**Notes**

**Call 2 June 2016**

**Attendees**

* Bob Friedman, J. V. Craig Center / TIGS
* Camilla Beech, Target Malaria
* David O'Brochta, University of Maryland
* Delphine Thizy, Target Malaria
* Heath Packard, Island Conservation / GBIRd
* Hector Quemada, Danforth Center
* Isabelle Coche, Emerging
* Jason Delborne, NCSU / GBIRd
* Jeff Chertak, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
* Royden Saah, Island Conservation / GBIRd
* Sentelle Eubanks, University of California / TIGS
* Todd Kuiken, NCSU / GBIRd
* Tony James, University of California / TIGS

**1- IUCN**

Heath provided the group with a short briefing on the IUCN activities related to gene drive. He noted that at the previous World Conservation Congress in September 2016, voting members adopted a decision on gene drive which noted that the IUCN Secretary General could not support or endorse gene drive research until research guidelines are developed ([WCC-2016-Res-086-EN](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/IUCN-WCC-6th-005.pdf) page 198). As a result, a committee has been charged with developing guidelines. It will be a 3.5-year process, with an estimated budget of $850,000. Funding is not currently available for the full suite of activities so the committee has been focused on fundraising and identifying low cost opportunities to carry out some of the activities it mapped out in the meantime.

Heath noted the importance of this process because of the influence of IUCN over the conservation community at large and in shaping perceptions of approaches of the interested public as well. He also noted the link between IUCN and CBD and the influence a decision at IUCN would have on CBD deliberations.

Heath and Jason noted that the upcoming meeting in Singapore on synbio (Seventh Meeting on Synthetic Biology) will feature a session on gene drive which is being convened by Island Conservation partly as a means of facilitating consultation for IUCN's work on the guidelines.

In response to the information shared by Heath, David noted that it would be useful to understand how much IUCN would be willing or interested in leveraging other efforts in reaching their conclusions, for example the NAS report. Heath suggested that while they will likely consider other guidance and opinions, it will be important for IUCN to develop its own in a manner independent of existing efforts and that is fully its own. However, there may be entry points or consultation moments where external experts could be asked to contribute. The exact roadmap is not yet defined so these entry points are still unknown.

In terms of the membership, Heath noted that most people would be appointed from the Safe Species Committee but that committee is large so it is not yet clear who is in the sub-group focused on gene drive.

Bob noted that the four-year framework was putting it slightly at odds with the CBD and wondered whether there were plans for an interim position or other milestones to synch with CBD in 2018.

**Action items:**

* **Heath will share list of members with the group**
* **When appropriate, Heath will signal that a group of experts would be willing to contribute**
* **A report on how the discussion in Singapore went will be shared on the next call of the group.**

**2- Environment NGOs and expert outreach**

Delphine informed the group that after consultations, Target Malaria felt it was needed to first approach the different contacts bilaterally and then, based on feedback, to see how the workshops could be organised. She noted there had been some concerns expressed that a 'group mentality' in a meeting may lead to unnecessary opposition so it would be important to give people a chance to hear about the project first. She is working on a list of people to contact and will prioritise outreach in the next few months. She also noted that the outreach will cover North America, Europe and Africa.

Jason informed the group that GBIRd was close to finalising funding for some of its activities and if the funding comes through, outreach to environment and conservation groups will be part of the consortium's activities, but with a focus more on North America compared to the plans from Target Malaria.

All agreed that it will be important to keep the group appraised of these efforts to ensure coordination and avoid confusion amongst the people being contacted as there may be overlap.

**Action item:**

* **Delphine and Jason will share the list of groups/experts they will reach out to**

**3- CBD preparations**

**Online forum**

On the registrations for the online forum, Isabelle noted that there are currently 19 people registered who are either directly linked to this group or considered well aligned to the position of the group. This is very positive and reflect the efforts made by everyone to reach out through their network. A list of registered participants is now available online: <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/participants/>

Isabelle noted that the geographical diversity of participants however remains a weak point, with mostly North America and Europe represented. Greater participation from Asian, Latin American and African experts would be very useful as government representatives tend to value the opinion of experts from their region. Bob and Royden offered to help reach out through Tata, TIGs group, and GBIRd to try to get more participants from India and Oceania. Delphine is continuing outreach to Target Malaria's partners in Africa as well. Hector offered to reach out to Douglas Miano.

Isabelle noted that in conversation with NEPAD, they had signalled their own efforts to have African experts registered but that sometimes a perceived lack of expertise was preventing them from being active in the discussions, even if they are registered. Isabelle suggested this group of experts could be made available to answer questions should NEPAD's network want to seek opinions on some of the questions raised. The group agreed and David noted he would be particularly keen to help.

Hector and Camilla both suggested that outreach could also be done through Biotechnology Information Centers (BIC) in Asia and Jeff suggested the Asian malaria leaders group could also be a good entry point.

In addition, Bob suggested PRRI could be a useful network to increase geographic diversity but that current lack of funding for that group was likely to impair their ability to participate. Camilla suggested reaching out to Diane Wray Cahen at USDA to see if there would be some funding opportunities for PRRI.

**AHTEG**

Todd and Bob informed the group that they had recently received communications from the CBD secretariat about their continued availability to participate in the AHTEG, which they both confirmed. The deadline for response was 31 May so this signals the Secretariat is slightly behind schedule. There was no information at the time on whether some slots would be open for new nominations.

**Action items:**

* **Delphine will seek to confirm 2 more participants from Target Malaria**
* **Hector will confirm whether Douglas Miano was able to be nominated**
* **Royden will reach out to his network in Australia and New Zealand**
* **Tony and Bob will reach out to their network to get Indian reps nominated, and try to check whether the government-nominated ones are aware of the issue**
* **Isabelle will follow up with Bob, Camilla and Jeff about spreading information on the registration through their suggested network**
* **Isabelle, Hector, Bob will see if a solution could be found to help support PRRI**
* **Once more information is available, Isabelle will organise briefing calls for the participants**
* **Isabelle will reach out to NEPAD to offer the group as an expert network**