



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
Fourteenth meeting  
Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 17-29 November 2018  
Agenda item 18

### DECISION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

#### 14/20. Digital sequence information on genetic resources

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Mindful* of the three objectives of the Convention,

*Recalling* Articles 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the Convention,

*Mindful* of the increasing generation and use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, its publication in both public and private databases and advances in data analytics,

*Noting* that the term “digital sequence information” may not be the most appropriate term and that it is used as a placeholder until an alternative term is agreed,

*Recognizing* the importance of new technologies for the current and future utilization of genetic resources, and noting that the media in which information is stored and shared is continuously evolving,

*Considering* that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will provide guidance on the long-term strategic directions to the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity,

*Noting* the relevant discussions on digital sequence information on genetic resources and related issues in other United Nations bodies and instruments, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the World Health Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the United Nations General Assembly,

1. *Recognizes* the importance of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention which are mutually supportive, although further work is needed to provide conceptual clarity on digital sequence information on genetic resources;

2. *Recognizes* that access to and use of digital sequence information on genetic resources contributes to scientific research as well as to other non-commercial and commercial activities in areas such as biological diversity, food security and human, animal and plant health;

3. *Recognizes* also that further capacity to access, use, generate and analyse digital sequence information on genetic resources is needed in many countries, and *encourages* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to support capacity-building and technology transfer, as appropriate, to assist in the access, use, generation and analysis of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and benefit-sharing;

4. *Notes* that the generation of digital sequence information on genetic resources in most cases requires access to a genetic resource, although in some cases linking the digital sequence information to the genetic resource from which it was generated may be difficult;

5. *Also notes* that some Parties have adopted domestic measures that regulate the access to and use of digital sequence information on genetic resources as part of their access and benefit-sharing frameworks;

6. *Further notes* that, as there is a divergence of views among Parties regarding benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, Parties commit to working towards resolving this divergence through the process established in the present decision, with the aim of strengthening the fulfilment of the third objective of the Convention and Article 15, paragraph 7, without prejudice to the circumstances to which this article applies;

7. *Notes* that, when genetic resources are accessed for their utilization, mutually agreed terms can cover benefits arising from the commercial and/or non-commercial use of digital sequence information on these genetic resources, in accordance with applicable domestic measures;

8. *Decides* to establish a science- and policy-based process on digital sequence information on genetic resources as set out in paragraphs 9 to 12 below;

9. *Invites* Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities, relevant stakeholders and organizations to submit their views and information:

(a) To clarify the concept, including relevant terminology and scope, of digital sequence information on genetic resources and if and how domestic measures on access and benefit-sharing consider digital sequence information on genetic resources;

(b) On benefit-sharing arrangements from commercial and non-commercial use of digital sequence information on genetic resources;

10. *Invites* Parties, other Governments and indigenous peoples and local communities to submit information on their capacity-building needs regarding the access, use, generation and analysis of digital sequence information on genetic resources, in particular for the three objectives of the Convention;

11. *Decides* to establish an extended Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group,<sup>1</sup> including the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, and *requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources:

(a) To compile and synthesize the views and information submitted pursuant to paragraphs 9 and 10 above;

(b) To commission a science-based peer-reviewed fact-finding study on the concept and scope of digital sequence information on genetic resources and how digital sequence information on genetic resources is currently used building on the existing fact-finding and scoping study;<sup>2</sup>

(c) To commission a peer-reviewed study on ongoing developments in the field of traceability of digital information, including how traceability is addressed by databases, and how these could inform discussions on digital sequence information on genetic resources;

(d) To commission a peer reviewed study on public and, to the extent possible, private databases of digital sequence information on genetic resources, including the terms and conditions on which access is granted or controlled, the biological scope and the size of the databases, numbers of accessions and their origin, governing policies, and the providers and users of the digital sequence information on genetic resources and encourages the owners of private databases to provide the necessary information;

(e) To commission a peer-reviewed study on how domestic measures address benefit-sharing arising from commercial and non-commercial use of digital sequence information on genetic resources and

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<sup>1</sup> The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group will be convened in accordance with the modus operandi of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, except that there will be five experts nominated by each of the five regions.

<sup>2</sup> Fact-Finding and Scoping Study on Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources in the Context of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol (CBD/DSI/AHTEG/2018/1/3).

address the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for research and development, taking into account the submissions provided in paragraph 9;

- (f) To convene a meeting of the extended Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group to:
  - (i) Consider the compilation and synthesis of views and information and the peer-reviewed studies referred to above;
  - (ii) Develop options for operational terms and their implications to provide conceptual clarity on digital sequence information on genetic resources, considering in particular the study referred to in paragraph 11(b) above;
  - (iii) Identify key areas for capacity-building;
  - (iv) Submit its outcomes for consideration by a meeting of the open-ended working group established under decision 14/34 to be held prior to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

12. *Requests* the open-ended working group established under decision 14/34<sup>3</sup> to consider the outcomes of the extended Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group and to make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting on how to address digital sequence information on genetic resources in the context of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

13. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to cooperate with other intergovernmental organizations to inform them of the process defined above and to take into account the work, approaches and outcomes that these organizations generate in the area in question.

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<sup>3</sup> Decision on the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (item 17).