



Opening statement by the Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, David Cooper, at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources

14 November 2023

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Good morning and welcome to the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources.

I would like to again thank the presidency and the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for their leadership and guidance in the preparation of this meeting, as well as all Parties and observers that have contributed to the process. I would also like to thank the many donors whose contributions have supported the participation of delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Distinguished delegates,

As already set out by the representative of the President of the Conference of the Parties, this Working Group has a crucial and exciting task before it.

At its fifteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted a landmark decision, decision 15/9, in which it agreed that the benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources should be shared fairly and equitably and decided to establish a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing, including a global fund.

The multilateral mechanism and global fund were established as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Our work here is to further develop and operationalize this multilateral mechanism and global fund.

The overall aims of this endeavour are reflected in the Framework itself.

Among the goals of this ambitious Framework is Goal C, which calls for the monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources and digital sequence information on genetic resources to be shared fairly and equitably and substantially increased by 2050.

This goal is supported by Target 13, which calls for effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures at all levels, as appropriate, to ensure that benefits are shared fairly and equitably, facilitating a significant increase of the benefits shared, by 2030.

Our work here also relates to the other goals and targets of the Framework, including those on capacity-building and on the mobilization of financial resources.

It is also relevant to discussions ongoing in other forums, including the World Health Organization, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the newly adopted Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. Many are watching what happens here.



To further develop and operationalize the multilateral mechanism and global fund, we have to address, among other things, how the funds will be collected and how they will be disbursed; how non-monetary benefits will be facilitated, including through capacity-building and development and technology transfer; how the system and the fund itself will be governed; and how the mechanism relates to national systems on access and benefit-sharing developed under the Nagoya Protocol, as well as also to other processes.

So we have important work to do.

And we have a short time. We are due to complete the work by the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Expectations are high.

Only two meetings of this Working Group are planned, and we must make good use of this first meeting.

I am confident that we can do so.

When we last met here in Geneva, in March 2021, for the meetings of the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the subsidiary bodies, and in subsequent meetings in Nairobi and Montreal, you, as negotiators on digital sequence information on genetic resources, were able to address difficult and complex issues, to bridge your differences and to come together to set out the principles for an approach that will ensure fairness and equity with regard to the use of sequence information, while supporting innovation and the considerable benefits that the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources has the potential to provide to make our lives safer and healthier.

Now is the time to come together once more and to translate the outline agreed at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties into concrete terms, to take the promise from that meeting and make it a tangible reality.

The world is waiting to see how you will implement the agreement of the Conference of the Parties. Actions will need to be bold, transformative and ambitious.

Successful discussions here will provide us with a clear path to success at the second meeting of this Working Group and at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties that will ensure that we have a practical system to share the benefits fairly and equitably, to contribute to supporting innovation and to support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; in short, a mechanism to contribute to all three objectives of the Convention and to the wider sustainable development agenda.

I wish you a highly productive meeting.

I thank you.
