

Report on WGRI-5 and SBSTTA-18 as a Youth Delegate

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India.

Introduction

52% of the world's population is under thirty. The majority of them are living in developing countries. (<http://blog.euromonitor.com/2012/02/special-report-the-worlds-youngest-populations-.html>) The youth mainly comprise of students and young professionals who are just beginning to take up jobs. This makes it very difficult for the youth to effectively engage with the convention as there is always a lack of funding to get young people to these conferences. Youth involvement in the international arena, especially in the biodiversity negotiations, is in its nascent stages. Though we have been participating and trying to get involved in the negotiations from COP9, we finally made our first official introduction into the CBD COP negotiations in 2012, during COP11. For the first time in 2014, a youth delegation of four members was given an opportunity to take part in the inter-session meeting of the CBD. The delegation expressed the youth concerns in these negotiations.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) is an international network of youth organizations and individuals from all over the world. As of July 2014, GYBN has 42 member organizations from 26 countries representing a total of 340,000 members. Over 800 young people from 80 countries are subscribed to the GYBN mailing list and 2000 follow the Facebook page. The common goal of the network is to prevent the loss of biodiversity in the world. As the official major group for youth in the negotiations under the CBD, GYBN was given an opportunity to nominate people from the global South to attend the WGRI 05 meeting. Melina Sakiyama and I were selected as the global South representatives.

During our preparation for WGRI 05, we tried to give a holistic view of youth's opinions. For this purpose, we tried to collect opinions and concerns from the GYBN group through email. From these opinions and concerns on the various agenda items, we prepared and finalized statements on the following three agenda items:

-The Informal dialogue session on the Sustainable Development Goals

This was the first time that the Secretariat organized an informal dialogue session where everyone's view points were noted. We had a fruitful discussion. There was common understanding on the need for better integration of biodiversity and SDGs. We were successful in

presenting the view point of the youth. The focus of the intervention was to emphasize the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We felt that the document “Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Zero Draft)”, presented by the co-chairs of the open working group on the SDGs, did not fully reflect the importance of biodiversity in enabling and limiting all essential human and non-human activities on the planet.

Through our statement, we strongly urged parties to further include biodiversity in the remaining targets, especially into target 4 on education. We spoke about the importance of including biodiversity awareness into formal and informal curricula. Also, we asked parties to ensure full and effective participation of all stakeholders including the frequently marginalized groups: children, youth, women, and indigenous and local communities. This would help in the successful implementation of the SDGs. Finally, we requested parties and the secretariat to further integrate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into the SDG process, and to think outside the box and be innovative.

I personally worked on reading the documents, collecting the network’s view, formulating and presenting this statement.



Figure 1: Presenting the Youth Statement on SDGs.

- Stakeholder engagement (item 12.2 agenda item in WGRI)

Under this agenda item, we emphasized that the current format of the meetings does not include opportunities for direct dialogue or discussions between parties and stakeholder groups, and strongly supported the proposal to make the procedures of CBD meetings more interactive. In our opinion, holding multi-stakeholder dialogues within the formal proceedings of COP-meetings would be a great start. We also urged parties to better integrate the outcomes of side

events and other relevant events into the proceedings of CBD meetings, and hold special short sessions to share results.

We were successful in COP11 in including a paragraph on acknowledging youth as important stakeholders. This was negotiated under the Agenda item 5.4 (engaging with major stakeholders). We hoped to introduce another paragraph on developing a Youth Strategy. This would have been a major next step forward in building the capacity of youth to work in the field of biological diversity at all levels. Unfortunately, our text was not supported by a party. Without this support it would not become a part of the L document.

The text was rejected by Norway and the EU, who felt that this was not the right place for such a strategy. We later learnt that the word “strategy” can entail funding requirements; this was something countries were very skeptical about due to the current economic scenario.

However, even though some parties rejected the text, India decided to introduce the term youth into the paragraphs 3 and 4. This was accepted by all parties and is now a part of the L document.

I helped in the finalization of this text.

- Cooperation with other Conventions

GYBN identified three focal areas where we urged parties to address and bring cooperation between MEAs to a new level:

1. Enhancing cooperation and coordination in the implementation of Biodiversity related conventions across different government institutions
2. Effective information sharing mechanisms to improve synergies between different conventions
3. Continue supporting joint awareness raising initiatives, such as the Rio Conventions Pavilion and to establish new joint work programs and communication strategies between conventions.

I was actively involved in finalizing this statement.

- Closing statement

This statement was given in the context of explaining to the parties that we want to be considered as important stakeholders and we care for our future. Even though our text was rejected by parties, we wanted them to know that we are willing to learn from them and understand how we can effectively contribute to this process. We also wanted to thank all the stakeholders and parties who have been supporting us. This statement was formulated by the GYBN team, and was presented by Melina Sakiyama and myself.

The statement was very well received by the parties; we were able to work with Norway during SBSTTA 18 to help incorporating the text into the executive summary of the GBO 4. We consider this as one of our greatest achievements during these meetings.



Figure 2: Presenting the closing intervention.

- Side event

During the side event held on 18 June by the CBD Alliance and GYBN, I presented a case study. The presentation gave an overview of how youth in India are engaging in biodiversity conservation. In the presentation, I explained how the youth work on various aspects of biodiversity which include: research, policy, awareness, and national outreach, and how they have also worked during the CBD-COPs with GYBN. I also included the obstacles we face as Indian youth and what could be the possible ways of overcoming them.



Figure 3: Presenting a case-study on Youth engagement in Biodiversity in India.

Lessons from WGRI 5:

I have always been a strong supporter of grassroot activities for biodiversity conservation and initially felt that there was very little scope for us to make implementable changes in the international arena. The experience at WGRI 5 has made me see a completely new side of the decision making process. I am just beginning to realize the immense potential that the youth have in participating in these negotiations, especially in regard to the CBD. The level of participation and co-operation given to all the stakeholders in the CBD by the Secretariat and the Parties, brings new hope and makes me realize that we still have a chance to shape the outcomes that will affect our future.

I am already working with various biodiversity conservation and environment organizations in India and will be starting my Masters in Wildlife Biology at the National Center for Biological Science. I will make the best of these opportunities to hold talks and discussions. I am also going to share my experiences with the entire GYBN network and the youth in India by writing about it in the GYBN website and also my personal blog.

The need for youth engagement in the international arena is poorly understood. I would like to work on helping the youth in India, to better understand the importance of working not just at the

local level, but also at the international level and how they can play a better role in shaping the future. Creating the right awareness can help the youth to apply the right pressure on our national governments, so that the countries can commit to text that can bring about effective biodiversity conservation locally. I have already taken a step in this respect. I am working with members in GYBN to make a youth friendly executive summary of the GBO-4. If we succeed in this, I would like to take this forward and make other important and relevant CBD texts more understandable for the youth. To sum it up, gaining so much knowledge and understanding of this complex process through my participation in WGRI 5 and SBSTTA 18, I will ensure that I disseminate this knowledge to the youth in my country, by making them understand the text better in order for them to effectively take part in the COP12 and other CBD meetings.

Overall experience

Understanding the text and following the negotiations is not very easy. Even though I have attended two COPs earlier, UNFCCC-COP15 and CBD-COP11, I have not been able to successfully understand the wordings in the text and be in a position to raise the appropriate concerns that I see as a part of the youth forum. WGRI-5, being a meeting on a smaller scale and a more focused one, helped me immensely in understanding the process of the negotiations. I followed the discussion on Sustainable Development Goals, Stakeholder Engagement and Cooperation with other Conventions. I used this opportunity given by the Japan Biodiversity Fund and the CBD Secretariat to attend the SBSTTA 18 as well. During these conferences, we learnt how most of the text is negotiated earlier and only the final last minute additions are done at the COPs. We, as the youth of the world, have now learnt that if we really want to take part effectively in the decision making process related to biodiversity, we need to attend and come well prepared to such inter-session meetings so that we have the desired impact.

Apart from the negotiations arena, we were able to interact with key members of the CBD Secretariat, the party members, and members from the NGOs and civil society. This enabled us to understand the decision making process and to learn how to make effective statements. The relationships we have built in WRGI 5 will be a great asset in the upcoming COP12 and also in the years to come.

My recommendations on ways to build youth capacity to partake in decision-making processes related to biodiversity

Being involved to some extent in the negotiations for the past three years has helped me understand the text to a certain extent. However, I believe that I still have a long way to go before I can fully understand how the change in wordings makes an impact. Making text more comprehensible to the youth and general public is the biggest challenge. If we could understand what the text means and what it implies to the youth working on the ground level, the youth would surely want to voice our concerns at these international arenas. I was one such member of the youth constituency and this exposure has helped me understand this importance.

Having preparatory meetings for youth before COPs to help everyone understand the important aspects is important. Also, for the first timers, it helps them to not feel lost during the COP. It also helps the youth divide work better among themselves so that they can effectively participate and contribute to the decision making process.



Figure 4: A Cheerful end to the conferences.

Annex

All the interventions GYBN presented during WGRI 5 and SBSTTA18

Informal Dialogue Session, Panel 1: “Mainstreaming biodiversity in the sustainable development goals: the road ahead”

Thank you Mr. Chair for the opportunity to share our position.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network welcomes the efforts of the international community and the work of the OWG in recognizing the importance of biodiversity in achieving the vision of a sustainable world and the future *really* want.

However, we express our concerns that the document “Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Zero Draft)” presented by the Co-chairs of the open working group on the SDGs does not fully reflect the importance of biodiversity in enabling and limiting all essential human and non-human activities on the planet. Biodiversity represents all of the richness and diversity on earth and therefore should be regarded as an indispensable element in the fight against poverty and inequality.

We welcome that target 15 in the Zero Draft refers directly to the halt of the loss of Biodiversity. However, we strongly urge parties to further integrate Biodiversity into the remaining targets as well, especially into target 4 on education, stressing the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity awareness into formal and informal curricula.

Biodiversity holds many advantages for society and is the foundation for many sectors of the economy, Mainstreaming Biodiversity into all SDGs is therefore the key to their success.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network urges parties to prioritize the improvement and redesign of governance structures and institutions through transformative, inclusive and daring approaches to tackle power imbalance, environmental and social justice, human rights and perverse incentives, rather than allocating efforts and major funds solely on improving technology and scientific capacity. In order to achieve sustainability, scientific development should be equally followed by ethical development, awareness raising and education.

Therefore, we welcome the establishment of quality education for all as a stand alone goal, and we further recommend that education be mainstreamed in all other sustainable development goals.

To ensure the achievement of the SDGs, we urge parties to ensure **full and effective participation** of all stakeholders including the frequently marginalized groups: children, youth, women, and indigenous and local communities. Their contribution is essential and should be supported during all phases of the process, from design to implementation.

In order to achieve the mission of the Strategic Plan to halt the loss of Biodiversity by 2020, we urge parties and the secretariat to further integrate the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets into the SDG process**, ensuring that they are mutually supportive and complement each other. All human prosperity depends on functioning ecosystem services, therefore **mainstreaming biodiversity into all SDGs is absolutely essential** and the CBD community should **ensure** that this is fully taken into account by the OWG during the whole process of establishing SDGs, **keeping the pressure in the negotiations**.

We are **here together with half of the world's population**, to **stand for the right of future generations** to live in harmony with the planet and with each other. We urge parties to acknowledge the planetary boundaries and to **fully recognize that human activities should operate according to its limitations in order to maintain the planet's existing potential to be resilient and ensure that future generations** have their chance to thrive.

Finally, we urge parties to have the **courage** to think **outside of the box**, to be **innovative**, and to **dare to** change current institutions and systems in order to fully address sustainability and **safeguard our capacity** to keep living on the planet for centuries to come.

Intervention on Stakeholder Engagement

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving us the opportunity to share our position on agenda item 12.2 on Stakeholder Engagement.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network fully agrees with the statement presented by the CBD Alliance and would like to further elaborate on specific aspects related to youth.

Over half of the world's population is under thirty. Children and youth will be most negatively affected by the anthropogenic loss of Biodiversity and it will be their responsibility to manage these challenges in the future. However, when it comes to young people's contribution to biodiversity conservation, we see two very different pictures: On one hand, several studies have shown that awareness about and particularly understanding of Biodiversity is shockingly low among children and youth. On the other hand, thousands of young people all around the world are taking action to preserve Biodiversity. They volunteer for environmental organizations, take part in practical nature conservation activities, organize conferences and awareness raising campaigns and make their voices heard in decision-making processes.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network was established to bring all youth organizations and individuals active on Biodiversity issues together in order to build a global coalition to halt the loss of Biodiversity. GYBN represents the voice of youth in the CBD process and strives to raise awareness among young people on the values of Biodiversity. At COP11, parties to the Convention adopted decision XI/8, which recognizes the importance of youth participation in Biodiversity-related decision making processes on all levels and the CBD Secretariat has always been very committed to support young people and their activities on Biodiversity.

However, compared to other UN processes such as Climate or CSD, youth participation in the CBD is still relatively weak. This is due to a number of obstacles that prevent many youth from participating in the CBD processes. The greatest obstacle is the lack of funding. Most youth delegates are volunteers and, specifically in the Global South, do not have access to any sources of funding. Apart from a few positive exceptions, no dedicated funds to support youth participation in international biodiversity governance exist in the majority of countries. There is also a lack of youth friendly information resources, and many youth delegates struggle to

understand the very complex system of negotiations and do not fully grasp their role in the CBD-process.

GYBN therefore welcomes the document on Stakeholder Engagement and thanks the Secretariat for its preparation. We also welcome the supportive statements by the European Union, Burkina Faso as well as South Africa. GYBN believes that the current forms of participation and engagement of stakeholders limit the potential of major groups to truly contribute to the Convention. GYBN would like to emphasize that the current format of the meetings does not include opportunities for direct dialogue or discussions between parties and stakeholder groups. We therefore strongly support the proposal to make the procedures of CBD meetings more interactive by holding multi-stakeholder dialogues within the formal proceedings of COP-meetings. We also urge parties to better integrate the outcomes of side events and other relevant events into the procedures of CBD meetings by holding special short sessions to share results. GYBN further calls upon parties to provide additional resources to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

Building upon the positive experiences in other processes and the lessons learned from past initiatives such as the Global Biodiversity Forums, GYBN strongly urges parties to provide support for the development of innovative stakeholder engagement mechanisms and strongly supports the proposal to organize Stakeholder Forums before the COP meetings.

GYBN is proud to announce that jointly with the Korean Council for Biological Diversity (KCBD), we are in the process of preparing a Global Youth Biodiversity Summit, to be held just before COP12 in Korea, which would serve as a capacity-building and coordination meeting for youth delegates attending the negotiations.

GYBN is deeply convinced that young people can play an important and active role in implementing measures to achieve the objectives of the Convention, its Protocols and the Strategic Plan. Young people are eager to take responsibility for their own future and be part of the solution to prevent the loss of biological diversity.

GYBN would therefore like to use this opportunity to propose the development of a “Strategy on Youth Engagement for Biodiversity”. This strategy should include outreach and awareness raising activities, the development of information and training resources for education and capacity building, support for local and regional youth activities on Biodiversity, support for

youth participation in the CBD through the creation of a voluntary fund, and a call for governments to engage youth in their implementation plan of the Convention. Ultimately this strategy will not only support, but accelerate the implementation of the convention and achievement of Aichi Target Numbers 1, 17 and 19.

GYBN therefore proposes to add the following text to the document on Stakeholder Engagement as on page 10 of UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/11:

“4. Inviting the Executive Secretary to develop in consultation with parties and relevant stakeholders a “Strategy on Youth Engagement for Biodiversity” that focuses on ways and means to raise awareness for the values of Biodiversity among young people as a contribution to the achievement of Aichi Targets No. 1, 17 and 19 and builds capacity to ensure the full and effective participation of young people in Biodiversity-related decision making processes at all levels”

Thank you very much for your attention.

Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives.

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving us the opportunity to share our position.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network strongly believes that enhancing cooperation between all Biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio Conventions and other relevant MEAs is key to fully implement the objectives of the CBD as well as to reach the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

GYBN has identified three focal areas that parties should address with higher priority in order to maximize synergies and to bring cooperation between MEAs to a new level.

First, GYBN believes that enhancing cooperation and coordination in the implementation of Biodiversity-related conventions across different government institutions at the national level is of fundamental importance. We call upon parties to review and improve communication structures within national governments, and organize exchange meetings between national Focal Points of different MEAs on a frequent basis.

To enable the full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders, including marginalized groups such as youth, women, and indigenous and local communities, we further recommend the establishment of stakeholder committees on the national level, and we call upon governments to

promote the establishment of inter-ministerial and inter-agency working groups to better coordinate the national implementation of Biodiversity-related conventions.

In particular, we propose the establishment of national competence centres to coordinate the implementation of all Biodiversity-related conventions. These centres should serve as monitoring mechanisms to identify and address loopholes, to identify inconsistencies and contrasting goals of national policies, and to ensure that the implementation of MEAs takes place in an integrated manner.

NBSAPs should be better integrated and take the goals and targets of all Biodiversity-related conventions into account, ensuring coherency in their implementation.

Second, GYBN would like to stress that effective information sharing mechanisms are essential to improve synergies between different conventions. Particularly, increasing the accessibility of decisions and other relevant information for the implementation of more than one convention is of overarching importance.

GYBN calls upon parties to reduce duplication of existing online platforms and databases. In particular we propose the creation of a central database to mainstream information about the activities, work programs and decisions of all Biodiversity-related conventions. Information about national, regional and international initiatives should also be included in order to enhance cooperation and facilitate the sharing process of best practice examples and lessons learned.

Existing cross-MEA databases such as the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements or knowledge management tools such as Biodiversity-L should be better promoted and further developed.

Third, GYBN calls upon parties to continue supporting joint awareness raising initiatives such as the Rio Conventions Pavilion and to establish new joint work programs and communication strategies between conventions.

Existing mechanisms for MEA coordination, specifically the Environmental Management Group, the Liaison Group of Biodiversity related Conventions, the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions and other thematic bodies such as the UN-REDD Program, Collaborative Partnership on Forests and others, should also be further promoted and strengthened.

Thank you for your attention.

Closing Plenary Intervention

Thank you Mr. Chair for supporting us and giving us the opportunity to intervene.

We have come here driven by the realities we have witnessed and experienced back in our countries.

Through our on-the ground experiences we have gained important knowledge and skills to conserve biodiversity, it is now necessary to step up our game and go beyond our local and national communities and establish an international initiative for youth engagement on biodiversity so that we can connect our on-ground experiences to the international negotiation arena and remind governments to take our rights and concerns into account.

We understand that our life experiences might not have been enough to fully inform us on how to engage in international negotiations and we are aware that the road ahead is a long and difficult one.

We might slip and fall sometimes, but we still stand here, clear of our convictions because we know that more than 3 billion of us back home are facing hunger, war, poverty, unemployment and exploitation every day.

Swetha- We also know that the past environmental abuse by our great great grandparents, grandparents and parents means that the world we will live in 20 years from now, will be a harsher and a more unforgiving one.

We know that these negotiations under the UNFCCC, CBD, UNEP, CSD and so on, are our last chance for a peaceful solution to save our ever depleting resources on the planet. We cannot afford to give up and we won't!

We are here, eager to learn from you the steps of this tricky road of international processes and be an asset to implement the Convention and its Aichi targets. We know our strengths and we will continue to do our best in our communities but we want to keep working internationally and unleash the potential of youth as change agents. Use your power to give us the chances we need and we will use our passion and energy to help steering the world on course.

Finally we would like to express our gratitude to India for using your power to support us as important stakeholders, Norway for giving us a valuable lesson and an opportunity to grow, and the Secretariat, the ILCs, NGOs and other rightholders that have always supported us and our activities.

Thank you very much.

GYBN Intervention on Biodiversity and Climate Change at SBSTTA18

Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity to share our position.

I am speaking on behalf of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and we would like to provide our views on agenda items 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3.

In light of the latest findings of the IPCC fifth assessment report of and the outcomes of the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook, GYBN is gravely concerned about the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and the consequences for children, youth and future generations. Combating climate change and preventing the loss of Biodiversity are one of the greatest challenges for mankind in the 21st century. Neither can be solved without addressing the other. The key to tackling both Biodiversity and climate change is policy coherency.

We therefore strongly urge parties to take effective measures to integrate the protection of Biodiversity into climate change policies and vice versa.

With regard to agenda item 9.1 on the integration of Biodiversity into climate-change mitigation and adaptation strategies, GYBN urges parties to further strengthen cooperation between conventions, specifically through the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions. To ensure policy coherence, we propose the development of joint work programs on cross cutting issues such as ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation, forestry and other relevant issues between conventions.

Furthermore collaboration and information-sharing among national Focal Points of different conventions is absolutely crucial to ensure the coherent implementation of decisions.

Special attention must also be given to the development of sound adaptation strategies, so that mal-adaptation can be avoided and adverse consequences for Biodiversity prevented. In this regard we urge parties to put in place joint platforms to share best-practice examples and lessons

learned when it comes to the implementation of national adaptation strategies and the incorporation of ecosystem based approaches.

With regard to agenda item 9.2 on the application of safeguards for Biodiversity in REDD plus, we want to emphasize that compliance with Biodiversity safeguards in REDD plus initiatives must be constantly monitored and reported. It is of fundamental importance that the conservation of natural forests and the protection of the rights of indigenous and local communities that depend on forests are ensured in all activities. The conversion of natural forests must be ruled out under all circumstances. Forests are complex ecosystems that support life on Earth and should not be regarded simply as carbon stocks.

Therefore, greater attention to non-carbon benefits as well as non-market based approaches should be ensured and parties should develop guidance on how these can contribute to the objectives of the Convention.

With regard to agenda item 9.3 on climate-related geoengineering and in light of repeated attempts by several actors from the private sector to sidestep decisions that were taken under the CBD, we urge parties not to allow for any exceptions and to take effective measures to prosecute violators. The evidence we have is clear: Geoengineering is way too risky to be taken into consideration. It is not a solution to combat climate change and could have dramatic consequences for ecosystem-services and Biodiversity. In accordance with the precautionary principle in the Convention, GYBN strongly calls upon parties to reaffirm the existing de facto moratorium on geoengineering.

Young people and future generations will have to bear the costs of climate change and live in a world deprived by much of its biological diversity. We are here to take up our responsibility. We are here to live up to the challenge and become part of the solution.

Thank you Madam Chair.

Synthetic Biology - SBSTTA 18

Thank you Mr. Chair, the Global youth biodiversity network thank you for this opportunity to share our position, we just would like to make a very quick intervention.

We thank the secretariat for the preparation of document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/18/10 and would like to remind parties on paragraph 2 of the introduction. In accordance with the preamble of the Convention and its Article 14, we strongly urge parties to follow the precautionary approach. Synthetic Biology should not be an exception.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network , supports the positions of indigenous people and we would like to express extreme concern regarding the risks presented by Synthetic biology and its products.

We believe that our current scientific community still does not detain the necessary knowledge and understanding of our environment, its organisms and how they interact with each other along time under evolutionary pressures. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to fully understand, predict and control the consequences of synthetically modified/produced organisms and products, once released in the environment.

We believe that the use of this technology without any national and international regulatory mechanisms constitutes great risk for the wellbeing of future generations.

Apart from the great environmental risk, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network is also deeply concerned that the livelihoods of many young people, indigenous communities and women in developing countries might be negatively affected once commodities such as vanilla, stevia and cocoa butter among others are substituted by synthetically produced composts in industries in developed countries. We also raise the concern of digital biopiracy.

The precautionary principle is a guiding principle of the convention and it should not be compromised when it comes to synthetic biology. Therefore we would like to propose the addition of the following text in document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/18/10, in the session:

Recommendation to the Conference of the Parties:

item 1(a), (...) after justify such testing, “taking into account the precautionary principle of the convention in decisions at all levels.”

Item 5- Invasive Alien Species Intervention

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this debate on behalf of **the Global Biodiversity Youth Network. I am also an active member of the women’s caucus of the CBD Alliance.**

We would like to emphasize the need for a socio-economic analysis of the impacts of invasive species, including in particular the impacts on women and future generations. Women have a special relationship with biodiversity; they are the guardians of biodiversity and the primary conservers of seeds. As acknowledged by the parties, invasive species can have a profound impact on their traditional use of biodiversity, including in particular farming systems. For example, due to invasive species weeding often has to be carried out 2 or 3 times more than previously, and the carrying capacity of pastures for livestock can be reduced by up to 90%, with serious impacts on food security and sovereignty. [Also, invasive species like water hyacinth threaten community water resource, while women often have the main responsibility of fetching water for their families.] For communities seeking to adapt to climate change, invasives make that adaptation even more difficult. They also have profound cultural impacts by displacing communities and generating conflicts over land not yet affected by invasives.

We are particularly concerned about the potential invasiveness of species cultivated outside their native range for bio-energy, which now includes troubling new risks posed by, micro-organisms such as algae, yeast and E-coli, manipulated using genetic engineering and synthetic biology. For that reason it is important to perform a profound assessment of the existing and potential socio-economic impacts of invasive species, and to take preventive measures when there are significant

risks. We are particularly concerned about the potential socio-economic impacts of invasive species introduced through synthetic biology, including on customary sustainable use of biodiversity.

Overall, we need a stronger text on effective monitoring, control and eradication of invasive species that goes beyond data collection and information sharing. There is a need for an ecosystem coordinated approach for the control and eradication of invasive species, incorporating legislation, governance, policy, capacity development, management and restoration with key links to health, livelihoods and well-being of indigenous peoples, local communities, women and youth.

So in closing, I would urge Parties to focus specifically on the implementation of measures that address the negative environmental and socio-economic impacts of invasive species. The costs of invasive species are simply too high to allow for these impacts to occur. We need preventive measures, based on a precautionary approach, especially in field of new and dangerous technologies like synthetic biology, where there is an urgent need for a moratorium.

Thank you.