



UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Investing in biodiversity for people and planet



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Digital sequence information on genetic resources

In recent years, DNA sequencing technologies have become faster, cheaper and more accurate. Digital sequence information, or DSI, on genetic resources is used in a range of activities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including taxonomy and monitoring for invasive species. However, questions persist about how digital sequence information relates to access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

The potential implications of DSI on genetic resources for the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the objective of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing emerged as a cross-cutting issue in 2016, at the last UN Biodiversity Conference. Since then, the CBD Secretariat commissioned a fact-finding and scoping study and prepared a synthesis of views and information on DSI. An expert group also met and discussed the terminology and different types of DSI on genetic resources, as well as any potential implications of the use of DSI for the objectives of the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol. Experts agreed that more discussion is required concerning terminology, in order to find the balance between terminology that is adaptive and dynamic enough to accommodate scientific, technological, market and other changes, while simultaneously being clear and solid enough to provide legal certainty. And, while governments generally recognise the positive contribution of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, important divergences in views remain with respect to the implications on the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.





Digital sequence information on genetic resources at the UN Biodiversity Conference¹

The UN Biodiversity Conference will look at the draft decisions on DSI developed during the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, held in July 2018. These draft decisions include paragraphs that aim to clarify what digital sequence information is, its role in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and its links to access and benefit-sharing. They also include paragraphs that would provide for further work on this issue prior to the next UN Biodiversity Conference, to be held in 2020, including possibly further studies, submissions of views and information, online discussions and an expert group or open-ended working group. Further negotiations will be needed during the UN Biodiversity Conference to reach agreement.

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Important links

- Documents from the February 2018 expert group meeting, including the fact-finding and scoping study on digital sequence information, the synthesis of views and information and the report of the meeting: www.cbd.int/meetings/DSI-AHTEG-2018-01
- Recommendation adopted by the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body On Scientific, Technical And Technological Advice: www.cbd.int/doc/recommendations/sbstta-22/sbstta-22-rec-01-en.pdf

¹ Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing; 17-29 November 2018

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