



**Process for the implementation of [IUCN Resolution 123](#) (Marseille, 2020)  
“Towards development of an IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to  
nature conservation”**

*May 2023*

This document should be read in conjunction with the Terms of Reference of the different bodies engaged in the discussion and drafting of the policy, see Annex. It was approved by IUCN Council in Decision C108/2, and then revised in response to feedback received from IUCN Members, with this revised version approved by IUCN Council in Decision C109/8. With C109/8, the document is now considered closed, to allow the bodies in question to proceed with their mandated work, to submit a draft IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to nature conservation to IUCN Council, to transmit this through a motion to the next meeting of the IUCN World Conservation Congress for debate and potential adoption by the Members of IUCN.

**IUCN Council Programme and Policy Committee Res 123 Working Group**

The Programme and Policy Committee of the IUCN Council has established a Working Group to ensure delivery of the draft “IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to nature conservation”, for consideration for adoption by the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress, according to the mandate provided in [IUCN Resolution WCC 2020 Res 123](#). This working group will track the implementation of the process described in this document and make recommendations to the IUCN Council on the actions required. The Terms of Reference of this group are included in the Annex.

**Inclusive process**

A team of Trainers, supported by the Secretariat and with oversight from the IUCN Council, Programme and Policy Committee Res 123 Working Group will develop a briefing document, in order to explain to a broad range of IUCN Members and their respective memberships what synthetic biology is, and why its implications for nature conservation require an inclusive debate. This briefing should recall the process on the topics so far within the context of IUCN, and draw extensively from the IUCN report “[Genetic Frontiers in Conservation](#)”.

**Discussions among IUCN structures**

IUCN Council will invite IUCN National, Regional and Interregional Committees, Regional Conservation Fora, and Commissions to carry out inclusive discussions, including grassroots online discussions, among their constituencies on the development of an IUCN policy on synthetic biology, as per Annex I of IUCN Resolution WCC 2020 Res 123. These inclusive discussions should aim at engaging a diverse constituency across regions, gender, age and knowledge systems.

This inclusive process should include, where possible, identification of questions about areas in which there are significant uncertainties and unknowns, as well as, where possible, participatory and anticipatory technology assessment, including community-led foresight and participatory action research.

To facilitate this inclusive process, a team of Facilitators will produce a brief guidance document with recommendations about achieving inclusive and participatory engagement across the constituency, including grassroots online discussions, how to cover the topics mentioned in the Resolution, and a template to receive appropriate reporting of discussions



and summaries of the collected inputs. These reports will be inputs into the drafting and deliberation process of the IUCN policy.

### Citizens' Assembly

One of the elements in the inclusive discussion process will be the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly to ensure a voice for the "silent majority" of the IUCN Membership that is not necessarily yet familiar and has not typically been engaged in the topic of synthetic biology.

A minimum of 16 IUCN Member institutions will be randomly selected (using an algorithm for which the code is publicly available), using a stratification across

- a) the Union's eight statutory regions, to ensure balanced geographic participation,
- b) IUCN's two voting houses: governments (including States, Government Agencies, and Sub-National Governments), and civil society organisations (including Indigenous Peoples' Organisations, National Non-Governmental Organisations, and International National Non-Governmental Organisations), ensuring half of the institutions are from governments and half from civil society organisations, and
- c) female and male participants.

The randomly selected Member institutions will be asked to put forward two different individual nominees to serve in the Citizens' Assembly, with consideration for contributing to the overall diversity of the group, especially considering gender, youth and ethnicity. One individual per organisation will be selected by the IUCN Council Programme and Policy Res 123 Working Group, to maximize diversity in the overall group. Fluency in either English or French or Spanish, the three official languages of IUCN, is required; whispering translations will be provided by the IUCN Secretariat to assist any citizens' assembly members requiring this.

The Citizens' Assembly will be first convened to participate in a training, responsive to needs expressed by members of the Citizens' Assembly, so that participants share a common understanding on the topic of synthetic biology and its interactions with and implications for nature conservation, as well as on the process to develop an IUCN policy. Training materials will also be made available across the IUCN constituency, to support the inclusive process overall.

A second convening of the Citizens' Assembly will be held to deliberate and produce a summary and recommendations to be taken into consideration by the Policy Development Working Group in the drafting of the IUCN policy. Further convening may be undertaken in-person or electronically as needed.

### Trainers and Facilitators

The Trainers and Facilitators of the Citizens' Assembly would be selected from among respected scientific institutions (e.g. national academies of natural and social science), through the IUCN procurement process, to ensure transparency, as well as minimising any actual or perceived conflicts of interest over the topic.

### **Appointment of the Policy Development Working Group**

The Policy Development Working Group will be in charge of drafting the "IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to nature conservation", its terms of reference are included in the Annex.



IUCN Council will send out a call for nominations to all IUCN Members and Commission members, with sufficient information about the process and terms of reference for this group. The call for nominations will be open for at least one month. The call for nominations will request brief information on the nominees, specifically contact information, brief biography, expertise on the topic, region of origin, gender, age, ethnicity, as well as their CV, statement of interest and confirmation of willingness to serve in a personal capacity, commitment to the time dedication required, willingness to engage in a respectful and inclusive way to the different perspectives on the topic and declaration of any potential conflicts of interest. Fluency in either English or French or Spanish, the three official languages of IUCN, is required; whispering translations will be provided by the IUCN Secretariat to assist any working group members requiring this.

The call for nominations will also request that nominees state if they would be willing to be considered for the position of Chair or Co-Chair of the Working Group, including the terms of reference for this/these position(s).

The IUCN President will appoint a preliminary list of sixteen participants for the Working Group (using criteria in the Resolution), including a Chair or Co-Chairs, and send out to IUCN Members the list of names and brief biographies. IUCN Members will have one month to send feedback to the IUCN President about its overall composition.

The IUCN President will appoint and announce the final list of participants of the Working Group and its Chair or Co-Chairs no more than two months after the deadline to receive feedback from IUCN Members.

### **Drafting and review of the policy**

The drafting of the policy will be led by the Policy Development Working Group, taking into account the inputs from the inclusive discussion process, especially the reports from the discussions carried out by the different IUCN structures, and the deliberations and recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly, as well as the guiding criteria listed in the Resolution, and the IUCN report Genetic Frontiers in Conservation: Assessment of Synthetic Biology and Biodiversity Conservation, as well as on other relevant sources of information. A call for information will be disseminated across current IUCN Members and Commission members to facilitate identification of such other relevant sources of information.

The drafting and review process to be followed is described in IUCN Resolution WCC 2020 Res 123. The Policy Development Working Group will meet in person three times, to prepare the first, second and third drafts of the policy, as well as will also work online via email and virtual meetings. In person meetings will have the support of the professional Facilitators hired and mentioned above.

The first and second drafts will be open to receive comments by IUCN Members during at least one month each. The third draft of the IUCN policy on synthetic biology will be submitted to the IUCN Council, which will transmit it, through a Council-sponsored motion, to the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress for debate and potential adoption by IUCN Members.

### **Conflict resolution**

If unconstructive conflicts should arise among participants of this process that halt progress in the inclusive discussions and drafting of the policy, IUCN Council will mediate to seek a resolution, having the capacity to remove and replace the parties involved if necessary.



### **Resources required to implement this process**

The implementation of IUCN Resolution WCC 2020 Res 123 following the process described in this document is conditioned by the availability of resources to cover costs such as travel, contracts for the Facilitators and Trainers, honoraria of participants of the Citizens' Assembly, Secretariat staff time dedication, document production and communication, among others. IUCN Secretariat is commissioned to fundraise to cover these costs from philanthropic organisations and governments minimising any actual or perceived conflicts of interest over the topic.