



Press Release

Building a global partnership on Access and Benefit-sharing

Montreal, 1 April 2009 - More than 500 participants are set to negotiate the international regime on access and benefit-sharing (ABS) at the seventh meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing (WGABS 7), to be held in Paris from 2 to 8 April 2009. This meeting is the first of three mandated by ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Bonn in May 2008, to finalize the negotiation of the international regime.

At their Bonn meeting, the Parties to the Convention agreed on a roadmap to complete the elaboration and negotiation of the international regime before their next meeting, which will be held in October 2010 in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. The Parties also established three distinct groups of technical and legal experts on compliance; concepts, terms, working definitions and sectoral approaches; and, traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources. These expert groups will inform the negotiation process by providing legal and, as appropriate, technical advice

Specifically, at this meeting of the Working Group, delegates will address the objective and scope of the international regime, as well as the components of the regime dealing with access to genetic resources, benefit-sharing, and compliance.

An international regime can ensure that all countries obtain a fair and equitable share of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources originating from their territory by setting out a clear and transparent framework for access and benefit-sharing.

The sharing of benefits, through technology transfer, research results, training and profits can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development in biodiversity rich developing countries.

Access to genetic resources in exchange for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits can contribute to further research and development contributing to human well-being through the use of genetic resources in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, agriculture and many other sectors. Access to genetic resources is also essential to ensure a better understanding of the world wide web of life through taxonomic research.

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the sovereign rights of States over their natural resources in areas within their jurisdiction. Parties to the Convention therefore have the authority to determine physical access to genetic resources in areas within their jurisdiction. Parties also have the obligation to take appropriate measures with the aim of sharing the benefits derived from their use. This is one of the three fundamental objectives of the Convention.

Information for journalists

To assist Parties with the implementation of the access and benefit-sharing provisions of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, at its fifth meeting, in 2000, in Nairobi, established the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, with the mandate to develop guidelines and other approaches of implementation.

The Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization developed by the Working Group were adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2002. The purpose of the Guidelines is to assist Parties when establishing administrative, legislative or policy measures on access and benefit-sharing and relevant stakeholders when negotiating contractual arrangements for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.



At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, heads of State and Government called for the negotiation within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, bearing in mind the Bonn Guidelines, of an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Accordingly, in 2004, the Conference of the Parties mandated the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to elaborate and negotiate an “international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing” in order to effectively implement the relevant provisions of the Convention.

In 2006, at its eighth meeting held in Curitiba, Brazil, the Conference of the Parties urged the Working Group to complete the negotiation of the international regime as soon as possible and no later than 2010, and designated two Co-chairs to lead the negotiation process: Mr. Timothy Hodges from Canada and Mr. Fernando Casas from Colombia.

At its ninth meeting, in May 2008, in Bonn, Germany, by [decision IX/12](#), the Conference of the Parties agreed on a schedule of meetings to complete the elaboration and negotiation of the international regime on access and benefit-sharing before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in 2010, in Nagoya, Japan.

For more information, please visit www.cbd.int/abs .

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is the international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of its benefits. With 191 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries who have committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@cbd.int .
