

African Minister Conference on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)

8-10 March 2010

Safari Court Hotel

Windhoek, Namibia

hosted by



Namibian Ministry of
Environment and Tourism
in partnership with AMCEN

funded by

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OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Background

Since the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP 9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Bonn, Germany in May 2008, the so-called “high-level segment” – a gathering of heads of state and ministers to discuss biodiversity related policies – has become an integral part of the COP negotiations.

The key element of upcoming COP 10 in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010 is the final negotiation and adoption of the international regime (IR) on access and benefit-sharing (ABS) – to be the probably most important international operative agreement on global (environmental) governance outside the climate change process.

Three ABS working groups meetings between Bonn and Nagoya are mandated to elaborate and negotiate the scope, nature, objectives and substantive elements of this regime: WG ABS 7 (Paris, April 2009). WGABS 8 (Montreal, November 2009) WG ABS 9 (Cali, Colombia, March 2010). WGABS 9 is scheduled to “only” consolidate the operational text. But it is to be expected that this gathering will require most positive political will to successfully finalize the IR - as the most political and disputed aspects of the regime such as scope and nature are likely to be substantively addressed only at WGABS 9 in Cali.

ABS is a major issue emerging for most African countries, requiring political awareness and guidance, technical knowledge and functioning regulations, which allow for access to genetic resources while ensuring benefits for the provider country at all levels – from government institutions down to communities, where the resources are found. One of the objectives of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa is to improve the capacities of and support African negotiators to actively and substantively engage in the negotiation and development of the international ABS regime.

Objectives

At the current stage of the negotiations it is of crucial importance to raise at the high political level - through issue focused briefings - the necessary awareness on the on-going negotiation process and its implications for national and global environmental governance. This will improve the needed political backing of the ABS negotiators during the process of elaborating the regime and enable informed final decisions by the high-level participants at COP 10.

In order to further build pan-African ownership at ministerial level the **Government of Namibia in partnership with the African Minister’s Council on the Environment (AMCEN) is hosting the African Minister Conference on ABS**. The conference is fully funded by the **Government of Denmark**

– as an initial step in joining the Initiative - and organised by the ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa. .

Building on the positive feedback from various African Ministers having attended the Initiative's COP 9 preparatory meeting in 2008 and discussions at the UNEP Governing Council 2009 between the Environmental Ministers of Denmark, Germany and Namibia, the Executive Director of UNEP and the Co-Chairs of the ABS Working Group the Minister Conference in Windhoek will be organized based on the following outline:

Conference brief

Date and Venue: 8-10 March 2010; Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek

Format: 2,5 days high-level meeting preceded by the African regional focal point's consultations prior to WGABS 9

- Plenary briefing sessions on the concept of ABS and interfaces to other political sectors and International Environmental Conventions and Agreements
- Technical briefings (plenary, smaller groups) on the current negotiation status of the international regime with view to WGABS 9 and COP 10
- National Focal Points and Ministers 1+1 exchange on ABS (process, substance, options, challenges, trade offs)
- Informal session incl. exchange on elements of African ABS position; technical and political issues to be solved
- Fieldtrip exploring an ABS related case including stakeholder interviews on impacts poverty alleviation, governance and conservation issues
- Chatham House dialogue with European Ministers / Secretaries of States from countries supporting the ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa (Denmark, Germany, Norway, The Netherlands etc.) to identify points of convergence and further elaboration and explanation
- Side events with business, research and local communities
- Participation of and facilitation by UNEP and CBD Secretariat executive management

Language: English / French / Portuguese simultaneous interpretation during conference sessions

Host and Invitation: The Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia in partnership with the chair of the African Minister's Council on the Environment (AMCEM)

Funding and Organisation : Funded by the Government of Denmark and organized by the GTZ implemented ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa

Proposed Participants:

- Ministers / deputy ministers / state secretaries and their technical advisors on ABS (1+1) of all African countries (53 countries)
- Selected facilitation and resource persons
- African Union as observer

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