

# **The Global Youth Biodiversity Network Statute**

- *GYBN Framework and Structure of Work* -



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## **I. Vision, Mission, and Objectives**

Biodiversity is life; it is crucial to the balance of ecosystems and the survival of all species. In spite of this, it continues to be lost at an unprecedented rate. This loss is one of the greatest challenges for mankind in the 21st century and needs to be addressed on all levels. We must overcome differences, cross borders and join forces to halt the loss of biodiversity – now!

### Vision

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) is a unique network of individuals under thirty and youth organizations from around the world whose common goal is to prevent and stop the loss of biodiversity. The network is the international coordination platform for youth participation in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is committed to bringing the opinions and positions of young people into the negotiations so that they are heard and taken into consideration. GYBN especially aims to facilitate collaboration towards a unified voice between youth coming from diverse academic and professional backgrounds and policy-makers. GYBN seeks to inspire global youth and future leaders to work towards promoting the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for a healthy environment and society.

### Mission

Our mission is to raise global awareness among young people of the values of biodiversity and connect individuals and youth organizations in order to build a global coalition to halt the loss of biodiversity.

The objectives of GYBN are to:

- Provide members with a global platform for exchanging ideas in order to connect, contribute and collaborate for positive impact;
- Facilitate collaboration and dialogue among youth with different academic and professional backgrounds;
- Provide members with up-to-date resources and information concerning biodiversity;
- Facilitate common action plans for youth advocacy;
- Coordinate youth participation in the CBD process;
- Support members in implementing CBD decisions through their local activities and engaging in grass-root/bottom-up initiatives.
- Build capacity to enable youth to influence and transform biodiversity related policies on both the national and international level.

## **II. Background**

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international legally binding treaty with three main goals: Conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity); sustainable use of its components; and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources. Its objective is to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It represents

a dramatic step forward in the conservation of biological diversity and has presented growing opportunities for youth involvement.

### **III. Youth participation at the CBD**

The CBD encourages the participation of civil society, including official Major Groups such as the Children and Youth, in its processes. In the years leading up to tenth Conference of the Parties of the CBD (COP10) young people from around the world who were passionate about biodiversity issues felt the need to create an organized network in order to ensure active participation and involvement in the CBD. At COP10 youth officially presented the GYBN concept and gained the support of the Secretariat. An interim Steering Committee was formed with the aim of establishing a relationship with the Secretariat and mobilizing their peers. This committee focused on using online means to connect youth, and organized the GYBN Kick-Off Conference held in Berlin, Germany in 2012.

### **IV. Structure of GYBN**

The GYBN is structured as follow:

1. **The Steering Committee:** The Committee is the main coordinating body of the Network and consists of ten (10) elected members coming from each of the following world regions: Africa, Asia and Middle East, America, Europe, Pacific and Caribbean.
2. **The Focal Points:** There are two elected members of the network (non-members of the Steering Committee) serving as communication channel (contact persons) between the network and external bodies (in particular, but not limited to, the CBD Secretariat).
3. **The Members:** Individuals and youth-focused organizations committed to biodiversity can become members of the network upon completion of registration.
4. **The Working Groups:** The GYBN has several Working Groups comprised of members focused on addressing specific objectives of the network and current biodiversity issues the network is working on.
5. **The Group of External Advisors:** An established group of external advisors to the network consisting of former members of the GYBN and/or experts on biodiversity or youth focused issues.

### **V. Membership**

The GYBN has two types of membership: individual membership (open to any person under 30 years of age) and group membership (open to any youth-led or youth-focused organizations). Both forms of members should be committed to the GYBN vision. By becoming members, they agree to accept the member rights and obligations.

## **VI. Rights and Obligations of Members**

Members of the network (individuals and organizations) have the right to:

- Volunteer their time, skills, knowledge and/or resources to fulfill a specific task with the network;
- Contribute equally and without discrimination to the GYBN vision;
- Participate in all activities, campaigns, meetings and workshops organized by the GYBN;
- Participate in all decision-making processes;
- Participate in all elections organized within the GYBN;
- Nominate themselves during open nomination processes;
- Become a member of the Steering Committee or a Focal Point, if eligible and elected;
- Propose and participate in any Working Group;
- Apply for available funding or specific support from the network if appropriate;
- Share and propose information, opportunity, ideas and initiatives for the network;
- Receive information and updates regarding the decisions and activities of the network;
- Request feedback, information, or clarification and/or raise specific issues, concerns, or suggestions regarding the GYBN;

Members of the Network (individuals and organizations) must:

- Commit to the network's Code of Conduct and act in accordance with its principles and rules;
- Take part in and contribute to the objectives and activities of the network, in accordance with their interests and capacity;
- Respect and apply the network's processes and procedures;
- Respect GYBN decision-making processes and all democratic decisions made;
- Not request payment for their contribution and involvement in activities and work under GYBN;
- Not speak on behalf of the Network if they have not been mandated to do so;
- Not engage at any time the name and/or the members of the Network in any activity or action that could have a negative impact on the credibility and work of the GYBN;
- Respect other members and enable a trustee relationship when interacting with others;
- Not discriminate, harass, or use inappropriate language when interacting with others;
- Consult with the Steering Committee and/or the Focal Points prior to engaging the Network in any activity or action that implicates the GYBN and its members.

## **VII. Mandate and Election of the Steering Committee**

The GYBN Steering Committee operates with transparent practices as the coordinating body of the network to support members and ensure the mission and objectives are achieved.

## Mandate

The GYBN Steering Committee mandate is to:

- Maintain a democratic, inclusive and participatory spirit in working with the network;
- Ensure network compliance with the GYBN mandate and code of conduct;
- Support and oversee the work of the Focal Points, and if needed, to specifically support Focal Points in their interactions with the CBD Secretariat;
- Seek approval and/or consensus from members before making any major decisions;
- Facilitate the collaboration between the Group of External Advisors and the network;
- Be able to join a one-month online training session at the beginning of their term;
- Facilitate the organization of all nomination and election processes within the network;
- Train newly elected committee members at the end of their term;
- Operate strategically and efficiently;
- Meet online at least once every month to coordinate network's activities and action plans;
- Ensure that open and effective methods of communication are maintained;
- Ensure the virtual participation of members in network activities and meetings when possible;
- Coordinate and moderate the GYBN general mailing list and the working groups mailing lists;
- Identify opportunities and partnerships for training and capacity-building for the network;
- Facilitate fundraising efforts, and make funding decisions in a transparent, accountable, and effective way;
- Support the network in organizing a biannual Global Youth Biodiversity Summit (GYBS)
- Ensure that the network develops an Annual Plan of Action and implements it as successfully as possible;
- Ensure that an annual evaluation of the network takes place, and is submitted to members for review and feedback;
- Facilitate the election of the Focal Points through a transparent review and shortlisting of nominees;
- Facilitate the review process of the Focal Point mandate by the members;
- Encourage celebration of network achievements and accomplishments.

## Election Process

The Steering Committee has between eight (8) and fifteen (15) members. The members are elected for a two (2) year mandate by the network members during an election facilitated by the current Steering Committee.

The election process takes place online, begins two weeks after the biannual Conference of the Parties at the CBD, and will be finalized by the Steering Committee within four weeks (six weeks after the COP). An open call for self-nominations is sent out across all communication channels. Members cannot nominate themselves for both the Steering Committee and the Focal Point positions. Following the nomination deadline, a voting process takes place online. After election of the Steering Committee, their

mandate is distributed for review by the network, and necessary amendments, if any, are discussed and addressed.

The newly elected candidates start their role after one month of online training by the outgoing Steering Committee. They also receive necessary documentation, internet tools and other useful resources for their work.

All members of the network can apply to join the Committee, including former committee members and former Focal Points. North – South representation is ensured during the election, while gender balance and linguistic diversity are strongly recommended.

If it comes to the Steering Committee's attention that one of its members is not adequately fulfilling his/her role or is acting in violation to the Code of Conduct, the Committee must directly address the issue with the member concerned and then, if necessary, take appropriate action through consultation with the membership.

## **VIII. Mandate and Election of the Focal Points**

The Focal Points are the communication channel (contact persons) which liaise between GYBN and any other body interested in working with the Network and supporting its mission

### Mandate

The Focal Points mandate is to:

- Promote the UN Guide of Participation to members who are attending CBD meetings;
- Facilitate the engagement of members of the network in events, meetings, activities and negotiations under the CBD and other intergovernmental processes;
- Maintain effective communication channels between the CBD Secretariat or other institutions; and the members, disseminating relevant information when appropriate
- Attend the COP taking place during the given term and actively seek adequate support with the assistance of the Steering Committee as necessary;
- Attend, to the best of their ability, CBD intercessional meetings;
- Identify interim Focal Point(s) to attend CBD intercessional meetings if they are not able to, and ensure these interim focal points are properly prepared for these meetings;
- Liaise with the CBD Secretariat at CBD negotiation sessions on a daily basis if necessary;
- Make emails from the CBD Secretariat or other institutions accessible to youth by translating the information into youth friendly language;
- Direct specific matters to the appropriate Working Groups if applicable;
- Encourage that the network meets deadlines in responding to requests for input and participation, from the CBD Secretariat or other institutions;
- Avoid rapid decisions and tasks that do not take into account the input necessary for transparency and effective participation from the network;
- Maintain a democratic, inclusive and participatory spirit in working with the network;
- Collaborate closely with the Steering Committee and working groups;

- Maintain transparency by regularly updating and informing the network on their work;
- Establish a trusting relationship between themselves and all members of the network, as well as with other bodies working or interested in working with GYBN.

### Election Process

The Focal Points are elected for a two (2) year mandate by the network members during an election facilitated by the current Steering Committee and Focal Points.

The election process takes place online, begins two weeks after the biannual Conference of the Parties at the CBD, and will be finalized by the Steering Committee within four weeks (six weeks after the COP). An open call for self-nominations is sent out across all communication channels. Members cannot nominate themselves for both the Focal Point and Steering Committee positions. Following the nomination deadline, a voting process takes place online. After election of the Focal Points, their mandate is distributed for review by the network, and necessary amendments, if any, are discussed and addressed.

The newly elected candidates start their role after one month of online training by the outgoing Focal Points. They also receive necessary documentation, internet tools and other useful resources for their work.

All members of the network can apply to be a Focal Point, including former committee members, but current Focal Points cannot apply for a second term. North – South representation is ensured during the election, while gender balance is highly recommended. In order to ensure the aforementioned equal representation of the Global North and Global South, outreach measures will be conducted if necessary. If it comes to the Steering Committee's attention that a Focal Point is not adequately fulfilling his/her role or is acting in violation to the Code of Conduct, the Committee must directly address the issue with the Focal Point and then, if necessary, take appropriate action through consultation with the membership.

## **IX. Mandate of the Working Groups**

The Working Groups are open to all members of the Network with no limit on number of members. Each group designates two Facilitators, with consideration of regional and gender balance. The Facilitators work closely with the Steering Committee and the Focal Points.

The groups are responsible for implementing the network's mission and objectives. Working Groups may focus on scientific, policy-based, technical or GYBN mission-based matters. The members of each working group have the responsibility to organize themselves in order to fulfill their tasks. They also must inform the Steering Committee and members about their activities and should encourage the involvement of new members. In the case that a newsletter, report or policy paper is to be prepared the facilitators of each Working Group are responsible for disseminating relevant and necessary information to the drafting group. All relevant documents produced by the working groups should be archived.

## **X. Mandate of the External Advisors**

The Group of External Advisors consists of former members of GYBN and/or experts on biodiversity or youth focused issues. They should agree with their appointment and willing to support GYBN with their expertise and knowledge. GYBN strives for North-South and gender balance in those it seeks advice from.

The External Advisors' mandate is to support GYBN in achieving its mission and objectives by providing the Steering Committee, the Focal Points, the members and the Working Groups with appropriate advice and technical support to their work. The external advisors may hold their positions for an unlimited length of time, but may be removed from their position by request or steering committee suggestion. External advisors may be publically recognized for their contribution with their permission, and this recognition will be discussed with each advisor by the steering committee. GYBN will share any feedback received on their involvement with the Network so that they can act accordingly.

Assistance provided by the external advisors may include but is not limited to:

- Drafting of the Annual Plan of Action
- Consultation with working groups
- Provision of any type of knowledge or resources
- Participation in meetings

## **XI. Collaboration with the CBD Secretariat**

Collaboration between GYBN and the CBD Secretariat is facilitated by the two elected Focal Points who are appointed to liaise with the Secretariat on behalf of the network. The rationale behind this measure is to guarantee a permanent and effective communication channel, ensuring that members of GYBN speak with one voice. If mandated by the Focal Points, members of the network could liaise directly with the Secretariat.

GYBN collaborates with the Secretariat, in recognition of the mutual goal of effective youth participation in the CBD-process. As an outcome of this relationship, GYBN will deliver statements and interventions during COPs and other relevant meetings.

## **XII. Decision-making procedures**

### Representation during official meetings

Priority will be given to GYBN representatives with particular expertise in the topic being discussed at the meeting or workshop. Representatives are responsible for arranging the necessary resources to prepare and participate in the meeting and for reporting back to the network.



### Interventions and Statements

When GYBN has an opportunity to deliver an intervention or statement at CBD meetings (COP or others) a process will be initiated which will maintain a transparent and inclusive procedure for developing and delivering statements:

- 1) The members will be informed as soon as possible by the Focal Points.
- 2) The Focal Points will then inform the Steering Committee, who will help to direct the opportunity to the relevant working groups, in order to facilitate the writing of a statement and the nomination of the speaker.
- 3) The Working Group(s) will invite members to join the writing process.
- 4) The produced drafts will be circulated within the network for feedback, input and final approval.
- 5) In the writing of a policy statement, if there is no consensus, those who would reject a proposal must provide an explanation and amendment.
- 6) The Steering Committee will then facilitate the nomination of a speaker by sending out a call for self-nominations. GYBN representatives at the meeting will then make a final decision on the speakers, through a democratic and transparent voting process. It is preferable, but not necessary, that the nominees are part of the drafting process and/or are knowledgeable about the topics to be addressed. If the statement is cancelled, the network must be informed so that a decision can be made regarding the next steps.
- 7) A member who is selected to deliver a statement must deliver only the decided-upon statement, without alterations. Additionally, a speaker representing GYBN must present themselves in a respectful and professional manner, and must follow the CBD Secretariat guidelines for delivering a statement.

### Activities and Actions during Meetings

In case of a decision to be made in organizing an activity or action during CBD meetings (COP or others) on behalf of the network, members must ensure the proposal adheres to the code of conduct. The proposal will be assessed by the steering committee for feasibility and an email will be circulated to the network for feedback and input. GYBN representatives at the meeting will approve or disapprove the action.

### Other Activities and Actions

Individuals and organizations that wish to organize activities or actions which use the GYBN logo or association outside of the CBD process must first consult with the Steering Committee and network for approval.

### **XIII. Means of communication**

GYBN uses a variety of means of communication to maintain contact with members.

Outside of the negotiation sessions, the communication is mainly based on internet tools:

- There is a general mailing list open to all youth interested in joining and contributing to its work, and there are also specific mailing lists for the Steering Committee and for each working group.
- The creation of new mailing lists is subject to Steering Committee approval and will be both posted online and sent over the general mailing list.
- The network will also produce a newsletter for presenting activities, achievements and action plans. The newsletter is disseminated online and sent to the CBD Secretariat.

During CBD negotiation sessions communication consists of organizing daily meetings. These meetings will ensure that all participating youth are informed, involved and updated about the process. To this effect, efforts will be taken to make information accessible in as many languages as possible.

### **XIV. Fundraising**

The network works to increase financial resources by approaching potential sponsors, funding institutions and philanthropists who may be willing to support network activities. The network also develops an annual fundraising plan.

### **XV. Capacity building**

GYBN recognizes the need to facilitate capacity building for members in order to maximize the positive role of youth in biodiversity issues and supports members in sharing knowledge and expertise. This capacity building will be especially important in ensuring effective youth participation in the CBD process. Both online tools and physical training sessions can be utilized in capacity building. Additionally, other institutions or organizations can support GYBN in capacity building efforts.

### **XVI. Global Youth Biodiversity Summit (GYBS)**

In accordance with our mission, GYBN aims to empower youth to strengthen their voice in addressing biodiversity issues. As a way of achieving this, GYBN aims to organize a Global Youth Biodiversity Summit which will be held prior to the CBD COP and in collaboration, if possible, with the CBD Alliance's Capacity Building and Strategy Session.

GYBS will provide youth participants with the knowledge, skills, information and relationships necessary to both work together towards promoting the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and participate successfully at the CBD COP.

## **XVII. External partnerships**

As an umbrella network for youth organization and individuals working on biodiversity issues, GYBN welcomes cooperation with external partners which support our mission. Potential partnerships will be facilitated by the Steering Committee and subject to approval by members. The Focal Points will serve as liaisons with these external partners.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: History of Global Youth Biodiversity Network**

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (UNCED, known as the *Rio Earth Summit*) and entered into force in 1993. At the same conference, Agenda 21, an agenda for environment and development in the 21st Century, was also adopted. It is a Programme of Action for Sustainable Development which recognizes each nation's right to pursue social and economic progress and assigned to States the responsibility of adopting a model of sustainable development.

Civil society participation in the sustainable development process is strongly supported by 'Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration', which states that "environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level." This involvement is defined in "Agenda 21," which recognizes nine Major Groups as the main stakeholders to be engaged in sustainable development. Those groups are Children and Youth; Women; Indigenous People; Farmers; Non-Governmental Organizations; Trade Unions; Businesses and Industries; Local Governments; Science and Technological Organizations, and Research Organizations.

The CBD therefore also encourages youth participation in its processes. In order to better structure and organize their participation at this process, young people who participated at the "Biodiversity on the Edge" International Youth Conference held in May 2008 in Bonn, Germany prior to the CBD COP9, felt the need to establish a global youth network for biodiversity. This idea was also expressed at various other international youth conferences and CBD negotiation sessions. That idea was also mentioned at the 2nd International Youth Symposium on Biodiversity, which convened in Ottawa, Canada, in July 2009, where the Global Youth Accord on Biodiversity was adopted. Also, in August 2009, the Asian Youth Conference on Biodiversity was held and among others led to the inception of an Asian Youth Network on Biodiversity.

Later, in summer 2010, the same idea was again discussed at the European Youth Perspective Conference on Biodiversity (YouPEC 2010), held in July in Geel, Belgium. It was also on the agenda of the Aichi Nagoya International Youth Conference on Biodiversity, held in August 2010, in Japan. At that conference, a small group of participants formed a working group and developed a first rough concept for a Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN). Following intensive discussion among youth

participants from 31 countries during the two-week negotiations in Nagoya, the decision to start preparatory measures for the establishment of GYBN was finally taken at the end of COP10. To coordinate this process, and to liaise with the CBD Secretariat, an interim Steering Committee consisting of 16 members from 13 countries was formed shortly after COP10. With the explicit support of the CBD Executive Secretary and in close coordination with the CBD Secretariat NGO Focal Points Neil Pratt and Chantal Robichaud, the interim Steering Committee has worked together since November 2010 to make preparations for the creation of a democratic and globally representative youth network. In August 2012, 40 youth representatives from 26 countries met in Berlin, Germany, at the global kick-off conference for the foundation of the GYBN. There, participants continued work on and adopted an initial version of the Berlin Declaration, which was later finalized and adopted through an inclusive online process by the network.

## **Appendix 2: Code of Conduct**

As members of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), we recognize our unity in diversity. We accept all kind of differences related to religions, races, origins, genders, behaviors and opinions. We understand the importance of having an all-inclusive, democratic and trustee network for all our members. Therefore:

- We are committed to raise awareness among young people of the values of biodiversity and connect individuals and youth organizations in order to build a global coalition to halt the loss of biodiversity.
- We voluntarily engage ourselves in activities towards building a unique network of individuals and youth organizations from around the world whose common goal is to live in harmony with nature.
- We highly respect the diversity of cultural backgrounds and political opinions as the base of our mandate. We also recognize the importance of regional and gender balance for the success of our network.
- We base our work on respect and solidarity. We foster open dialogue and mutual understanding among our members and with other actors involved in biodiversity conservation.
- We rely on democratic participation in an equal, fair, transparent and inclusive process for our network. We are open to constructive critique and advice, recognizing our need to keep learning and improving.
- We endorse the need for diverse means of participation based on a non-violent approach for the successful achievement of our common goal.
- We recognize our responsibility as the Major Group for Children and Youth, engage in the CBD process and work in close collaboration with others.
- We duly acknowledge and fully commit to the *Guide of Participation* in the CBD process.

### **Annex 3: Eligibility criteria for Elected Positions**

The GYBN Steering Committee operates with transparent practices as the coordinating body of the network to support members and ensure the mission and objectives are achieved.

Members of the GYBN Steering Committee should:

- Be an active member of the network
- Be between 18 and 28 (at the time of their election)
- Be fluent in English; other languages are an asset.
- Be supported by their organization of origin
- Be available and willing to commit to a two year mandate
- Be knowledgeable about the CBD process; experience at a previous COP or other CBD-related meetings is an asset
- Have reliable access to internet and be able to quickly communicate with the network
- Be able to promote the Code of Conduct of the Network
- Be trustworthy and able to build a trusting relationship with members of the network
- Be able to work with a diverse and multicultural group of people and have a good team spirit
- Be able to join a one-month online training session at the beginning of their term

GYBN Focal Points should:

- Be an active member of the network; members of the Steering Committee are also eligible for election: If elected as Focal Points, they resign from their position in the Committee
- Be between 18 and 28 (at the time of their election)
- Be fluent in English, other languages are an asset
- Be supported by their organization of origin
- Be available and willing to commit to a two year mandate
- Have excellent communications skills
- Be knowledgeable about the CBD process; experience at a previous COP or other CBD-related meetings is an asset
- Have reliable access to internet and be able to efficiently communicate
- Promote the Code of Conduct of the network
- Be trustworthy and able to build a trusting relationship with members of the network as well as with other bodies and the CBD Secretariat
- Be able to work with a diverse and multicultural group of people and have a good team spirit
- Be able to join a one-month online training session at the beginning of their term.

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*Adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2012.*