



## United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

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24 January 2017

Dear Dr. Chan,

The UN Biodiversity Conference, which included the concurrent meetings of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 13), the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 8), and the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (COP-MOP 2), was held from 2 to 17 December 2016, in Cancun, Mexico.

Given the close linkages between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol, I am pleased to bring to your attention some of the outcomes of the Conference which are of particular relevance to pathogen sharing, digital sequence information on genetic resources and health. We would be very appreciative if this information could be made available to the WHO Member States.

### Key outcomes: the Nagoya Protocol and Public Health

The agenda for the meeting of the governing body of the Nagoya Protocol – the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol – included an item on cooperation with other international organizations, conventions and initiatives. Under this item, at the request of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the advance Executive Summary of the WHO study on “Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and Pathogen Sharing: Public Health Implications” was made available for the information of participants in the meeting<sup>1</sup>.

Discussions under this agenda item resulted in adoption of decision NP-2/5<sup>2</sup> which, among other things, requested the Executive Secretary to:

- Liaise with WHO on the outcomes of the study and to transmit information on the study to COP-MOP 3;
- Share with WHO relevant information provided by Parties in their national reports, including on the implementation of Article 8(b) of the Nagoya Protocol which addresses health emergencies<sup>3</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> See [UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/2/INF/12](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/np-mop-02/np-mop-02-dec-05-en.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Parties are to submit their interim national reports on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol by the fourth quarter of 2017.

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- Conduct a study into criteria that could be used to identify what constitutes a specialized international access and benefit-sharing instrument in the context of Article 4(4) of the Nagoya Protocol and what could be a possible process for recognizing such an instrument. This study is to be submitted for the consideration of the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the third meeting of the COP-MOP, both of which will be held in 2018; and
- Continue to engage with relevant ongoing processes and policy debates, including in the WHO, among others, to collect information on current discussions on the relationship between the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources and access and benefit-sharing arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and to include relevant information gathered during these engagements in the information provided to the process on digital sequence information on genetic resources (see below).

### **Key outcomes: Digital sequence information on genetic resources**

The issue of digital sequence information on genetic resources<sup>4</sup> emerged as a cross-cutting issue during the UN Biodiversity Conference. The result was two decisions: one adopted by the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (decision XIII/16)<sup>5</sup> and one adopted by COP-MOP 2 to the Nagoya Protocol (decision NP-2/14)<sup>6</sup>. In these decisions, the Parties agreed to consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention and the objective of the Nagoya Protocol at the next meetings of the governing bodies of the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol, in 2018 (COP 14 and COP-MOP 3).

The decisions also establish a coordinated and non-duplicative process for further work on this topic in the 2017-2018 period. This process includes the submission of views, the commissioning of a study to clarify terminology and concepts and to assess the extent and terms and conditions of use of digital sequence information, a meeting of an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group and consideration of this matter by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which will make recommendations to COP 14 and COP-MOP 3.

### **Key outcomes: Biodiversity and human health**

On the interlinkages between biodiversity and human health, building on decision XII/21<sup>7</sup>, Parties to the Convention addressed the implications of the findings of the WHO-CBD's *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, A State of Knowledge Review*, and adopted decision XIII/6.<sup>8</sup> In the decision, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties and other Governments to make use of the *State of Knowledge Review* and its key messages to promote biodiversity-health linkages, with a view to maximizing health benefits, assessing trade-offs and addressing common drivers for health risks and biodiversity loss. An annex to the decision includes information on the linkages between biodiversity and human health derived from the findings of the *State of Knowledge Review*, which Parties are invited to make use of in the development of national policies, programmes, plans and strategies.

The decision also requested the Executive Secretary to collaborate with the WHO, among others, including by disseminating the findings of the *State of Knowledge Review*, supporting capacity-building activities on the linkages between biodiversity and human health, developing guidance on "One Health", and co-convening with the WHO a meeting of the interagency liaison group on biodiversity and human health.

<sup>4</sup> Terminology is subject to further discussion and clarification.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-16-en.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/np-mop-02/np-mop-02-dec-14-en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-21-en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-06-en.pdf>

In the context of actions to enhance the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, it was also decided that the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties should consider the mainstreaming of biodiversity into several sectors, including health.

Considering the issues discussed above, which provide opportunities for increased synergies and information-sharing between the WHO and the CBD, I look forward to the outcomes of the 140th meeting of the Executive Board and continued collaboration and engagement with the WHO in 2017-2018. In this regard, my staff will follow-up with your staff on the various items outlined above.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you of the end of my mandate as Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity and thank you for our fruitful collaboration over the past five years. Ms. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, former Minister for Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania, has been appointed as the new Executive Secretary. I am confident that the constructive partnership between the WHO and the CBD will continue under her leadership.

Yours sincerely,



Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias  
Executive Secretary