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Nations agree on historic UN pact on sharing benefits of world's genetic resources



29 October 2010 – After nearly two decades of debate, governments from around the world today [agreed](#) to a new United Nations treaty on managing the planet's wealth of genetic resources – from animals to plants to fungi – more fairly and systematically.

The decision came on the last day of the two-week conference of parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya, Japan.

The new pact, which is a protocol to the Convention, will set up an International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources, laying down the basic ground rules on how nations cooperate in obtaining genetic resources.

“This is a day to celebrate in terms of a new and innovative response to the alarming loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, and a day to celebrate in terms of opportunities for lives and livelihoods in terms of overcoming poverty and delivering sustainable development,” said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)).

He said that today's achievement also shows how countries can put aside the “narrow differences that all-too-often divide in favour of the broader, shared issues that can unite peoples and nations,” congratulating governments for “bringing a fresh vision to the more intelligent management of life on Earth.”

The new Nagoya Protocol will outline how benefits – for example, from when a plant’s genetics are turned into a commercial product, such as medicine – will be shared with countries and communities who conserved and managed that resource, in some cases for millennia.

It also lays out rules on how substances and compounds derived from genetic resources will be dealt with, as well as on the issue of pathogens, including how developed countries could obtain a flu virus in emergency situations to develop a vaccine to counter a possible epidemic.

In Nagoya, governments also adopted a new strategic plan, including targets for addressing biodiversity loss to be met by 2020.

Countries agreed to increase land-based protected areas and national parks to 17 per cent of the Earth’s surface from 12.5 per cent now, and to raise the percentage of marine protected areas from 1 per cent currently to 10 per cent.

The plan also calls for lifting the extinction risk from known threatened species by 2020.

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