**A Guide to Participating in the CBD Online Forum on SynBio**

**What if I need help? Get in touch! Contact Benjamin Robinson (ben@emergingag.com) or Isabelle Coche (isabelle@emergingag.com)**

**1- How does it work?**

* After you registered, you received a confirmation email from the CBD Secretariat with your details. An example of that email is at the end of this document.
* You set your own username and password which you will use to login. If you don't remember it, you can update it by clicking this link: http://bch.cbd.int/user/passwordreset.shtml
* Each topic will be moderated by one or more persons. They will set out questions to guide the conversation. You should try to respond to these questions, or respond to comments made by others.
* Everyone can see the online discussions, but only registered participants can post comments

**2- What's the point?**

* Once the forum concludes, the CBD Secretariat will prepare a report on the discussions that will be sent to the Expert Group (the "AHTEG"). The expert group will then meet over several months to try to prepare draft recommendations for countries to consider at their next meeting in December 2018.
* The point of participating in the online forum is to ensure a balanced view of the different topics is presented, so the report to the expert group is balanced
* the online forum is the only time discussions are open to all kinds of experts - once it goes to the expert group, opportunities to input will be very limited. So investing time now is important to ensure the report is as accurate and balanced as possible.

**3- How do I know what to do?**

* Emerging will be monitoring the discussions throughout the online forum.
* When relevant issues come up (it could be once a day or every few days), we will send the expert group an email. It will give you an overview of the conversations and suggest areas where contributions would be useful
* The conversations will be like an online comment board. To participate you can simply log in and post comments in response the topics

**4- When does it start?**

* The forum will start July 3rd. We will send an email to the expert group once the forum is 'live'.
* It will run for a total of eight weeks - four in July, four in September with a break in August.

**5- What makes for an effective comment?**

* **Keep it short and simple!**
* Focus your answers to topics or questions where you can provide clear explanations, evidence, or expertise. Questions based on value judgements can be more complex to answer in a sensitive and sound manner
* Don't comment on topics where you are not an expert or don't feel sufficiently knowledgeable
* Keep it short (a couple of paragraphs) so it could be easily read and incorporated into a report. If more information would be useful, add a link or refer to an external source of information
* **Provide evidence-based answers**
* Offer links and share studies, reports, papers, to back up your points
* Share case studies, well -documented examples to provide perspective and explain your arguments
* **Stay polite and professional**
* Be polite in your comments
* Don't single out other participants, keep your answers focused on the group at large
* Don't get dragged into endless back and forth on a point. Make your argument, show the evidence and then move on

**6- What is the schedule for the online forum?**

* The discussion topics will be based on the text of the decision that was taken in December 2016. It is likely that the moderators will rephrase the topics and break them down into sub-questions for participants to address, but for now the topics are included below in the formal language adopted in December.
* **3-17 July - Topic 1:** Review **recent technological developments** within the field of synthetic biology to assess if the developments could lead to impacts on biodiversity and the three objectives of the Convention, including unexpected and significant impacts
* **17-31 July - Topic 2**: Identify any living organisms already developed or currently under research and development through techniques of synthetic biology **which do not fall under the definition of living modified organisms** under the Cartagena Protocol;
* **4-18 Sept - Topic 3**: Further analyse **evidence of benefits and adverse effects of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology vis-à-vis the three objectives of the Convention**, and gather information **on risk management measures, safe use and best practices for safe handling** of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology

**AND topic 4**: In order to avoid or minimize any potential negative effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity**, evaluate the availability of tools to detect and monitor** the organisms, components and products of synthetic biology;

* **18 Sept-2 Oct - Topic 5**: provide recommendations to facilitate future discussions and actions on synthetic biology under the Convention

**7- What does a confirmation email look like?**

**Your CBD account profile has been updated.**

Dear xxxxx,

We are pleased to inform you that your Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) user profile has been updated as follows:

Summary of your contact information:

Your registered email address is: **xxxx@xxxx.xx**
Your government affiliation is: *[not specified]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: | xxxx |
| Designation: | xxxx |
| Department: | xxxx |
| Organization: | xxxx |
| Address: |  |
| City: |  |
| State: |  |
| Country: | xxxxx |
| Zip: |  |
| Email CC: |  |
| Phone: | xxxxx |
| Fax: |  |

The following role(s) has been added:

* Synbio forum – Organization

Your current role(s), which allow you to use sections with limited access, are:

* Synbio forum – Organization

You may update your profile at <https://bch.cbd.int/user/profile.shtml> or access the system management centre at <http://bch.cbd.int/managementcentre/> by signing in with your registered email address and password.

If you have forgotten your password you may request a new one at [http://bch.cbd.int/user/passwordreset.shtml](https://bch.cbd.int/user/passwordreset.shtml).