

Closing statement by the Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, David Cooper, for the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources

Geneva,
18 November 2023

Thank you very much Mr. Chair. Let me begin by thanking you for your hard work and guidance to us through this week for both meeting, and I would like to extend my thanks to the Chinese presidency for its continued support to this process in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland again for hosting our meetings and the many donors whose contributions have supported the participation of delegates in this meeting.

I wish to also thank the members of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties for their support and the helpful discussions we have had; the Co-Chairs of the Committee of the Whole, Mphatso Kalemba of Malawi and William Lockhart of the United Kingdom; and the co-chairs of the contact group, Nneke Nicholas of Antigua and Barbuda and Salima Kempenaer of Belgium. Thank you all for your strong support and for leading us through the discussions so skilfully this week.

This was the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources.

High expectations were set in decision 15/9 at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Although there is still much to do, I believe the high ambitions set out there have so far been met.

We saw lots of convergence on issues and lots of good ideas on how to operationalize the mechanism and the fund. And just as importantly, Parties and observers were able to share their views and hear the views of others.

With all of this, we have a better understanding of the breadth and scope of the work that needs to be carried out until the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the the meeting of the Parties to the Protocols.

I hope that once you are back home, you will use all of these ideas and understanding to reflect and consult with your constituencies to advance the process.

Of course, it will be important to continue to consult with civil society, business and academia.

The role and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities are of utmost importance for this process as holders of traditional knowledge and custodians of biodiversity. Their participation, as well as the participation of women and youth, are indispensable if we want to achieve our common goals.

The engagement and consultations with researchers, academia and private sector are also at the core of this process.

The ongoing process of the revision of national biodiversity strategies and action plans provides a good opportunity to meet with institutions and stakeholders in your countries and to assess the capacity-building needs and priorities for digital sequence information.

Also, I cannot stress enough the importance of the continued strong participation and engagement in the agreed intersessional work so we can suggest creative solutions to make the mechanism effective and find more areas of convergence by our next meeting in August, in Montreal.

The Secretariat is here to support you. You can rely on our support.

The decision on digital sequence information on genetic resources at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties was a landmark agreement. With this process, we really have the potential to develop a mechanism that can be truly transformative, that can make a real contribution to all the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Before we close our meeting, I would like to thank you all. In particular, I would like to thank the teams that have been supporting us this week, my colleagues at the Secretariat here and in Montreal, for their hard work and commitment. I wish to also thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, including the interpreters, translators, report writers and the staff of the conference centre, for facilitating our work.

I wish you all a safe return home, and we look forward to seeing you in other forums to continue these important discussions.

Thank you all very much.
