

**Getting the message across:
Crafting 'CEPA' approaches to promote
successful negotiation and implementation of ABS**

A workshop organized in cooperation with

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

9th to 12th March 2009, Nairobi, Kenya

Background

This workshop is part of the **ABS Capacity Development Initiative for Africa**, which was launched in 2006 to help enabling African states and stakeholders to use benefits generated by the use of genetic resources for biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. Background information about the Initiative and full documentation of previous workshops and events is provided on www.abs-africa.info.

In the course of developing national and international ABS regimes, **communicating** the importance of ABS, **educating** different stakeholders about its objectives, intentions and procedures, and **creating public awareness** about the implications of ABS have proven to be a major challenge. A variety of tools are available regarding communication, education and public awareness (**CEPA**) of goals 1 and 2 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). However, experience has revealed that many of them are difficult to translate directly to ABS. This is due to the peculiarities of ABS, such as the highly complex negotiation process, non-tangibility of many ABS issues, a plethora of diverging interests, a very unequal distribution of power among stakeholders, etc.

Efforts are therefore currently undertaken to develop **ABS specific CEPA strategies and approaches**, with a special focus on African stakeholders and perspectives. The overall aim is to **increase the effectiveness of negotiations and implementation of ABS regimes** on the international local, regional, national and levels, thus promoting fair deals which substantially contribute to poverty alleviation in Africa.

Two workshops have already addressed this issue, one in Dakar, Senegal, and one in Antsiranana, Madagascar (Nov. and Dec. 2008 respectively). They brought together a variety of African ABS stakeholders to reflect about the goals, challenges and building blocks for developing effective ABS CEPA strategies and approaches. An important result of those workshops is that ABS requires a **multitude of communication strategies**, reflecting the diversity of involved stakeholders, their different levels of insight into the issue and their often diverging needs and interests. The complexity of ABS doesn't lend itself to singular, centralized communication strategies. Instead, **differentiated and well-sequenced approaches** are called for. The initial step in this sequence is lobbying relevant policy makers and administrators, so as to strengthen political will and momentum for ABS.

Objectives of the Workshop

This workshop aims at

- Taking stock of recommendations elaborated so far for promoting ABS CEPA in Africa.
- Providing participants with new tools, approaches and ideas on how to use communication as a lever for anchoring ABS in the political system, thus supporting the cause of sustainable poverty alleviation in Africa.
- Translating those tools, approaches and ideas to the participants' specific circumstances, and deriving generalized recommendations for other interested parties.
- Supporting cooperation between CBS/ABS Focal Points and Communication experts to design and implement ABS communication strategies together.

Participants

The two previous workshops have underlined the important role of CBD/ABS Focal Points in communicating ABS and promoting political will. Yet, it is clear that the Focal Points, who are typically subject-matter experts, cannot do it all by themselves. They need support from other parties, such as national and international communication experts who, in turn, are not necessarily familiar with the specifics of ABS. Both need to work closely together to achieve the desired effects. Specifically, the workshop addresses the following groups:

- International environmental communication experts (e.g., CEPA Informal Advisory Committee representatives, Program officer CEPA at SCBD, UNEP communication unit);
- Members of the African "ABS CEPA task force", representing various stakeholder groups;
- ABS communication teams from selected African countries, each consisting of
 - CBD/ABS Focal Point
 - Communication expert(s) from national institution that is responsible for ABS

Participants from English as well as French speaking African countries are cordially invited to join, as simultaneous translation services will be available throughout the workshop.

Program Overview

The program will cover the following elements:

- Reviewing and synthesizing results from previous workshops and meetings
- Identifying and prioritizing political actors to be addressed (communication “targets”)
- Specifying communication objectives and messages to be conveyed at the political level
- Input and training on, e.g., (to be specified)
 - Strategic communication for sustainable development
 - Existing approaches from the CBD CEPA toolkit that are applicable to ABS
 - Complementary approaches: Lobbying, Influencing, Identifying strategic partners
- Selecting suitable modules and steps for implementation
- Deriving generalized approaches
- Action planning and agreements

Date and Venue

The workshop will be held from 9th to 12th March 2009 at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Further details about the venue and accommodation will be provided in due time.

Further Information

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