

AN "INTERNATIONAL REGIME FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING"

IUCN-ELC has been able to embark on a 3-year project for the development and implementation of "access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use" (usually referred to as "access and benefit-sharing" or "ABS") under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

ABS is perhaps the most complex, and least understood of the Convention's three primary objectives (the other two being "conservation of biological diversity", and "sustainable use of its components".) Despite a general lack of clarity regarding the concept, representatives of the 187 countries that are parties to the CBD will sit down to finalise the Convention's "international ABS regime" – a process mandated both by earlier conferences of the CBD parties, as well as by an express statement in the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

The IUCN-ELC project focuses on the practical elements of such a regime. It is currently focused on developing critical data needed to fill informational gaps, as inputs into the international process. In 2004-2005, it will place primary emphasis on technical assistance for implementation of the elements of the regime at the national and regional levels.

The project is collaborating closely with the secretariats from the CBD and other conventions, and working with and through a number of experts and partner organisations, including FAO, UNU, UC Davis, Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental, IUCN-PBIA, IUCN-Marine, and experts and CEL members in Africa, Latin America, North America, and Europe.

As the project expands into later phases, it is expected that it will include direct participation by IUCN Regional offices in West Africa, Mesoamerica, South America and Asia, as well as national and international partners. A web-page (for general information) and web-portal (for collaborating partners and advisors) are being developed and will be posted within the next few months.

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