



ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING (ABS)

ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES AND THE FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF BENEFITS ARISING FROM THEIR UTILIZATION

The “fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources” is one of the three overall objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) along with the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity. The CBD, in its article 15, sets out principles and obligations of Parties related to access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, on the basis of prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms.

The CBD establishes that a person or institution seeking access to genetic resources in a foreign country should seek the prior informed consent of the country in which the resource is located. Moreover, the person or institution must also negotiate and agree on the terms and conditions of access and use of this resource. This includes the sharing of benefits arising from the use of this resource with the provider as a prerequisite for access to the genetic resource and its use.

Conversely, countries, when acting as providers of genetic resources, should create conditions to facilitate access to their genetic resources for environmentally sound uses and not impose restrictions that run counter to the objectives of the CBD.

Genetic resources, whether from plant, animal or micro-organisms, are used for a variety of purposes ranging from basic research to the development of products. Users of genetic resources include research and academic institutions, and private companies operat-

ing in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, horticulture, cosmetics and biotechnology.

In some cases, traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources that comes from indigenous and local communities (ILCs) provides valuable information to researchers regarding the particular properties and value of these resources and their potential use for the development of, for example, new medicines or cosmetics. According to article 8j of the CBD: Parties shall respect, preserve and promote the knowledge, innovations and practices of ILCs relevant to biological diversity, with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge and encourage the equitable sharing of benefits arising from its use.

EXAMPLES OF USES:

- ▶ The development of compounds called Calanolides, derived from the latex of a tree (*Calophyllum* species) found in the Malaysian rainforest, as a potential treatment for HIV (type 1) and certain types of cancer.
- ▶ The use of indigenous plant resources for breeding programmes and cultivation, e.g. the so-called “Mona Lavender”, a hybrid of two *Plectranthus* species indigenous to South Africa, is now commercially available as an ornamental plant throughout Europe, the US and Japan.
- ▶ The use of therapeutic properties of a small perennial herb *Trichopus zeylanikus*, known as *Sathan Kalanja* or *Arogyappacha*, locally and traditionally consumed to reduce fatigue.

Benefits derived from the use of genetic resources may include the sharing of the results of research and development carried out on genetic resources, the transfer of technologies which make use of



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those resources, and participation in biotechnological research activities. Benefits may also be monetary when products based on genetic resources are commercialised.

EXAMPLES OF BENEFIT-SHARING:

- ▶ Research exchanges: a researcher from a provider country collaborates with research staff from the user country.
- ▶ Collaborative research: a researcher from a user country employs indigenous and local community research assistants from the provider country.
- ▶ Provision of equipment, improvement of infrastructure and sharing of technologies: the user of genetic resources sets up laboratories or a drug manufacturing facility in the provider country.
- ▶ Payment of royalties: royalties generated from the commercialization of a product based on genetic resources are shared between the provider and the user of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.
- ▶ Preferential access for the provider country to any medicine derived from genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge: preferential rates to purchase medicine.
- ▶ Joint ownership of intellectual property rights (IPRs): when the user and provider of genetic resources seek joint ownership of IPRs for patented products based on the genetic resource used.

MAIN ABS ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER THE CBD

THE BONN GUIDELINES

In 2002, the Bonn Guidelines on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization were adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD at its sixth meeting in The Hague. These voluntary guidelines guide both providers and users of genetic resources in the implementation of the access and benefit-sharing provisions of the Convention.

They were adopted to assist Parties when establishing administrative, legislative or policy measures on access and benefit-sharing and/or providers and users when negotiating agreements for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

For example, they address the steps of the access and benefit-sharing process, by providing guidance with respect to procedures that can be established in a provider country in order to obtain access to genetic resources. They also provide an indicative list of typical elements for inclusion in access and benefit-sharing agreements



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regarding the conditions of access and use of genetic resources and, in addition, they provide guidance with respect to the roles and responsibilities of providers and users of genetic resources.

The Bonn Guidelines are available in the 6 UN languages at www.cbd.int/abs/bonn.

THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING

The *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity* was adopted on 29 October 2010 by the Conference of the Parties at its tenth meeting, in Nagoya, Japan. It stems from a call to action by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002), later acted upon by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2004, to negotiate within the framework of the CBD an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing established by the COP met eleven times from 2005 to 2010 to negotiate the text of the Nagoya Protocol.

Further information on the Nagoya Protocol is available on an additional fact sheet entitled "The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing" posted on the CBD Website at www.cbd.int/abs.



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