**Notification: SCBD/BS/CG/MPM/DA/85140 (2015-139)**

**Peer review of the outcomes of the process in response to decision XII/24 on synthetic biology**

**Result of the national peer review of the reports, available at** [**http://bch.cbd.int/synbio/peer-review**](http://bch.cbd.int/synbio/peer-review)**, for consideration by SBSTTA at its twentieth meeting to be held in Montreal, Canada from 25 to 29 April 2016:**

**(a)   Updated report and synthesis of views in response to paragraph 7(b) of decision XII/24; (b)  Report of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology.**

The Slovak Republic amply supports both documents, in particular the outcomes and recommendations of the AHTEG.

Let us highlight some of the statements made in the above mentioned documents that we fully agree with.

* We fully agree with the operational definition of synthetic biology, comprising inclusion and exclusion criteria, as a broad term which encompasses and/or is used to refer to a wide range of disciplines, techniques, potential applications and end products. In particular we agree with the statement, that „SynBio is the application of science, technology and engineering to facilitate the design, manufacture and/or modification of genetic materials in living organisms“. In line with Cartagena Protocol we are amply supportive to the affirmation of the three criteria (which expressly exclude non-living entities created by living organisms), stating that an LMO must be „living“, and contain a „novel combination of genetic material“, as a result of the „application of modern biotechnology“.
* As concerns the socioeconomic impacts relevant to the mandate of the Conventions and its Protocols, we are aware of the fact that the impacts of synthetic biology on biological diversity, leading to the development of new biological systems that do not exist in nature, are expected to be broader and more intense due to the ability of synthetic biology to engineer more complex systems for use in a wider range of applications as does classical genetic engineering.
* We are aware of the synergies of the AHTEG outcomes with the Cartagena Protocol on risk assessment, especially in the general agreement that living organisms, generated through synthetic biology, fall within the scope of the Convention and its Protocols, as well as under existing national biosafety frameworks. Clearly, Article 8 of the Convention requires all signatories to establish and maintain means to regulate, manage or control the risks associated with the use and release of LMO’s resulting from biotechnology. We also agree with the idea that at some points there is a need to expand the language of the Cartagena Protocol and national legislations, especially with regard to future living organisms developed through synthetic biology, or novel risks posed by products of synthetic biology whereby no parent organisms can be used as comparators. We come to an agreement that there is a need to revise and further develop risk assessment methodologies in order to fully address the potential environmental and societal impacts of synthetic biology because, there are certain challenges as to what kind of information is needed to support rigorous risk assessment, or who should collect such data. Truly, it remains a matter of interpretation whether or not living organisms resulting from certain areas of synthetic biology research, such as the synthesis of entire organisms, xenobiology or manipulations that lead to heritable characteristics without the creation of „novel combinations of nucleic acids“, fall within the scope of the Cartagena Protocol of Biosafety.
* As concerns the outlook and possible elements of a way forward we are amply supportive to all proposed elements salient in the deliberations on synthetic biology as are listed in the updated report and synthesis of views in response to paragraph 7(b) of decision XII/24 on new and emerging issues of synthetic biology. Particularly, we would like to underline the idea of the importance of the information exchange about SynBio. Scientific and technological developments in the field of synthetic biology must be reviewed regularly and actions taken if voluntary codes or current regulatory procedures appear insufficient. Exchange between the research community, risk assessors and policymakers will be central to expanding of technical knowledge and may be basis for filling potential gaps in risk assessment and regulation of evolving developments.
* In a global perspective, an international coordination and dialogue concerning all aspects of synthetic biology are highly necessary and amply supported by the Slovak Republic. We are currently and continuously interested in participating in all regarding policymaking actions.