

ABS Capacity Development Workshop for Eastern and Southern Africa

hosted by the

Institute of Biodiversity Conservation

28th September to 2nd October 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Background

This workshop is part of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa. Background information about the Initiative and full documentation of previous workshops and events is provided on www.abs-africa.info. This website was launched under the Initiative to provide a platform for information exchange and it is envisaged to develop it further into an ABS Clearinghouse for Africa.

Following the pilot workshops under the Initiative, which targeted Eastern and Southern Africa, and ensuing pan-African workshops including representatives from the region, this workshop will be the first in a row of annually held regional workshops dedicated to participants from Eastern and Southern Africa. Like the two other regional processes under the Initiative, one focusing on Central Africa, and the other on the Maghreb and francophone West Africa, this regional process will provide participants with an opportunity to exchange views, to identify regional priorities and feed into the annual pan-African workshop.

Objectives of the workshop

Building on this background, the objectives of the workshop are to

- Support the development of national ABS policies and measures by promoting information exchange
- Identify the potential for regional harmonisation/coordination of national ABS policies.
- Develop elements of a strategy for communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) in the context of ABS in order to further the development and implementation of national ABS measures

Programme overview

The workshop will consist of the following elements of work:

Overview of key issues relating to ABS

A bio-prospecting case will be presented and will serve as a basis for discussing central elements of a national and international ABS regulatory framework. This programme element will introduce ABS “novices” to the subject matter while drawing on the knowledge of more experienced participants.

International ABS regime negotiations: presentation of African position & discussion

The current state of negotiations will be presented and discussed, including relevant results of the 7th meeting of the ad hoc open-ended working group on ABS (WGABS-7) and the expert meeting on traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

Focal Points will inform participants about the African position in the international regime negotiations, in particular relating to traditional knowledge associated to genetic resources, compliance and fair and equitable benefit-sharing. The ensuing discussion will allow clarifying points raised and commenting on the African position.

Documenting traditional knowledge

In the discussions on protecting traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, documentation of such knowledge takes a prominent place. Advantages such as an insurance against the loss of such knowledge and a clear attribution to the knowledge holder face disadvantages such as the placing of this knowledge into the public domain. Participants will discuss these and other issues relating to documenting traditional knowledge.

A field trip to a medicinal plant research centre, with information provided by, and discussions with, different stakeholders will shed light onto the complexities of the subject matter and raise participants' awareness over different stakeholders' needs.

Regional harmonisation/coordination

Given the transboundary nature of many genetic resources that are of (potential) interest to bio-prospectors, it is advantageous for any region to adopt a regionally harmonised or at least coordinated approach. Regional harmonisation/coordination is an important step in preventing that genetic resources are taken from a country with the lowest level of regulation and consequent benefit-sharing requirement. The secretariats of SADC and EAC could provide helpful in assisting a regional approach to regulating ABS. Participants will identify elements that could constitute a regional approach to ABS, discuss its merits and challenges, and identify possible next steps.

Communication, education and public awareness

Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) are central elements in bringing ABS to the forefront of the public, as well as setting it onto policy makers' agendas. Having recognised the importance of CEPA in advancing ABS, African participants have called on the ABS Initiative to support their efforts in this domain. A Pan-African CEPA workshop was held in March 2009, leading to a roadmap for developing CEPA strategies for ABS. The workshop's results will be presented and discussed with the aim of defining elements of a CEPA strategy.

Products of the workshop

- Elements of a CEPA strategy to develop stakeholders' capacities in relation to ABS
- Recommendations for further work on documenting traditional knowledge
- Identification of potential roles assumed by the secretariats of SADC and EAC in furthering regional cooperation and harmonisation

Participants

Up to 50 participants will take part in the workshop, including private sector representatives involved in biotrade and bioprospecting, ABS National Focal Points and representatives of Competent National Authorities for ABS, negotiators in the last meetings of the ABS Working Group, relevant international institutions as well as NGOs from the local, national and regional level with practical experiences in the implementation of relevant projects and/or business initiatives.

Contact

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