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## **Key UN protocol on biodiversity receives another 13 signatories**



The Caspian Sea is a rich source of biodiversity, as well as natural resources including oil and gas

20 September 2011 –

Thirteen countries today signed a key protocol to a United Nations treaty promoting a more equitable sharing of the planet's genetic resources and their benefits as the annual UN event aimed at encouraging States to sign, ratify or accede to various global pacts and accords kicked off.

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity – which was adopted in October last year in the Japanese city – now has 55 signatories.

Representatives of Serbia, Belgium, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, France, Greece, Palau, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania and Tajikistan added their signatures at UN Headquarters in New York.

But the protocol will only enter into force some 90 days after 50 countries have consented to be bound by it, which means they must ratify the text. So far no countries have done that.

The protocol envisages the setting up of an international regime on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, which will lay down the basic ground rules on how nations cooperate in obtaining genetic resources, according to the administrative offices of the 193-member Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which drafted the protocol.

It outlines 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 which conserved and managed that resource, in some cases for millennia.

Genetic resources, whether from plant, animal or micro-organisms, are used for various purposes, ranging from basic research to the development of products. Users of genetic resources include research institutes, universities and private companies operating in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, horticulture, cosmetics and biotechnology.

The benefits derived may include the sharing of the results of research and development carried out on genetic resources, the transfer of technologies that make use of those resources, participation in biotechnological research activities, or monetary benefits arising from the commercialization of products based on genetic resources, such as pharmaceuticals.

The signatories took place the same day that a senior UN official took part in a webcast with viewers from around the world to outline his strategy for responding to Earth's recent loss of biodiversity and the importance of the UN decade that is dedicated to the issue.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the CBD Executive Secretary, and Monique Barbut, the chief executive and chair of the Global Environment Facility, took part in the interactive event from New York this afternoon.

Last year the General Assembly declared that 2011 to 2020 will be the UN Decade on Biodiversity and Mr. Djoghlaif and Ms. Barbut discussed how the UN system will try to use the Decade to build on earlier progress on biodiversity.

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