

DSI Scientific Network
CoW statement on Non-Monetary Benefits
13 August 2024

Thank you chair for giving me the floor. I am Amber Scholz from the Leibniz Institute DSMZ and I speak now on behalf of the DSI Scientific Network.

I will address the revised non-paper on non-monetary benefits but before turning to this, I would like to address the proposal that has been made by Egypt and others regarding the establishment of a new database under the CBD.

On the proposal for a new database

It would be useful to take into consideration some of the elements to assess how feasible this is.

Setting up a new database would require the hiring of dozens of informatics staff, and the capacity to handle hundreds of petabytes (millions of gigabytes) in data and accompanying technological infrastructure. In addition, the database would need to manage inter-connectivity with thousands of other databases and data types, as well as thousands of submissions per week.

The sheer volume of submissions also points to the fact that proposals to check each submission for compliance with national ABS measures is not only cost ineffective, it is likely to be impossible.

It is important to remember that under the Nagoya Protocol countries exercise their sovereign rights when genetic resources are accessed. There is no database “checkpoint” under the CBD. Compliance with Nagoya Protocol obligations for access to the original genetic resource is very important and uncontested. But these are a matter for the Nagoya Protocol and the Convention and not for the DSI multilateral mechanism and DSI databases cannot be co-opted to post-facto add new compliance mechanisms to bilateral ABS arrangements.

On the new list on NMBs in the non-paper

This version of the non-paper offers a more robust list of possible non-monetary benefits. But it is clear that much is still to be done to capture the benefits that are generated by the use and provision of DSI by the millions of users of DSI that are using DSI for non-commercial purposes.

We would like to make a few suggestions to Enclosure B:

- It could take additional inspiration from the non-monetary benefits listed in the Annex to the Nagoya Protocol,
- It should also be coherent with the non-monetary benefits recognized under BBNJ. In particular, BBNJ recognizes open access to DSI as a non-monetary benefit.
- We propose the inclusion of the following additional non-monetary benefits:
 - Knowledge transfer through scientific publications and open sharing of data.
 - Free access to scientific databases and infrastructure
 - Investments made by research institutions around the world to support the sequencing of DSI, and
 - Use of DSI to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Additional issues for consideration in relation to NMBs

We need to go beyond making a list of potential NMBs. There are many open questions that need to be considered before an informed decision on non-monetary benefits can be made such as:

1. How can we capture and account for non-monetary benefits? We cannot improve what we do not measure.
2. Non-monetary benefits cost money and according to some studies have more value impact than monetary benefits. There is a cost associated with publishing, with doing research, with training, and with maintaining databases. So we need to consider how to account for and measure those costs to reflect the true value of what is being done.
3. What are the most important non-monetary benefits for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and implementation of the KMGBF?
4. How do non-monetary benefits relate to capacity building and tech transfer? Are non-monetary benefits an overarching category for these or not? What non-monetary benefits come from and through the multilateral mechanism and which are “outside” of it but still relevant?
5. What are the responsibilities of different users of DSI for sharing non-monetary benefits?

The idea of a “connective tissue” mentioned by CGIAR and EU could be explored further. The option of a central platform or database for non-monetary benefit-sharing indicator data could be interesting. Such a platform could help capture non-monetary benefits and perhaps even have the sort of matchmaking platform on CB opportunities such as exist within UNESCO. These ideas could, for example, be further developed in a pilot proof-of-principle project.

We would suggest that a study should be commissioned to address these open questions and new ideas in order to inform Parties discussions on this topic and this could be a focus area for the next intersessional period after COP16.