

UNU/IUCN COLLABORATION FOCUSES ON GENETIC RESOURCES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND MONGOLIA

Last week in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the IUCN-ELC's "ABS Project" sponsored and co-presented a regional workshop on "Legal Issues of Access and Benefit-sharing in Central Asia and Mongolia," through a collaboration with the IUCN Office for Central Asia and UN University. More than 25 participants from Mongolia and all 6 central Asian republics met for 3 days of intense, high-level discussion of the practical issues surrounding the creation of genetic resources frameworks within these countries. The meeting was originally intended to focus on the creation of legislation directed at "access to genetic resources and equitably sharing the benefits from their utilization" (often called "ABS" – a concept created under the Convention on Biological Diversity.) Over its discussion, however, the legal impediments to ABS legislative development on this issue were recognised, and the workshop's emphasis began to shift to the possible need for a more comprehensive framework addressing the broader range of genetic resource issues, including biosafety, agriculture and farmers rights, as well as ABS – an approach that might create new pathways and solutions of ABS and other genetic resource implementation problems. This potentially ground-breaking approach is one result of the first year of work under the ABS project, and is currently the subject of an intensive international research project (and publication in 2005). Like all activities under the ABS Project, the Almaty workshop owes a debt of gratitude to the German Ministry for Development Co-operation (BMZ), without whose financial support it could not have been held.

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