

Future of biodiversity hinges on benefit-sharing agreement

Title

Progress in tackling the biodiversity crisis hangs on achieving agreement between the world's nations on the access to genetic resources, and sharing of benefits arising from their use, according to BirdLife International. But this in turn depends on whether today's last-minute meeting of an Interregional Negotiating Group can agree a draft protocol text in time to be presented for finalisation and approval at COP-10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya. Commonly known as Access and Benefit Sharing or ABS, fair and equitable benefit sharing and access to genetic resources is one of the three fundamental objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD recognises the rights of States over their native natural resources, including genetic resources, and Parties to the CBD are also obliged to take appropriate measures to share the benefits of using them. Benefits might include the results of research and development carried out using genetic resources, or money from the commercialisation of products based on them. An agreement on ABS is essential for the success of the CBD's Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP-10), which begins shortly in Nagoya, Japan. One of the most important tasks for COP-10 is to agree on a new Strategic Plan for CBD, including a crucial set of 2020 targets to put the brakes on biodiversity loss. In 2000, CBD members created a working group to ensure that developing countries benefit from discoveries based on native species or traditional medicine, and to address concerns of bio-piracy -- the commercial exploitation of plants or other genetic matter without adequately compensating the countries and communities where they are found. This meeting of the negotiating group, which will determine whether the draft protocol text can be agreed, takes place just five days before COP-10 opens. "Several key Governments see progress in developing a new agreement on ABS as absolutely necessary, and are willing to block progress in all other areas of the CBD until such an agreement is reached. We are asking politicians to get their acts together and stop unnecessarily blocking the negotiations", said Dr Muhtari Aminu-Kano, BirdLife's Senior Adviser on Policy and Advocacy. BirdLife believes that it is imperative that COP-10 wraps up negotiations on the international ABS regime, resulting in a Protocol to the CBD which is legally binding. The treaty must be comprehensive, with an effective compliance system. "Governments must summon the political will to resolve outstanding issues at this meeting of the working group, and endorse a new protocol in Nagoya", said Dr Leon Bennun, BirdLife's Director of Science, Policy and Information. "Compromise is needed on both sides" but developed countries have to recognise the great frustration felt by the developing world on this issue." In BirdLife's view, this is one of five steps that must be taken at COP-10 to bring about the fundamental change that is urgently required to halt biodiversity loss. For COP-10 to succeed, BirdLife believes that Parties must:

- Adopt a comprehensive, ambitious and achievable Strategic Plan with associated 2020 Targets. This should include a framework to involve local communities and civil society in achieving its aims, and should recognise the importance of linking biodiversity conservation to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction.
- Agree mechanisms to ensure each country has the resources it needs for effective implementation of the CBD. This must involve an increase in biodiversity budgets in all countries, and new and increased money from developed countries to developing countries. We want governments to recognise that at least a tenfold increase in funding is needed by 2020.
- Successfully conclude negotiations on an international regime for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).
- Agree to expand protected area networks, particularly in marine areas, to cover all areas of particular importance for biodiversity. Standard criteria should be developed for the identification of sites of global biodiversity significance.
- Agree clear actions to promote synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at national and international levels. Biodiversity and ecosystems underpin effective climate change mitigation and adaptation and are in turn impacted by climate change. This must be recognised within all decisions and actions taken to address climate change.

?COP-10 must provide political momentum for a massive gearing-up of biodiversity conservation efforts. It should generate a sense of urgency, and recognition that, given the resources and political will, tools exist to address the biodiversity crisis effectively?, concluded Dr Aminu-Kano. Read BirdLife's Policy Briefing on Access and Benefit Sharing by clicking [here](#)
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