

Subject: CBD Online Forum Update

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Hi all,

The 1st two days of the CBD's online forum on synthetic biology have not featured substantive discussion of gene drive technology. However, there have been a couple of statements which it may be useful to begin thinking about ways to respond to, as per below:

Points you may wish to address:

1. Barbara Livoreil, SBSTTA focal point for France, has raised the following points as potential new developments in synthetic biology, while **asking how true they are:**
 - "It is designed to be used "in vivo", in field experiments, no longer in confinement only"
 - **"off target effects are prevalent and may prevent the prediction with a high level of certainty of the real phenotype (including behaviour) of the organism and its effects on its environment"**
 - **This point in particular may be picked up by NGOs with regards to CRISPR and other gene editing techniques, so it would be good to think about arguments or publications which could be used as a response.**
 - "It goes "faster" or "deeper" (larger modifications) than evolution (and may not consider how the natural environment may react to this)."
 - You can respond to Ms. Livoreil's points here: <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/open-ended/discussion/?threadid=8384#8392>
2. Taye Birhanu, of the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, raised concerns about horizontal gene transfer from synthetic biology organisms to native populations negatively impacting biodiversity.
 - Hi comment is here: <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/open-ended/discussion/?threadid=8384#8384>

Summary of new developments: Apart from the above, the main topic of discussion so far has been the current definition of synthetic biology, as acknowledged in [CBD decision XIII/17](#), with many feeling that it is inadequate and would need to be revised. However, the moderator reminded all participants that the current definition was the result of compromises arising from lengthy discussions at both the SBSTTA and COP13, and that revising it was beyond the scope of the forum's current activities. As a reminder, **this is an operational definition which is to be used as a basis for further discussions in the context of the CBD, but not as a reference.**

Regards,
Ben

—Attachments:—

A Guide to Participating in the CBD Online Forum on SynBio (1).docx	137 KB
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Key terms and reference for the online forum (1).docx	147 KB