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## **UNU-IAS Pocket Guide**

**Access to Genetic Resources,  
Benefit Sharing  
and Bioprospecting**

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# **UNU-IAS Pocket Guide**

## **Access to Genetic Resources, Benefit Sharing and Bioprospecting**

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## Foreword

There has been much debate on what is needed to achieve the third objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing (ABS). The issue of access to genetic resources and benefit sharing and associated issues such as traditional knowledge and intellectual property are being debated both within the CBD's processes and other forums such as the World Intellectual Property Organization Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (WIPO-IGC). The CBD processes continue to be the dominant fora however, and a major achievement of the debates was the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines which sets out a range of voluntary measures for both "provider countries" and "user countries" to achieve the CBD's ABS objective.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) mandated CBD to negotiate and

agree on an international regime on benefit sharing. Parties to the CBD began working on development of the regime since 2002. It was decided during CBD Eighth Conference of Parties in Curitiba that the negotiations for the regime should be completed by 2010. Despite progress in the negotiations of the international regime and the quickly approaching 2010 deadline, several stakeholders are unfamiliar with the international ABS debates. Sometimes the understanding of the principle that CBD calls for, facilitation of access, itself is misunderstood as regulation of access. Several country experiences indicate that a poor understanding of ABS principles results in inefficient policy development. The ABS debates can be difficult and given the social, environmental and ethical implications of any ABS regime it is important that all stakeholders, especially local communities in provider countries understand the basic issues and terminologies associated with the debates. This pocket guide thus

seeks to provide a simple and concise summary of the ABS and bioprospecting issues and a glossary of the terms being used. It is hoped that the guide will be used by local stakeholders and representatives to the Convention who are new to the debates as a quick introduction and reference to the issues.

The United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) was established in 1996 as a research and training centre of UNU to undertake research and post-graduate training on emerging issues of strategic importance to the United Nations and its Member States. Development of this pocket guide is part of the wider Biodiplomacy programme of the Institute. The programme has developed objective information documents for the international negotiation and also contributed to

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