

Joint press release by the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) and Federal Environment Agency (UBA)

Breakthrough in the fight against biopiracy

International community wants fairer distribution of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources

After tough international negotiations substantial progress towards an international agreement against biopiracy was achieved in Montreal, Canada on 15 November 2009. The goal of the envisaged agreement is to ensure a more equitable distribution of the economic benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. "I am happy about this breakthrough in the negotiations. It cannot be that industrialised countries, having overexploited their own natural resources, now use genetic resources from developing countries, for example for pharmaceuticals production, without giving a fair share of the benefits resulting from this to the respective countries", said Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) and current President of the COP Bureau of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which provides the framework for the agreement.

It was not until the last day of the week-long of negotiations that the just under 500 delegates representing the 194 Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity agreed on a complete negotiating text. This text will be the basis for a legally binding regime, to be concluded by the end of 2010, on access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of the benefits, also referred to as the ABS (Access and Benefit Sharing) agreement. The next round of negotiations will start in Cartagena, Columbia in March 2010. If everything goes as planned, the international ABS agreement against biopiracy could be adopted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010.

"It is out of the question for us to expect the countries of the South to provide their biological diversity for free, which we then use for industrial products and sell back to them. If we, the wealthy industrialised countries, expect developing countries to protect their nature, then we have to establish binding rules to ensure that they receive a fair share in the economic profits resulting from biological resources", stressed UBA President Jochen Flasbarth.

Since the UN Conference on Biological Diversity in Bonn in May 2008 Germany has had the Presidency of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and will continue to hold this position until the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Japan in October 2010. One focus of the German CBD Presidency is on negotiating and adopting an international regime on the fair sharing of the benefits arising from the use of biological diversity, the ABS regime. During the High Level Segment at the UN Conference in Bonn Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her support for international rules against biopiracy. Since then, some countries that used to oppose establishing a regime, such as Australia, Japan and Canada, have considerably shifted their position. One of the reasons the US has not ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity is because it rejects internationally binding rules against biopiracy.