

## Press Release

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### **Governments advance discussions on a multilateral mechanism to share benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources.**

Geneva 19 November 2023. Governments, in Geneva, Switzerland, advanced in their discussions on the development and operationalization of a multilateral mechanism, including a global fund, for the sharing of benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources.

Digital sequence information (DSI) is a placeholder term to refer to data derived from de-materialized genetic resources. It includes nucleic acid sequence data and potentially other data such as protein sequence data. The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities associated with the use of genetic resources is also relevant.

DSI is crucial to research in a wide range of contexts, including public health, medicine, plant and animal breeding, evolution research and the achievement of the [Convention on Biological Diversity's](#) objectives, namely the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources, as well as the objective of its [Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing](#).

At the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Montreal, Canada, in December 2022, governments agreed that benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources should be shared fairly and equitably (decision 15/9) and further agreed to establish, as part of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (decision 15/4), a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, including a global fund. They agreed that the development and operationalization of this would be according to a fair, transparent, inclusive, participatory, and time-bound process (decision 15/9).

In Geneva this week, negotiations on the multilateral mechanism, led by co-chairs Martha Mphatso Kalemba of Malawi and William Lockhart of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, addressed 16 different issues identified as central to the creation of such a mechanism, set out in the Annex to decision 15/9. These issues were clustered into five groups:

- **Contributions to the fund**, including triggering points for benefit-sharing and some aspects of the role and interests of industry and academia;
- **Disbursement of the funds**, including disbursement of monetary benefits, including information on geographical origin as one of the criteria, some aspects of the role, rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities, including associated traditional knowledge;
- **Non-monetary benefit-sharing**, including information on geographical origin as one of the criteria, capacity development and technology transfer, including linkages between research and technology and the multilateral mechanism on benefit-sharing;
- **Governance**, including the monitoring and evaluation and review of effectiveness, principles of data governance and some aspects of the role, rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities, including associated traditional knowledge, and interests of industry and academia;

- **Relation to other approaches and systems**, including the potential to voluntarily extend the multilateral mechanism to genetic resources or biological diversity, other policy options, the interface between national systems and the multilateral mechanism on benefit-sharing, the relationship with the Nagoya Protocol and the adaptability of the mechanism to other resource mobilization instruments or funds.

“The engagement of delegates in this week’s meeting on the multilateral mechanism for DSI demonstrated that there is goodwill amongst the Parties and that we are well on our way towards operationalizing the mechanism and fund as mandated by the Convention’s Conference of the Parties in December 2022”, said David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “I believe that we have the potential to develop a mechanism that can be truly transformative; one that can make a real contribution to the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.”

Co-chairs, Martha Mphatso Kalemba of Malawi and William Lockhart of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, said “Parties worked well together, with a cooperative spirit and a high degree of trust during discussions this week. As we move towards our meeting in August of next year, we look forward to facilitating this journey towards the adoption and operationalisation of a new mechanism.”

Following this meeting, a number of informal consultations are expected to be held to consider issues that needed further work to understand the underlying interest, views and positions of delegations before resumption of negotiations. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources will meet a second time, in Montreal, Canada, in August 2024, to further the discussions and to make recommendations for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth meeting (COP 16).

The final versions of the documents for the Geneva meeting can be found [here](#).

### **About the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and entering into force in December 1993, the CBD is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources.

With 196 Parties, the CBD has near universal participation among countries. 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 peoples and local communities, youth, women, NGOs, sub-national actors and the business community.

The [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#) was adopted during the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15). This historic Framework supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, builds on the Convention’s previous Strategic Plans, and adopts a human-rights approach. It sets out an ambitious pathway to reach the vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. Among the Framework’s key elements are 4 goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030.

The [Nagoya Protocol](#) entered into force 12 October 2014. It provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol also covers traditional knowledge (TK) associated with genetic resources. More information on the Nagoya Protocol and traditional knowledge can be found on the [Traditional Knowledge](#) programme of work webpage.

The [Cartagena Protocol](#), entered into force 11 September 2003. is an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health.

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