

## COPMOP2018 - PRRI Statement on Synthetic Biology

Thank you Chair,

I speak on behalf of the delegation of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative, which is an organisation of public sector scientists involved in modern biotechnology for the common good.

Chair, one of the reasons why since Agenda 21 in 1992 the world community has underlined the importance of biotechnology, because biological processes do not require unsustainable or non-renewable inputs and because it opens possibilities for previously extremely difficult or impossible improvements in health, food and fiber as well as conservation of biodiversity.

Synthetic Biology is not a particular technology, but rather an overall approach of making those biological processes more targeted and/or more efficient, based on design.

As with any new technology, we are well advised to work together to make sure that we maximally exploit the potential of this new approach to help us address the escalating challenges of malnutrition and environmental degradation that were presented yesterday in the opening session.

In a side event on 22 November we will discuss examples of how synthetic biology can contribute to finding such solutions.

Chair, since Agenda 21 it is also generally accepted that while maximising the benefits of new technologies, we should also ensure that systems are in place to minimise potential risks.

Given that all current and foreseeable applications of synthetic biology will involve LMOs at one or more steps, the conclusion is that the system of the Biosafety Protocol applies. The risk assessment outlined in Annex III of the Protocol is equally applicable to LMOs developed through Synthetic Biology.

In response to the various calls for additional procedures or restrictions for synthetic biology, we submit that duplicating biosafety systems does not serve safety, on the contrary. Moreover, duplicating regulatory systems will seriously hamper the potential of synthetic biology to help us address the escalating challenges of malnutrition and environmental degradation

Thank you Chair