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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION  
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SERVING AS THE  
MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE NAGOYA  
PROTOCOL ON ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES  
AND THE FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF THE  
BENEFITS ARISING FROM THEIR UTILIZATION

First meeting

Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, 13–17 October 2014

Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

### **INDICATIVE PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE**

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Utilization establishes an Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House (ABS Clearing-House) as part of the clearing-house mechanism under Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention. The ABS Clearing-House shall serve as a means for sharing information related to access and benefit-sharing and shall provide access to information made available by each Party relevant to the implementation of the Protocol.

2. Article 14, paragraph 4, of the Nagoya Protocol provides that the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House, including reports of its activities, shall be considered and decided upon by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol (COP-MOP) at its first meeting, and kept under review thereafter.

3. The Secretariat will administer the central portal of the ABS Clearing-House and perform the functions in accordance to the modalities of operation to be considered and adopted by the first meeting of COP-MOP. The draft modalities are available in document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/2/Add.1. Paragraph 5 of the draft modalities of operation identifies the following functions to be carried out by the Secretariat:

(a) Developing and maintaining the central portal and central databases to ensure that the ABS Clearing-House is accessible, user-friendly, searchable, and understandable;

(b) Identifying, reviewing and developing, as necessary, common formats for making information available to the ABS Clearing-House;

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\* UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/1.

(c) Providing technical assistance to Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders for registering and retrieving information;

(d) Cooperating with relevant international, regional, subregional and national organizations and entities, as appropriate;

(e) Enabling information exchange, as appropriate, with other data providers to support the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol;

(f) Registering offline submissions of information in the ABS Clearing-House on behalf of Parties, upon request;

(g) Providing portable data storage devices containing information available through the ABS Clearing-House, when requested by Parties;

(h) Performing other administrative functions as requested by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol.

4. The Secretariat may also seek assistance from an informal advisory committee for technical guidance with respect to the resolution of technical issues arising from the ongoing development of the ABS Clearing-House.<sup>1</sup>

5. The present document provides an indicative list of priorities for further development of the ABS Clearing-House for some of the above-mentioned functions.

## **II. PROPOSED INDICATIVE PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE**

6. The indicative priorities below have been identified based on feedback received and experience gained from the implementation of the pilot phase of the ABS Clearing-House.

### **A. *Developing and maintaining the central portal and central databases to ensure that the ABS Clearing-House is accessible, user-friendly, searchable, and understandable***

7. Indicative priorities in this regard may include:

(a) Reviewing the operation of the ABS Clearing-House, including through user feedback mechanisms and targeted surveys for assessing and reviewing what information users of the ABS Clearing-House would find useful;

(b) Optimizing the website for speed;

(c) Improving functionality for all Internet browsers;

(d) Developing a test development environment. This would facilitate the development of new improvements and functionalities in a completely separate and isolated environment without affecting the stability of the ABS Clearing-House central portal;

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<sup>1</sup> The draft modalities of operation contained in the annex to document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/2/Add.1 include the possibility of an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary.

(e) Improving categorization and display of information and making navigation of the website more intuitive;

(f) Translating on a regular basis (for example, quarterly) the text of the central portal into United Nations languages. Following the example of the translation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), translation costs for the ABS Clearing-House have been included in the proposal for the core budget;

(g) Incorporating the facility for publishing authorities to designate or make changes to national authorized users online;

(h) Including alerts to the publishing authority on issues requiring their attention, for example, due to changes in the status of the records (for instance when an ABS measures becomes no longer applicable according to the record submitted) or for ensuring that records in the ABS Clearing-House are up to date (for instance, confirmation of contact details of the national focal point after a certain period of time);

(i) Exploring the possibility of generation of automatic reports according to identified user needs;

(j) Enhancing integration with the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House, including user interface, the development of common formats, and making relevant information available through the different search functions.

***B. Identifying, reviewing and developing, as necessary, common formats for making information available to the ABS Clearing-House***

8. The Open-ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (Intergovernmental Committee), in its recommendation 3/5, recommended that COP-MOP adopt a decision on measures to assist in capacity-building and development for the Nagoya Protocol. The draft decision included in the recommendation includes several paragraphs which are relevant for the ABS Clearing-House:<sup>2</sup>

(a) In paragraph 5, Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities, relevant organizations, and the private sector are invited to provide to the ABS Clearing-House information on their capacity-building and development initiatives, including emerging best practices and lessons learned, and opportunities relevant to the implementation of the strategic framework;

(b) Paragraph 6 encourages developing country Parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States among them, and Parties with economies in transition, as well as indigenous and local communities, to make available through the ABS Clearing-House information regarding their capacity-building and development needs and priorities identified through national capacity self-assessments;

(c) Paragraph 8 (b) requests the Executive Secretary to ensure that information on capacity-building and development needs, opportunities and activities can be submitted to and accessed from all platforms under the Convention;

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<sup>2</sup> The draft decision is included in document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/1/Add.2.

(d) Finally, paragraph 8 (a) requests the Executive Secretary to promote and facilitate, in collaboration with relevant organizations, coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the strategic framework by, inter alia, providing relevant tools and information through the ABS Clearing-House.

9. The Intergovernmental Committee also recommended that COP-MOP adopt a decision on monitoring and reporting (recommendation 3/7). The draft decision includes a request to the Executive Secretary to make the format for the interim national report that is to be considered by COP-MOP available through the ABS Clearing-House.<sup>3</sup>

10. Against this background, the proposed indicative priorities in this regard include:

(a) Ongoing review and improvement of the existing common format and controlled vocabulary to better reflect country needs and enhanced integration with the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(b) Developing new common formats, as requested by COP-MOP under different agenda items, in particular in relation to capacity-building and monitoring and reporting;

(c) Developing a new common format on explanatory information as suggested in the feedback (see section I, subsection B, of document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/2).

***C. Providing technical assistance to Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities, and other stakeholders for registering and retrieving information through the ABS Clearing-House***

11. In light of section II, subsection F, of document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/2, and with a view to ensuring appropriate participation in the ABS Clearing-House of Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, the following contains, subject to the availability of adequate resources, the proposed approach to building and developing capacity for the ABS Clearing-House. This approach would enable answers to be provided to ABS Clearing-House users in a timely and cost-efficient manner, reducing the need for face-to-face workshops or courses.

12. Indicative priorities in this area may include:

(a) Raising awareness among Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders about the ABS Clearing-House;

(b) Developing a client-side monitoring and feedback system in order to automatically receive information on technical problems experienced by users and better understand user activities;

(c) On the basis of the most common questions and problems encountered by users, improving and further expanding the interactive ABS Clearing-House user guide, and developing awareness and capacity-building materials including e-learning materials and videos;

(d) Setting up an ABS Clearing-House training site or sand box to enable the registration of test records without requiring publishing authority or national authority user permissions, and to facilitate the delivery of training on the ABS Clearing-House, following the example of the Biosafety Clearing-House training site;

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<sup>3</sup> The draft guidelines and format for the interim national report are contained in the annex to UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/3.

(e) Providing personalized technical assistance to Parties, other Governments, indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, and offering direct help and solutions to ABS Clearing-House users for registration and retrieval of information, through, inter alia, an on-demand help desk service (for instance through a dedicated online chat room, call centre, or screen-sharing mechanisms) and webinars;

(f) Optimizing opportunities for including a component on the ABS Clearing-House in relevant workshops, activities and events in a cost-effective manner.

***D. Cooperating with relevant international, regional, subregional and national organizations and entities, as appropriate***

13. Taking into account section II, subsection E, of document UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/2, potential linkages and collaboration with partners and data providers need to be further explored as a common understanding on the role and modalities of the ABS Clearing-House advances. An informal advisory committee could assist in providing technical advice to the Executive Secretary on the consideration of this issue.

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