

SUBMISSION

In relation to the Preparations of the Post-2020 Strategic Plan

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Convention on Biological Diversity
Cristiana Paşca Palmer, PhD
Executive Secretary
413 Rue Saint-Jacques Ouest, Suite 800 Montreal, Quebec
Canada H2Y 1N9

15 September 2017

Dear Ms. Cristiana Paşca Palmer,

This is a submission by the CBD Women's Caucus, together comprising a diverse group of women's groups, Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network (IWBN) including RMIB-LAC its regional caucus from Latin America and the Caribbean, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, community-based organisations, NGOs, researchers, and networks working on issues related to gender and biodiversity conservation.

This submission includes the following sections:

- **Engaging women and gender mainstreaming in the CBD**
- **Institutionalising an engagement mechanism for rightsholders in the preparatory process**
- **Building on the steps taken in the previous preparatory process for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**
- **Improving meaningful consideration of gender and biodiversity**
- **Process to update the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action**
- **Coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide inputs on these important matters related to the preparations of the post-2020 strategic plan, to be considered by the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

Sincerely yours,

Lucy Mulenkei, Yolanda Teran and Mrinalini Rai

On behalf of the CBD Women's Caucus and Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network (IWBN) and RMIB-LAC, its regional caucus from Latin America and the Caribbean

Engaging women and gender mainstreaming in the CBD

1. Indigenous women are the cultural pillars and the keepers of seeds and transmitters of traditional knowledge. They are closely linked with Mother Earth and all her beings and ecosystems. Therefore, it is imperative to recognise Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women as rightsholders as well as the roles of Indigenous women in conservation and all related processes regarding biodiversity, food and water security.
2. While the need for mainstreaming gender and women's full and effective participation in the CBD has been recently recognised (COP 12 Decision XII/7), successful gender mainstreaming and consideration of women's rights in all biodiversity policies, programmes and plans has yet to be fully realised.
3. Effectively responding to the patriarchal system that has marginalised women in participating in biodiversity policy planning and implementation and that has continually characterised women as 'vulnerable' and 'dependent', requires recognition of gender equality and women's rights in biodiversity, greater engagement opportunities afforded to women as well as mainstreaming of gender considerations in all biodiversity policy.
4. Women's vital roles and needs in conserving and sustainably using biodiversity mandates that any policy approach and planning process fully engages and recognises women as experts, agents of change, leaders and rightsholders.¹
5. Therefore, continued promotion of gender mainstreaming in the CBD requires the full and effective engagement and participation of women as rightsholders, including Indigenous women and grassroots women's groups, in the preparatory process for a post-2020 strategic plan, and this ensures that gender is not simply considered as just a theme, but a crosscutting issue that is integrated in each and every biodiversity-related policy, plan and programme.

Institutionalising an engagement mechanism for rightsholders in the preparatory process

6. A comprehensive and participatory preparatory process and timetable for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has been requested by the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties (decision XIII/1, para. 34). To ensure this, a meaningful engagement mechanism for rightsholders who are on the frontlines of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use must be developed and institutionalised. **We call on the Conference of Parties to adopt a decision to institutionalise such a rightsholder-developed engagement mechanism in the preparatory process.**
7. Rightsholder groups, such as women, Indigenous women, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, children and youth, and farmers (including fisher folk and livestock producers) and workers must be involved in all policy planning processes that affect them, from conception to monitoring, and evaluation. Such rightsholders require specific, institutionalised channels of participation so that their invaluable experiences and perspectives can be included in the post-2020 strategic plan. Channels should consider culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive tools

¹ The term rightsholders is used to distinguish major groups that represent people with recognized rights under international law related to sustainable development, like women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, workers and farmers, from stakeholders like NGOs, business and industry and other major groups that merely have a stake in sustainable development policy.

and methods and Indigenous languages. This will promote gender mainstreaming in the CBD at all levels, throughout the preparatory process.

8. Parties and the Secretariat should recognise and call upon rightsholder groups as expert groups in biodiversity policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The engagement of Indigenous women and grassroots women's groups as expert groups in technical/expert panels and meetings, Secretariat and party-led studies, assessments and reviews, workshops, and formal and informal consultations has thus far been missing.

Therefore, we call for the decision on an institutionalised engagement mechanism to include modalities for engaging women, including Indigenous women and grassroots women's groups as expert groups throughout the preparatory process for the new strategic framework and beyond.

9. We call for an in-session workshop at the Subsidiary Body meetings to elaborate and allow for broad-based understanding and ownership of such a rightsholder-developed engagement mechanism amongst rightsholders and parties'.

10. To ensure such institutionalisation, clear modalities for the rightsholder engagement mechanism in the preparatory process should be developed by rightsholders worldwide, in all their diversity, and committed to in a decision by the Secretariat and Parties. This can be done through a number of ways:

- Ensuring rightsholder groups such as women, Indigenous women, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities amongst others have their spaces and seats at the table in all processes at all levels of the preparatory process and timetable, including through the major groups and stakeholder groups structure such as the CBD Women's Caucus, Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network (IWBN) including its regional caucus from Latin America and the Caribbean (RMIB-LAC), and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB).
- Inviting representatives from all rightsholder groups as experts to global consultations, national regional workshops and expert meetings, in an inclusive and equitable manner, and ensuring there is translation for effective engagement.
- Mobilising funding/resources to ensure that representatives from all rightsholder groups (diverse in age and gender) can be financed to participate in both global and regional meetings. For example, we encourage Parties to contribute generously to the CBD Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to enable their participation in the preparatory post-2020 process, including CBD regional workshops, expert group meetings and inter-sessional meetings at COPs. Additionally, different United Nations (UN) Agencies have set up civil society and other stakeholders' engagement mechanisms that sponsor participants to attend the different events: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN NGLS) issue regular calls for sponsored candidates to attend the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), General Assembly (GA) or other relevant meetings; UN Environment (UNE) through its Civil Society Unit (formerly known as the Major Groups & Stakeholders Branch) also provide Major Group representatives with funding to attend UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) meetings.
- Ensure rightsholder groups have space, time and translation services to express their diverse perspectives and understand that is just not a consolidated voice, but that rightsholders are also a pool of experts that are ready to assist Parties in deliberations.
- In line with ensuring inclusivity, equity and a diversity of perspectives, the preparatory process should strive for gender balance in consultations, personal testimonies, meetings, workshops and expert groups.

11. Tokenistic participation of rightsholders must be avoided. The nature of participation and engagement of rightsholders that is required extends beyond opportunities for information-dissemination to Parties and attendance and being consulted at meetings and workshops. Participation should happen in the framework of mutual respect, understanding and consideration.

12. What is needed for meaningful participation in the preparatory process is the creation of safe spaces for candid engagement between rightsholders and parties. This requires for sufficient space and time to be allocated for interchanging of ideas between Parties and rightsholder groups, respecting the time, protocols and diverse ways of having conversations and dialogues. Rightsholders must be recognised and given the opportunity to participate in setting the agenda, contributing to analysis and special reports as experts, reaching consensus on the issues at hand and being involved in the decision-making, therefore producing more equitable outcomes and having broad-based ownership over those decisions and outcomes.² Facilitating such an environment leads to increased trust and mutual benefits in the long run.

Building on the steps taken in the previous preparatory process for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020

13. The 2050 Vision of the Strategic Plan “Living in harmony with nature” where “By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people” remains very relevant after 2020; the realisation of such a vision where all people benefit requires a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that is well informed by views from women, including Indigenous women and grassroots women’s groups. There should be a real concerted focus on gender mainstreaming to ensure that the revised Strategic Plan and targets fully reflect gender considerations, in line with the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development (see also below).

14. We recommend following some of the major steps that were taken in the previous preparatory process for developing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, but with key improvements such as increased participation and engagement of women as rightsholders, including Indigenous women and grassroots women’s groups, namely:

- National and regional workshops among representatives of Parties and rightsholder groups, including women, Indigenous women, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
- Global consultations among representatives of Parties and rightsholder groups, including women, Indigenous women, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
- Workshops and expert meetings organized by Parties, partners and stakeholders and rightsholder groups, including women, Indigenous women, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
- Call for and collect best practices, lessons learned and recommendations from rightsholders, particularly on gender mainstreaming, to inform the preparation of the new strategic framework.

Improving meaningful consideration of gender and biodiversity

² Asia-Pacific Regional Engagement Mechanism, ‘The Dual Objectives of Participation’, accessed 5 September 2017, available at: <http://asiapacificrcem.org/about-rcem/what-is-the-rcem/objectives-of-rcem/>.

15. There were 28 decisions with a reference to gender at the Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties, which indicates the growing acknowledgment of the importance of gender considerations in the CBD. However, there is a need for more measurable targets and an analysis by the Global Gender Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that 44 per cent of all NBSAPs (111 of 254) submitted by Parties to the Secretariat of the Convention between 1993 and May 2016 did not contain any mention of either “gender” or “women”.³ Therefore, it is necessary to have gender training for Parties’ staff and focal points that are dealing with biodiversity issues.

16. This points to how little gender is being mainstreamed and meaningfully considered in practice by Parties in their national reporting and at implementation level, despite the calls to do so in the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action. This also points to the need for amplifying the importance of mainstreaming gender and capacity building on gender, women’s rights and empowerment, for Parties in developing the next strategic plan. It also indicates thus far that the priorities and key aspects articulated in the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action have not been taken into consideration or realised.

17. A more comprehensive effort is needed by Parties and the Secretariat to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed in the CBD. What will be key to encouraging more effective integration of gender by parties going into the future would be to ensure that women’s voices, perspectives and presence are more clearly heard and felt throughout the preparatory process of developing the next strategic framework.

18. It is clear that increased efforts are needed during the preparatory process to secure high-level commitment from Parties towards implementing decisions around gender, especially by committing funds and budgeting for gender activities to be coordinated by the Secretariat.

Process to update the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action

19. We call for a participatory process involving women, including Indigenous women, grassroots women’s groups, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, to update the post-2020 Gender Plan of Action in line with the new strategic plan. The process to prepare an updated post-2020 Gender Plan of Action must include a mid-term evaluation and analysis of the interim outcomes of the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action.

20. The process of developing an updated post-2020 Gender Plan of Action should also include an independent evaluation that measures Parties and the Secretariat’s efforts in implementing the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action. Through this we can identify the gaps, lessons learned, and recommendations, which can inform the baseline and process of developing an updated post-2020 Gender Plan of Action.

21. We urge the Secretariat to organise regional civil society consultations/workshops/dialogues on gender and biodiversity with national CBD focal points and women including Indigenous women and grassroots women’s groups, as gender experts, as a key component of the preparatory process for the new strategic framework and updated post-2020 Gender Plan of Action.

³ See note by the Executive Secretary ‘Progress in Implementing the Gender Plan of Action: Update on Mainstreaming Gender Considerations in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans’ UNEP/CBD/COP/13/8/Add.3 available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/official/cop-13-08-add3-en.pdf>

22. The 'gender task force', which was called for in the current 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action and COP12 Decision XII/7, should play a key role in the process of preparing the new strategic framework and facilitating the process for a revised post-2020 Gender Plan of Action. It should be a resourced and an active body that is inclusive of external representatives including those from rightsholder groups. Therefore, women, including Indigenous women and grassroots women's groups should be engaged as key gender experts in the gender task force.

Coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

23. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an important enabling framework for the further implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and the post-2020 strategic plan. It is important that the post-2020 strategic plan and Targets are streamlined with SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as the current Strategic Plan and Aichi Targets reflect almost no gender considerations. The new framework should follow that of the SDGs, in which environment, social and economic concerns are fully integrated, and in which gender equality is both a standalone goal and a key cross-cutting theme. It is therefore imperative to strengthen the CBD's 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action and to mainstream gender in the post-2020 strategic plan, especially if we are going to ensure that by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, and delivers benefits essential for all people, including women, while ensuring that "no one is left behind".

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/post2020/doc/Approaches-Post2020Biodiversity.pdf>