

Access and Benefit Sharing in Non-commercial Biodiversity Research

David E. Schindel, Executive Secretary
Consortium for the Barcode of Life, Smithsonian Institution¹

Two of the most contentious issues associated with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are the regulation of access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits associated with the use of those resources. The CBD has set a 2010 goal for creation of an International Regime for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and a series of six meetings are scheduled for 2008-2010 with that goal in mind. There is great concern in the research community that the International Regime might make no distinction between commercial research (such as pharmaceutical bioprospecting) and non-commercial research (biotic surveys, inventories, ecological studies). This could lead to severe restrictions on access to biological specimens and could hamper international research collaborations.

The Consortium for the Barcode of Life (CBOL; www.barcoding.si.edu) held a week-long workshop on ABS in non-commercial research and has prepared reports that will be introduced into the negotiations of the International ABS Regime. These reports:

- Explore the distinctions between commercial and non-commercial research;
- Describe the benefits and benefit-sharing associated with non-commercial research;
- Consider the risks of lost benefits perceived by developing countries; and
- Outline voluntary compliance measures that could assess and mitigate these risks.

This half-day session will present summaries of the main issues associated with ABS and the development of the International ABS regime. A case study of a non-commercial research project in French Polynesia will be presented, in which the different perspectives of the diverse stakeholders will be explored:

- The researcher;
- The sponsoring university;
- A local government agency; and
- The local community.

¹ Contact information: CE115, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC 20560, SchindelD@si.edu, 202/633-0812