



# Convention on Biological Diversity

Secretariat

Ref: SCBD/STTM/CL

23 July 2001

## NOTIFICATION

Dear Madam/Sir:

Pursuant to Decision V/26 of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on access to genetic resources and further to my Notification dated 25 August 2000, I wish to reiterate my invitation for Governments to designate National Focal Points and one or more competent authorities to be responsible for access and benefit-sharing arrangements.

As noted in Document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/INF/4 the Coordination Mechanism of the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) has identified a need to facilitate international cooperation for taxonomic research by *inter alia* granting the necessary permissions for approved research projects, fieldwork, collection of biological specimens and free exchange of personnel, data and relevant materials. As an initial step towards facilitating such permissions, the Competent Authorities might include Ministries, Departments or other Authorities active in this field. I have attached some explanatory details that might assist you in this matter.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely yours,

Hamdallah Zedan  
Executive Secretary

To: CBD National Focal Points



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**Access and Benefit-sharing issues and permission for taxonomic research:  
Explanatory note and suggestions for detailed actions.**

At its fifth meeting, by decision V/26 on Access to Genetic Resources, under section A, paragraphs 1 and 2, the COP requested Parties to designate a national focal point and one or more competent national authorities, as appropriate, to be responsible for access and benefit-sharing arrangements or to provide information on such arrangements. The COP further requested Parties to notify the names and addresses of these focal points to the Executive Secretary.

At its fourth meeting, the COP in decision IV/1 had already suggested to Parties that they should encourage partnerships between institutions in developed and developing countries so as to promote scientific collaboration, and that Parties should assist institutions to establish consortia to conduct regional projects. Further, COP V in Decision V/9 urged Parties, Governments and relevant organizations to undertake priority activities to further the Global Taxonomy Initiative, including Establishment of regional and national reference centers and the building of taxonomic capacity...including through partnerships between national, regional and international reference centers.

It has been noted by the Coordination Mechanism of the Global Taxonomy Initiative, building on these suggestions, that “Biological species do not observe national boundaries, and can only be understood and sustained if their variation can be studied and assessed in the natural habitats throughout their entire geographic range. Much taxonomic research depends on transnational activities and international cooperation involving joint fieldwork, travel of personnel, and the frequent exchange of data, samples, and biological specimens.” Because of this the Coordination Mechanism advised the Executive Secretary to “Urge Parties to the Convention to facilitate such efforts of international cooperation for taxonomic research as are needed to help implementing activities of the Convention by *inter alia* establishing clear and unambiguous mechanisms for granting the necessary permissions for approved research projects, field work, collection of biological specimens, and free exchange of personnel, data and relevant materials.”

Further to the above-mentioned decisions by the COP and in response to the request of the GTI Coordination Mechanism the Executive Secretary will be taking various actions.

In the short term, being aware that permissions under this heading may include such aspects as to: conduct research; collect specimens; export specimens; retain specimens; conduct different types of analysis (e.g. molecular or genetic); exchange specimens freely outside the country; publish data about the specimens (particularly distributional); import necessary equipment and chemicals to carry out the research (preferably with tax exemption), the following actions by Parties might be helpful to facilitate the implementation of the Convention *vis a vis* the GTI:

1. To designate a National Focal Point and one or more Competent National Authorities, as appropriate, to be responsible for access and benefit-sharing arrangements or to

provide information on such arrangements, as requested in section A, paragraphs 1 and 2 of decision V/26 of the COP. The NFP or CNA should take necessary steps at the national level for the requirements of taxonomic permissions to be taken into account.

2. To make details of Collecting and Export Permit requirements available on the appropriate national web site, together with appropriate contact points (Competent National Authorities).
3. To make copies of their Collecting and Export Permit requirements available at each of their Embassies or Consulates.
4. To make copies of Collecting and Export Permit requirements available through the National CBD/GTI Focal Point and Access & Benefit-Sharing Focal Point.
5. To send copies of Collecting and Export Permit requirements, or reference to a web site, to the Executive Secretary in order to facilitate exchange of information through the CHM.
6. CBD Focal Points to note that in any approval process of projects associated with the CBD the CBD focal point should require the matter of granting permissions to have been satisfactorily addressed.
7. Finally, in order to ensure that developments regarding Access and Benefit-sharing under the Convention take due account of the specific needs of taxonomic research, Parties should ensure that the Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, at its first meeting in October 2001, take due account of these specific needs in the elaboration of draft guidelines on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.