

INFORMAL SESSION FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

17-19 and 24-26 February 2021

Agenda Item 5. Risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms

Statement of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), presented by Ms. Jennifer Corpuz, TEBTEBBA

Thank you, Chair.

I am making this statement on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). We thank the Secretariat for its intensive preparatory work and for the documents under this agenda item. Indigenous Peoples have participated actively in the inter-sessional process on Risk Assessment and Risk Management of LMOs, including the online forum and the AHTEG.

For Indigenous Peoples, Mother Earth and Nature are alive and sacred. When we make decisions that will affect our Mother's body, we must treat her with the same dignity and respect we would afford our own families, as her health ultimately affects the health of all our families. The known and unknown risks posed by unregulated scientific and technological development, specifically the release of LMOs with engineered gene drives, are vast, irreversible, and may be harmful to human health and Indigenous life ways, brought about by adverse impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems, wild species, indigenous food systems, genetic resources and associated traditional, indigenous and local knowledge, culture, and traditional occupations of IPLCs.

As pointed out by the AHTEG, it is difficult to predict the behavior of gene drive organisms prior to their release into the environment. Risk estimations may be highly speculative due to the high levels of uncertainty in the assessment of the likelihood of occurrence of adverse effects. Therefore, the IIFB strongly supports a precautionary approach to LMOs containing engineered gene drives, recalling COP decision 14/19. In particular, Parties and other Governments should only consider introducing organisms containing engineered gene drives into the environment, including for experimental releases and research and development purposes, when scientifically sound case-by-case risk assessments have been carried out, risk management measures are in place to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects, and free, prior and informed consent of potentially affected Indigenous Peoples is obtained for any introduction anywhere and in all situations that may impinge on Indigenous Peoples' resources or heritage.

A robust regulatory mechanism must be developed that allows scientific collaboration, taking Indigenous science into account, technological co-operation, and long-term capacity building that is inclusive and participatory. This mechanism must respect the right to self-determination

of Indigenous Peoples, including free, prior and informed consent (or FPIC), full and effective participation at all levels, including for Indigenous women and youth.

Finally, the IIFB supports the recommendation that an AHTEG be established to develop additional guidance for risk assessment on LMOs containing engineered gene drives. Since there needs to be further elaboration of FPIC in relation to gene drive organisms in accordance with decision 14/19, full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the AHTEG should be ensured.

Thank you, Chair.