

## SB8j 1 Highlights:

### Monday, 27 October 2025

The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) (SB8j) opened on Monday, in Panama City, Panama.

Delegates discussed resource mobilization and addressed the *modus operandi* of the SB8j. They further focused on proposed elements for the guidelines related to Tasks 1.1 (strengthen legal and policy implementation for Targets 2 (restore 30% of all degraded ecosystems) and 3 (conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)) and 1.2 (guidelines on inclusion of traditional lands and resource use in spatial planning processes and environmental impact assessments) of the programme of work (PoW) on Article 8(j).

#### Opening

The meeting opened with a traditional Guna dance as a tribute to knowledge, culture, and the strength of grandmothers. “Our brothers and sisters from around the world, the great creators of knowledge and strength are guiding us in our work together so we can move forward in defending our heritage,” underlined Briseida Iglesias López de Guerrero in opening remarks at the inaugural meeting of SB8j.

Stressing that the establishment of SB8j is an “unprecedented step toward greater environmental democracy within the UN, SB8j Co-Chair Irene Vélez Torres, Colombia, highlighted as a meeting priority to finalize the draft *modus operandi* of SB8j for adoption at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17).

“We have reached a watershed moment in the journey of the Convention,” said Astrid Schomaker, CBD Executive Secretary, emphasizing that IPLCs are partners in conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Juan Carlos Navarro, Minister of Environment, Panama, acknowledged the Guna, Embera, Waunan, Gnobe, Bri bri, Naso Tier-Di, and Bugle Indigenous Peoples of Panama, and highlighted “Mua Palaa,” meaning Ocean Grandmother in the Guna language, a term emphasizing the interconnectedness of life. He further emphasized that SB8j must ensure that its commitments translate to real policies, accessible funding, and visible results on the ground.

#### Organizational Matters

**Adoption of agenda and organization of work:** Delegates adopted the provisional agenda ([CBD/SB8J/1/1/Rev.1](#)) and the annotated provisional agenda ([CBD/SB8J/1/1/Add.1](#)).

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed that representatives of IPLCs’ organizations may participate only as “Friends of the Bureau,” without becoming Bureau members or having decision-making powers.

**Election of officers:** Gunn-Britt Retter (Arctic region) was designated to serve as Indigenous Co-Chair, together with the representative of the COP 16 presidency, Irene Vélez Torres, Colombia.

In addition to Co-Chair Retter, six IPLC representatives were designated as “Friends of the Bureau,” representing the UN

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) sociocultural regions. Lucy Mulenkei (Africa); Jennifer Tauli Corpuz (Asia); Ramiro Batzin (Central and South America and the Caribbean); Aleksei Tsykarev (Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia); Rochelle Diver (North America); and Christine Teresa Grant (the Pacific). Jonas Komi Anthé (Togo) was elected rapporteur.

#### In-depth Dialogue on Resource Mobilization

Co-Chair Retter introduced the document ([CBD/SB8J/1/2](#)) for the in-depth dialogue on “strategies for mobilizing resources to ensure the availability of and access to financial resources and funding, as well as other means of implementation, including capacity- building, development and technical support for IPLCs, including women and youth, to support the full implementation of the GBF”.

Jurgis Sapijanskas, Global Environment Facility, highlighted that self-determination, project co-design, and community-driven priorities matter as much as funding levels. Terence Hay-Ediet, UN Development Programme, recognized the complexity and unevenness of global finance.

Dario Mejía, Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America, stressed the need for direct funding, traceability, and trust. Anita Tzec, Podong – International Union for Conservation of Nature, emphasized co-design, rights protection, local priority-setting, and two-way capacity building. Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine, drawing from the Arramât Project, recommended ensuring direct funding and decision-making power, and strengthening ethical co-learning.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) called for: creating dedicated Indigenous-managed funding opportunities within multilateral funds; and analyzing cultural impacts of financing programmes for IPLCs.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for the AFRICAN GROUP, called to: assess the level of progress made in mobilizing USD 20 billion per year until 2025; ensure that IPLCs have the technical and financial capacity to access funding opportunities; and ensure that the GBF Fund delivers 20% of funding to IPLCs.

Denmark, for the EU, called upon Parties and others to improve access to, and increase financial resources from, all sources, and to prioritize sustained capacity building.

COLOMBIA, PANAMA, TANZANIA, and others supported the creation of direct funding access mechanisms. SOUTH AFRICA and HAITI called for simplified funding processes.

NEW ZEALAND supported rights-based, locally-led funding approaches aligned with Indigenous governance systems and priorities. MALAYSIA stressed that any human-rights based approach must respect national contexts. CHINA, MALAYSIA, JORDAN, INDONESIA, INDIA, BRAZIL, and MALAWI suggested nationally tailored approaches to direct access funding mechanisms for IPLCs, in accordance with national contexts. JORDAN urged flexibility to determine nationally appropriate funding recipients. INDONESIA stressed that States hold primary responsibility for biodiversity stewardship within their territories. BRAZIL urged a role for IPLCs in governing funds at all levels.

### **Modus Operandi of the SB8j**

Daniela Durán González, Colombia, co-chaired the session on behalf of Co-Chair Irene Vélez Torres, Colombia. The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents ([CBD/SB8J/1/3](#) and [INF/3](#)).

The IIFB, supported by CANADA, NIGERIA, NEW ZEALAND, PANAMA, NORWAY, and others, highlighted: applying *mutatis mutandis* the practices of the Working Group on Article 8j (WG8j); simplicity and avoiding overly prescriptive language; and the self-selection processes for IPLCs.

South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, Denmark, for the EU, BRAZIL, CHINA, INDIA, PANAMA, JORDAN, BANGLADESH, JAPAN, and others stressed that the SB8j should be complementary to other subsidiary bodies and avoid duplication, respecting their mandates. BRAZIL, CHINA, and others highlighted cost-efficiency.

The AFRICAN GROUP, the EU, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, BRAZIL, the DRC, INDIA, JORDAN, and others noted that the *modus operandi* should maintain a Party-led process. NORWAY highlighted that the self-determination of IPLCs must be ensured. PANAMA said that SB8j must ensure the protection of IPLCs' rights.

On selection of co-chairs and Bureau members, COLOMBIA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NORWAY, CHINA, INDIA, and others supported having two co-chairs, including an IPLC one, as per the modalities of the WG8j. CHINA stressed that co-chairs should have relevant competence and experience. The AFRICAN GROUP suggested removing the requirement for prior experience in CBD processes.

The AFRICAN GROUP and MALAYSIA noted that invitations for participation of Indigenous representatives as Friends of the Bureau should be done in consultation with relevant Parties. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted that the selection of IPLC representatives should be based on the five UN regions rather than the seven sociocultural regions. The DRC urged not to discriminate between Indigenous Peoples and local communities. JORDAN recalled that not all countries have groups identified as Indigenous Peoples.

The EU and CANADA supported developing long-lasting provisions. The DRC emphasized that SB8j is not bound by the practices and procedures established by the Working Group.

COLOMBIA noted that administrative efficiency should not be a criterion to limit IPLCs' voices. MALAYSIA, CANADA, CHINA, and others urged their participation in SB8j meetings be fostered through the Special Voluntary Trust Fund for Facilitating the Participation of IPLCs.

COLOMBIA highlighted traditional knowledge and the role of Afrodescendants. ARMENIA called for integrating traditional knowledge into the global report on collective progress in GBF implementation. BANGLADESH and BURUNDI supported the integration of traditional knowledge in national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

JORDAN stressed the need to operationalize national focal points for traditional knowledge. FIJI encouraged Parties to consider establishing technical expert groups on IPLC-related matters.

The CBD WOMEN'S CAUCUS emphasized that SB8j must embed gender expertise across all processes. The INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S NETWORK ON BIODIVERSITY FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (RMIB-LAC) suggested coordinating the SB8j work with the UN Interagency Group on Indigenous Peoples. IUCN suggested collaborating with Indigenous Peoples' platforms in other multilateral environmental agreements, UN bodies, and other fora.

The Co-Chair established a contact group to initiate textual negotiations on the basis of the annex in document CBD/SB8J/1/3.

### **Proposed Elements for the Guidelines Related to Tasks 1.1 and 1.2 of the PoW on Article 8(j)**

The Secretariat introduced the documents [CBD/SB8j/1/4](#) and [INF/5](#). Delegates opened deliberations addressing guidelines for Tasks 1.1 and 1.2.

The IIFB emphasized the need to: develop implementation, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms that recognize Indigenous and traditional territories' (ITTs) direct role in conservation, restoration, and spatial planning; ensure the guidelines safeguard the rights of Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation and initial contact; and adhere to the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Zimbabwe, for the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized the guidelines must ensure respect for and preservation of IPLCs' rights and knowledges, with their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). The AFRICAN GROUP, CHINA, MALAYSIA, INDIA, SAUDI ARABIA, BRAZIL, and JAPAN supported the development of guidance, while underlining the need to implement them according to respective national legal systems, governance structures, circumstances, and contexts. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted practical guidelines that align with the GBF and avoid repetition. JAPAN emphasized that the guidelines are "voluntary."

CANADA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, UGANDA, and the DRC welcomed the guidelines for implementing Tasks 1.1 and 1.2, urging their adoption and utilization. MALAWI stressed that Parties, IPLCs, women, youth, civil society, and the private sector should take an active role in implementing the guidelines.

BRAZIL supported ITTs as a specific pathway of recognition under Target 3 of the GBF, while the EU and EGYPT stressed further discussions are required. GUATEMALA emphasized the need to advance recognition of ITTs.

AUSTRALIA noted the importance of recognizing that Indigenous knowledges, sciences, and practices continue to evolve. BRAZIL and COLOMBIA emphasized recognizing the collective rights of IPLCs and Afrodescendants. NEW ZEALAND stressed Indigenous-led mapping and planning tools, and, with the AFRICAN GROUP and BRAZIL, IPLCs' data sovereignty.

RMIB-LAC urged that implementation, monitoring, and reporting take a differentiated approach and place participation of Indigenous women and children "at the heart of all work to protect intergenerational knowledge and life."

Co-Chair Retter established a contact group for further deliberation.

### **Contact Group on the Modus Operandi of the SB8j**

In the evening, the "first-ever contact group under SB8j," took place, co-chaired by Lucy Mullenkei, IPLC representative, Africa region, and Pernilla Malmer, Sweden.

The group exchanged views on the annex containing the proposed *modus operandi* of the SB8j, engaging in textual negotiations paragraph by paragraph.

On the functions section, discussions addressed, among other things, ways to refer to the roles, functions, and mandates of the three CBD subsidiary bodies to avoid duplication and foster collaboration and complementarity among them; and SB8j functions such as to promote, support, and review the implementation of the work undertaken under the CBD, pertaining to Article 8(j) and to advise the COP. Discussions continued into the evening.

### **In the Corridors**

There was much anticipation and organization ahead of the first meeting of the subsidiary body, including preparatory meetings held by the IIFB during the weekend ahead of the official opening, convening over 150 IPLC representatives to carve out priorities. While several Parties praised the historic moment and indicated their support for ensuring the engagement of IPLCs, differences quickly emerged. Discussions on resource mobilization, tabled for the meeting's "in-depth dialogue," saw some delegates call for direct access to funds for IPLCs. Others, however, were hesitant, finding the discussions "premature," and yet others took the opportunity to emphasize States' primary responsibility for the stewardship of biodiversity within their territories. Thorny discussions on *modus operandi*, which will lay the foundation for the body's work, will have to navigate tensions between maintaining a Party-led process and demands for IPLCs' full and effective participation.