

THE **ABS**  
CAPACITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE



L'INITIATIVE DE  
RENFORCEMENT  
DES CAPACITES  
POUR L'**APA**

## Report of the Meeting of the African Steering Committee 2019

*Virtual Meeting on 24 March 2020*

*13.30 – 17.30 CET*

### Welcome and Introduction

Wolfram Klein, the new Head of Division for Biodiversity at BMZ, welcomed everyone as the chair of the meeting. After a brief round of introduction, the meeting agenda was adopted.

### Progress Report 2019

Andreas Drews, Manager of the ABS Initiative, gave participants a brief overview of the composition and function of the 3 regional steering committees (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific). He explained that members of the SC are representatives of donors and appointed stakeholder representatives. Stakeholder representatives are appointed by the SC in their personal capacities based on their function, experience and ability to represent the interests of stakeholders. Observers are relevant partners involved in ABS related capacity development in the respective region. The key functions of the SC are the following: approve progress report, annual work plans and budgets; ensure that activities are aligned and coherent with the overall strategy and the objectives of the ABS Initiative; and ensure emerging issues are considered and integrated into the activities, goals and outcomes.

Supported by other members of the ABS Initiative, Mr Drews then presented an overview of the Initiative's processed, activities and achievements in Africa in 2019, including the SECO co-funded ABioSA sub-project. He also shed light on activities in the Caribbean and Pacific (see presentation "Progress Report-RSC Africa" – for more details, see Progress Report 2019). Further, Suhel al-Janabi and Hartmut Meyer presented challenges that the Initiative encounters and measures to address these.

Highlights of the work in 2019 include:

- Benin: Close and effective support for functional ABS framework
- Côte d'Ivoire: Ambitious start as new partner country
- Kenya: Final phase of programming the IT-based ABS application, permitting and monitoring system
- South Africa: Adoption of historic Rooibos-Agreement based on formal recognition of associated tradition knowledge of IPLCs
- Adoption of several BCPs

- Speeding up support for ABS agreements, from applying simple forms (non-commercial, Benin) to complex negotiations (commercial, Kenya)
- Conducting the Global Dialogue on DSI with support of Norway and South Africa
- Strengthening focus on ABS-compliant biodiversity-based value chains (12th Pan-African ABS Workshop, UEFT-BSR Conference, ABioSA activities with SMMEs)

In the ensuing discussion, the following key points were made:

- Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the global lockdown, all missions and events of the ABS Initiative have been postponed until further notice. GIZ has banned travel for staff until the end of May 2020 and urged staff to work from home until end of June 2020 pending further information.
- It was clarified that ABS agreements as defined in the outcome indicators are contracts that have been supported by the ABS Initiative (e.g. through trainings, advice on clauses for ABS contracts)
- Whether ABS agreements are to be validated by CNAs or the CNA has a role in MAT depends on national legislation. For instance, in many countries, such as in Malawi, it is either the IPLC or the relevant sectoral ministry that enters into a contract (not the ABS NFP nor the CNA).
- It is crucial to demonstrate the impact of ABS frameworks on the ground, i.e. how much non-monetary and monetary benefit-sharing is reaching local communities and contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This is necessary in order to (a) inform and convince policy makers of the need for ABS and (b) manage stakeholder expectations.
- Documentation of monetary and non-monetary benefits is equally important. It was highlighted that due to the confidential nature of many ABS contracts and a lack of systematic reporting such numbers are rarely available. To illustrate the outcome of ABS, short factsheets on benefit sharing through ABS contracts will be prepared. They will be used by the ABS Initiative in cooperation with providers and users it was supporting in ABS negotiations to inform about the benefit-sharing obligations in these contracts. However, a more comprehensive assessment may also be required.
- ABS CEPA material for IPLC target groups is important and should be made available at the earliest possible, so it can be adapted to local contexts and translated into local languages. “Picture cards” for IPLCs will be ready for roll-out in African partner and cooperation countries as soon as travel restrictions have been lifted.
- Two errors relating to the expenditure of the Initiative in the Progress Report will be rectified by the Secretariat, see p. 53 in the Progress Report on activities 2.2.12. and 2.2.13. concerning the Norwegian contribution (see “cooperation with GALVmed” and “Global DSI Dialogue South Africa”).
- The Norwegian contribution to the Initiative is earmarked for capacity development activities on DSI and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The SC members commended the comprehensive Progress Report, but some considered an aggregate overview of what has been achieved within the specific reported year useful in order to better track progress of the Initiative’s work.

*Comments to the Progress Report can be submitted to the Secretariat until 29 March, 2020. The Secretariat is to adopt the amended version via silence procedure on 6 April, 2020.*

## Short updates:

### Status of ABS in the post-2020 discussion

Suhel al-Janabi and Pierre du Plessis gave a concise update on the status of ABS in the Post-2020 discussion. They highlighted that the conservation of ecosystems and sustainable use as well as benefit-sharing play a crucial role in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. They briefly summarized the discussions of the Contact Group at the OEWG 2 in Rome and highlighted that the co-chairs proposed the following action targets: (1) reducing threats to biodiversity; (2) meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing; (3) tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

The main comments from the Contact Group include, among others:

- sustainable use and access and benefit-sharing deserve to have standalone targets, consistent with the theory of change;
- the third objective is intended to promote the achievement of the first two objectives;
- there is a need for distinction between monetary and non-monetary benefits and a mechanism to evaluate monetary and non-monetary benefits is needed;
- momentum for the creation of a global benefit-sharing fund for biodiversity;
- benefit-sharing could be expanded to include benefits that arise from the use of biological resources [and DSI];
- clarification of DSI and related issues will be dealt with in a separate process;
- ensure synergies with other global instruments on benefit sharing;
- measuring the increase in benefits and benefits shared is challenging;

The co-chairs also proposed elements for potential language improvement regarding Target 11<sup>1</sup> in the zero draft.

### Status of the DSI discussion and resulting capacity development needs

Hartmut Meyer and Pierre du Plessis provided the SC with an update of the status of the DSI discussion and resulting capacity development needs. They informed about the international DSI process and the main outcomes of the AHTEG on DSI. The AHTEG on DSI divided the subject matter into three categories, with a fourth category for cross-cutting / over-arching information<sup>2</sup>. There was an agreement to request the International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC) to improve data about the origin of DSI to support monitoring and compliance as well as a general agreement that access should remain open; however, with a growing consensus that "open" does not mean "free for commercial use". Overall, there was widening support for a multilateral benefit-sharing solution and an awareness that divergent national systems can create problems. Capacity development priorities (infrastructure, skills, knowledge) were also identified. Mr Meyer said that SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3 are tentatively scheduled to take place at the end of August / beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> "Ensure that benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and related traditional knowledge, are shared fairly and equitably, resulting by 2030 in an [X] increase in benefits."

<sup>2</sup>Category 1: Information obtained directly from DNA and RNA reads

Category 2: Above, plus information about protein expression

Category 3: Above, plus information about metabolites

Category 4: Cross-cutting: passport data, aTK, biotic and abiotic environmental information, modalities of use, providing country

September 2020 and meetings on DSI may still take place this year, depending on developments in the corona crisis. An introductory guide for African policymakers and stakeholders on DSI has been made available by the Initiative in English and French.

### External evaluation of the ABS Initiative

In 2020, a thorough external evaluation of the ABS Initiative's current programme phase will be commissioned. The evaluation shall take into consideration the outcomes of COP 15, allowing the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and its implications for ABS implementation and the respective capacity development challenges to be taken into account. The Secretariat has started working on the ToR for the evaluation. A first draft shall be available by early June 2020 which is to be shared with the SC for feedback. The tendering process is expected to start in July 2020, depending on international health developments. The findings will guide the conceptual design of a possible next phase of the ABS Initiative starting in April 2022. The evaluation will also take into account the findings of the EU Results Oriented Monitoring conducted during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2019. The SECO sub-project is also to be evaluated and may require a visit of evaluators in South Africa.

### Workplan and indicative budget 04/2020 to 03/2021

An overview of the work plan including indicative budget allocations for the timeframe 04/2020-03/2021 was presented by Andreas Drews (see Work Plan 04/2020-03/2021 for Africa for further details). Possible adaptations due to COVID-19 lockdowns were discussed and approved (see below "Way forward"). Mr Drews informed participants that earmarked budget from SECO as well as funding from BMZ, EU and Norway (in parts) is secured. The Francophonie (IFDD) on the other hand is not able to continue the funding of the ABS Initiative which started in 2008 but is happy to continue technical and political cooperation. The total costs for the implementation of the proposed workplan amount to more than 4.6 million Euros. The Secretariat has secured 2.07 million Euros. Around 500.000 Euros are still pending for approval.

In the subsequent discussion, it was clarified that the columns "ABS Initiative core budget" differentiate between "secured", "pending" and "open" (see Work Plan 04/2020-03/2021 – Africa). "Secured" funds are the funds of BMZ and other donors to the ABS Initiative where financing agreements have been signed. "Pending" are funds where donors indicated their intention to contribute to the ABS Initiative without having financing agreements signed. For items listed as "open", so far, no budget is secured or pending at the time of budgeting. The latter are activities such as the Regional ABS Workshop Lusophone Countries that have been proposed to the Secretariat through different channels (e.g. partners). In order to address the various needs, a donor representative suggested to the Initiative to look into private funding sources and different funding strategies.

Further, an African SC member stated that monitoring for Target 11<sup>3</sup> in the zero draft of OEWG 2 is a challenge. While he commended the ABS Initiative for its work on developing guidelines, he advocated for a better definition of baselines and the indicators. Also, the question was raised when countries receiving ABS support are ready to "walk alone". In response, the Secretariat said that a decision was taken by the SC in the past to accompany countries at different levels of

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<sup>3</sup> "Ensure that benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and related traditional knowledge, are shared fairly and equitably, resulting by 2030 in an [X] increase in benefits."

implementation. (Sub)regional workshops and trainings serve as “transmission belts” with a view to reaching a wider audience throughout the African continent. From the perspective of an African SC member, the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in many countries suffers from discontinuity of administrators. In his opinion, many success stories are therefore needed before ABS support is withdrawn from a country. Andreas Drews also pointed out that the external evaluation of the ABS Initiative will address such questions.

During the discussion, a donor representative enquired whether it would be better to strengthen the focus on ABS-compliant biodiversity value chains rather than on the development of legal frameworks and ABS agreements. In direct follow-up, a SC observer highlighted the difficulty of foreseeing a value chain without a contract guiding it. Overall, it was acknowledged that it takes considerable time to get an ABS system up and running and a donor representative emphasized that ABS is at crossroads in the CBD discussions. She added that ABS implementation is occurring at slow speed because there are many structural challenges on the way. Finally, it was clarified that the budget in the Workplan only concerns activities in Africa, not the Caribbean or Pacific.

*The Work Plan including budget is approved with the adaptations due to COVID-19 lockdowns (see the last two slides of the presentation “Workplan Africa 2020”). Once travel bans and lockdowns are lifted the Secretariat will adapt the Workplan accordingly and submit it for approval to the SC.*

## Way forward

A discussion was held on how to deal with current implementation uncertainties. Possible responses to the COVID-19 crisis were presented. These include:

- **Mapping and fostering NP implementation in Africa**
  - Webinars on implementation options, introducing flow chart approach to visualize national PIC and MAT processes as well as related permitting processes;
  - Online support for creating national permitting flow charts; populating the ABS-CH
  - Assessment and compilation of national implementation approaches, identification of best practices and comparison against AU Guidelines.
- **Knowledge Generation on MAT and Benefit-Sharing**
  - Documentation of (non-confidential) elements of contracts, conditions and nature of benefit-sharing;
  - Compilation and discussion of results, feeding into SC 2021 (as key performance indicator of ABS Initiative) as well as national / regional / international events;
  - Linking up technically and conceptually to the ABS related post 2020 discussions of goal E and target 11.
- **Contribution ABS to Conservation and Sustainable Use**
  - Webinar: Key findings of global study on linkages between ABS and conservation & sustainable use (University of Cape Town / People & Plants International)
  - Follow up with key African countries on existing approaches and experiences to foster the contribution of ABS for conservation and sustainable use
  - Feeding back into capacity development supporting African post-2020 positioning and international discussion

- **Outreach and Capacity Development on DSI in Africa**
  - Fields, sectors and methods of applications of DSI
  - Foster technical understanding of databases and their operations
  - Technical feasibility of tracking and tracing options and challenges
  - DSI awareness raising material (NFPs informing their national constituencies / peers on relevant DSI aspects)

Before coming to a close, Kristina Taboulchanas (SCBD) reminded that 2020 marks the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol. The SCBD is planning to undertake some communication and outreach activities. The Initiative also aims to use this opportunity for awareness-raising and showcasing how benefit-sharing contributes to conservation and sustainable use, e.g. during side events at SBI or COP 15 (*to be reflected in the Work Plan*).

## Closure

### Participants

#### **Members of the Steering Committee:**

Wolfram Klein (BMZ, Germany), chair  
 Florence Van Houtte (EU, DG DEV)  
 Philipp Ischer (SECO, Switzerland)  
 Bente Herstadt (NORAD, Norway)  
 Natalie Feltmann (DEFF, South Africa)  
 Kauna Schroder (MET, Namibia)  
 Véronique Koffi (MSEDD, Côte d'Ivoire)  
 Christine Akello (NEMA, Uganda)  
 Ahmed Birouk (Institut agronomique et vétérinaire Hassan II, Morocco)  
 Shamiso Mungwashu (FSNZ, Zimbabwe)  
 Lucy Mulenkei (Indigenous Information Network)  
 Lesle Jansen (Natural Justice)  
 Pierre du Plessis (pers. capacity)

#### **Members excused:**

Aurélie Dingom (MEPNDD, Cameroon)

#### **Observers:**

Kristina Taboulchanas (SCBD)  
 Mahlet Teshome (AUC)  
 Maria Julia Oliva (Union for Ethical BioTrade)  
 Olivier Rukundo (ITPGRFA-FAO)  
 Morten Walløe Tvedt (Molde University, Norway)  
 Alicja Kosłowska (EU, DG ENV)  
 Mery Ciacci (EU, DG ENV)

#### **Team (ABS Capacity Development Initiative):**

Andreas Drews  
 Suhel al-Janabi  
 Hartmut Meyer  
 Eva Fenster (rapporteur)