

**Melina Sakiyama (Brazil)**

**Co-founder, Global Youth Biodiversity Network**



---

### Remarks

---

The beauty, the complexity and the intricate balance of the web of life have mesmerized me. Growing up and pursuing biodiversity as the object of my studies and my passion, I soon realized its very existence was increasingly being threatened by us. Being a kid, it was incomprehensible that we were the ones threatening our own life-supporting system. Why would we do that? This question followed me through my life, influenced me to pursue an academic career as a biologist, and I embarked in a journey to seek for answers, to understand and change this grim reality. I am extremely honoured and humbled by this recognition and have sincere gratitude for the AEON Environmental Foundation, the Midori Prize for Biodiversity judging committee, the CBD Secretariat and everyone who has believed and supported the work of the Global Youth

Biodiversity Network (GYBN) until now.

I am very confident that this recognition will empower many young people, especially young girls in developing countries, to pursue their dreams and aspirations and join collective action for biodiversity everywhere. I am also hopeful that it will inspire other institutions and organizations to recognize the leadership, energy and success that young people can bring to biodiversity actions in all levels. What started as a crazy aspiration - seeds of hope, shared by a like-minded group of young friends ten years ago, has bloomed into a vibrant movement for biodiversity.

Finally, I would like to share this honor and recognition with perhaps one of the brightest of all these stars, GYBN's co-founder, Christian Schwarzer, a true force of nature that has been moving heavens and earth to make this crazy aspiration, real. Today, beyond being the youth constituency to the CBD process, we are a global movement. Tomorrow, we will be shaping our culture and will hopefully be leading a just transition to live a future in peace, in equity and in harmony within nature. Join us in this journey!

---

### Achievement

---

Ms. Melina Sakiyama has always been interested in the fine balance between the planet and all its inhabitants. From an early age, she developed a passion about conserving this balance and committed to engage many people in this cause. At the University of Sao Paulo, Melina pursued a degree in Biology where she contributed to research on the role of biologists in environmental issues. Following she received a master's degree in Environmental Management at Kyoto University in Japan where she focused on biodiversity education, biodiversity valuation and ways to engage youth.

Inspired by her participation in CBD COP10 in 2010 and International Youth Conference on Biodiversity in Aichi 2010, she dedicated a great part of her life in the next ten years to build a global movement for young people to engage in biodiversity issues. Since 2014, Ms. Sakiyama has coordinated GYBN's "Youth Voices" - Youth Capacity Building Programme, which aims to empower young people and build their capacity to become biodiversity leaders and support the implementation of the CBD. Since the launch of Youth Voices, more than 340 youth from 120 countries could be trained and over 55 youth-led conservation initiatives have been supported. These youth-led initiatives helped to engage young people in the implementation of the CBD on the ground and gave young people a concrete role in the implementation of NBSAPs. Nine youth capacity-building workshops could be organized in almost all regions of the world. Furthermore, more than 200 scholarships for young people to be trained on Biodiversity issues and participate in CBD-meetings could be awarded. Ms. Sakiyama also helped young people to raise their voice in the negotiations under the CBD and oversaw the development of more than 100 official youth interventions that contributed directly to the negotiations.

Ms. Sakiyama has led the development of different publications and materials to facilitate engagement of youth and build their capacity in taking action for biodiversity, and she is the co-author of CBD in a Nutshell, GYBN's guidebook to the CBD-process, which has become an invaluable source for civil society and government delegates in the CBD alike. CBD in a Nutshell has been downloaded more than 14.000 times and has been translated into Japanese, Spanish, German and Chinese so far. Ms. Sakiyama and GYBN have been promoting youth participation in biodiversity activities and providing input for international decision-making. In particular, the Network has achieved positive results in building capacities and skills of younger generations and raising the status of youth in the field of biodiversity conservation and governance. Through the publication of CBD in a Nutshell, as well as other guidebooks and resources, she has facilitated engagement in the CBD process, and has empowered young people to become champions for biodiversity. Her efforts have contributed to develop GYBN in a vibrant global youth movement for biodiversity representing more than 1 million youth, 40 chapters around 150 countries.

It has great significance to honor their activities as a way to further inspire young people to commit and take action for biodiversity, as well as to showcase to the world what young people can bring to the world when they are given the right opportunities and empowered to take the lead.