

Minutes of the Project Board Meeting

Project name: UNDP-GEF Global ABS Project (Nagoya Protocol)
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Date: 22 June 2021
Subject: 5th meeting of the Steering Committee
Implementing: Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS
Project Team based: Istanbul and Panama Regional Hubs

1. General opening and introduction

In his capacity as Chairperson of the Project Board for UNDP-GEF project “Strengthening human resources, legal frameworks, and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol” (Global ABS project), Mr. Gerd Trogemann, Manager of Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and Central Asia (IRH), welcomed the participants to the fifth meeting of the steering committee, including UNV and all country participants (Belarus, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Jordan, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan).

Gerd Trogemann welcomed participants to the final meeting of the Steering Committee of the Global ABS Project and explained that it was with a smile, for the successful and interesting project, but with sadness in reaching its end. He guided participants through the agenda of the meeting and clarified that for this meeting there had been no selection of countries to participate as Senior Beneficiaries, but that all the countries covered under the project had been invited to participate. Based on the high number of participants he requested all to be concise and have short interventions.

2. Presentation & Discussion on 2021 Progress and Final Results of the Project (documents 2 and 5)

Alejandro Lago, Manager of the UNDP-GEF Global ABS Project, made the presentation contained in document 5. He summarized key results obtained by the project under its 4 components, summarizing the information contained in document 2 (Final Report of the project). Under component 1, he highlighted that the project had supported the development of draft ABS legislation in all the countries of the project and that 8 countries have approved ABS legal measures. The project had trained 12,874 stakeholders on ABS procedures, the Nagoya Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Under component 2, the key results were the support to 33 biodiscovery projects that served to develop research capacities at the national level and also to build trust between providers and user of genetic resources. 7 countries had developed strategies to promote bioprospection activities as part as their bioeconomy strategy or other mechanisms to promote the valorization of their genetic resources. A shortfall under this component was the limited number of commercial agreements signed, where only 10 countries have managed to sign 238 commercial agreements. In regard to component 3, the project had supported the development of 28 Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) in 15 countries. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic impeded 4 countries to support the development of BCPs as originally planned.

Agustina Rato (UNV), presented the results obtained under component 4, the Global ABS Community, the community of practice on ABS with more than 700 registered members. In particular she highlighted that the project had provided 46 (original target 15) technical assistances to requirements on ABS and it had generated 41 (original target 20) Knowledge products. She also indicated that the services (ABS Legal Clinics and ABS Business Facility) of the community were available to anyone interested on ABS matters. The launch of the Global ABS Community as an online platform in February 2019 has proven crucial for the project and the ABS

Community to maintain the work, the discussions and the progress on ABS matters through the organization of ABS events, such as the virtual Global ABS Conference celebrated in November 2020.

Alejandro Lago presented the financial overview of the project indicating that the last budget revision recently approved will result in utilization of entire funds allocated to the project. He highlighted the multiplier effect of the project at the regional and global level and the introduced the adaptative approach followed during its implementation, for instance reprogramming funds that were not going to be spent at the global level due to the pandemic making them available to conduct additional activities at the national level and supporting other urgent needs. He indicated that UNDP had extended for 5 months the contracts of Agustina Rato and Alejandro Lago to prepare a solid proposal for a second phase of the project and to keep the Global ABS Community in operation during that transition period.

Finally, he paid tribute to the colleagues who passed away during the implementation of the project, in particular to those colleagues, relatives and friends that left us in a premature and an unfair way due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He thanked all the colleagues at the national level for the tremendous effort and fantastic work done, making the difference on the ground. He also thanked the members of the Global ABS team, Santiago Carrizosa as UNDP Global Lead on ABS, and Gerd Trogemann and IRH team for all the support provided to keep the project on track during all its implementation.

Hilda Paparoni, Manager of the UNV Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, expressed the stellar character of the Global ABS project for UNV and the role that volunteers can have in a project like this one, with a high involvement and engagement and its multiplier effect into the broader population. She considered the project and in particular the Global ABS Community as an efficient instrument to ensure that this community of practice continues and maintains itself, through the transfer of knowledge and the fairness and equity of the ABS transactions. She congratulated the team for the achievements of the project and remarked the interest of UNV to continue to be part of the project in its second phase.

3. Presentation of the Conclusions and Recommendations from the Terminal Evaluation of the project (document 4)

Santiago Carrizosa, UNDP Global Lead on Access to genetic resources and Benefit Sharing (ABS), introduced the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the draft report of the Terminal Evaluation of the project contained in Document 4. He indicated that unfortunately the consultant who is conducting the Terminal Evaluation of the project was not in a position to make this presentation and also explained the draft status of the report, which still requires some corrections. From the draft report of the Terminal Evaluation he highlighted that the 4 components of projects had positive outcomes: the project had a positive impact in the development of ABS national legal frameworks, increased trust between provider and user of genetic resources, generated more awareness on ABS amongst indigenous peoples and local communities, and increased South-South cooperation about ABS issues. Most countries involved IPLCs in the development of their ABS legal frameworks, something that should be continued in a second phase. The institutional capacity of government agencies to develop, implement and enforce ABS and the Nagoya Protocol is sufficient. Biodiscovery projects and opportunities to develop commercial agreements is still a challenge due to many factors related to research and development but also to the absence in many cases of the necessary ABS legal frameworks. The project delivered positive changes in terms of awareness, knowledge and practices related to ABS, but it had problems to complete baselines scores for this indicator. The ABS community of practice facilitated South-South cooperation between countries at the regional and global levels.

In regard to the lessons learned, Santiago underscored that the draft evaluation had identified the need to prevent delays of technical assistance caused by the rotation of government authorities, something that could be addressed through detailed monitoring plans and more coordinated follow up. A second lesson is that national authorities should be more involved in the preparation of national legislation to ensure more

ownership of the process and final outcomes. A third lesson learned is the need to promote a multidisciplinary team and strong partnerships for effective implementation of ABS regulations. Lastly, the Global ABS Community was useful in disseminating knowledge on ABS at the global level.

In terms of recommendations, the evaluator recommended a second phase of the project, particularly to increase the capacity on ABS in new countries and also to support dedicated consultancies generated by request through the community of practice. Another area of intervention for the second phase would be the development of partnerships with the direct participation of IPLCs, particularly women. The evaluator also recommended to scale up capacity building activities on ABS mechanisms for competent authorities and decision makers.

Santiago concluded that once completely reviewed and finalized, the final report of the terminal evaluation will be submitted to the GEF and that he will continue to work with Alejandro on the preparation of a proposal for a second phase of the project and on the identification of potential donors, such as the GEF under GEF-7 or GEF-8. He thanked all the colleagues that have been involved in the implementation of the project hoping for a successful second phase.

Gerd Trogemann thanked Santiago for his summary of the draft report of the Terminal Evaluation, wished for a prompt recovery of the evaluator and also to the circulation of the final report of the Terminal Evaluation, whenever available, to the members of the Steering Committee of the project prior to its circulation to the GEF.

4. Presentation of the Quality Assurance Report (document 3)

Gerd Trogemann highlighted that quality assurance is a critical part for UNDP and carefully managed in all UNDP engagements. Abusabeeb Elsadig, Regional Programme Coordination, RBM and Quality Assurance Specialist, underscored that quality assurance assessment is part of all the requirements that UNDP has at the design, during implementation of projects (every 2 years) and at the closure. At the latter, quality assurance is very important because it provides a snapshot on how sustainable the results carried out by the project and how the ideas invested under the project can be replicated and also proper exit with certain parameters is in place. In particular, he highlighted the ownership in regard the results of the project to ensure its continuity beyond the lifespan of the project.

Abusabeeb enumerated the seven main pillars of the assessment: 1. Strategic (contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and UNDP Strategic Plan); 2. Relevance (programming objectives and results are consistent with national needs and with adequate feedback from the national level, including marginalized and minority groups); 3. Principled (Human Rights, gender, resilience and sustainability); 4. Management and monitoring (outcomes and outputs with the indicators are consistent, SMART and result oriented); 5. Efficiency (efficient use of resources from the design to the implementation); 6. Effectiveness (design and implementation to inform corrective actions); 7. Sustainability (results are accomplished and national ownership of the project). The final assessment report found that the project overall rating is highly satisfactory (in 5 out of the 7 areas the project was exemplary, highly satisfactory in one and satisfactory in another one). In his view the rating of the report confirms the findings brought in the terminal evaluation and in the final report of the project. The Quality Assessment Report for Closure has been endorsed by the Project Board.

5. Discussions and Inputs from Senior Beneficiaries Representatives

The Chairman thanked all the participant countries and mentioned that there was a long list of speakers and that the order of interventions would be from East to West.

India

Dr VB Mathur, Chairman of the National Biodiversity Authority in India underscored that the project in India had focused in and prioritized the first two components of the project. In regard to component 1, despite of the small size of the project, it reached 16 out of the 28 states of India, positively impacting the capacity of 25 law schools. 3 important knowledge products were developed (ABS Handbook for researchers; Monitoring guidelines for research institutions to promote compliance with ABS mechanism; Ethical Code of Conduct on ABS for researchers) and recently presented during the International Day of Biodiversity (22nd May 2021) by the Minister of Environment. He thanked the opportunity provided by the project under additional activities to develop a voluntary certification scheme to incentivize ABS process in the country through reputational benefits to companies, thanking also the project and the Global ABS Community for facilitating the interaction with Costa Rica, as the only country in the world that has in place such a system. He also underscored the importance and huge potential of the pilot project to test blockchain technology on ABS and showed his support to implement it under the second phase of the project. He concluded his intervention looking forward to having a phase 2 (and phase 3) of the project and expressed his deep appreciation to the management team of the project led by Alejandro at the global level and by Dr. Ruchi Pant at the national level.

Jordan

Mohammad Abumughli, National Project Officer of Environment, Climate Change and Deputy Resident Representative Portfolio (UNDP Jordan) congratulated the team of the Global ABS Project for its big success. He highlighted that Jordan had recently approved its ABS bylaw and that in the second phase of the project they will require further support in its implementation. He also underscored the importance of having a well-defined strategy to engage private sector into ABS, because otherwise it could be perceived as another burden.

Belarus

Elena Makeyeva, Head of the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and ABS National Focal Point highlighted that the project had been very fruitful and creative for Belarus. She summarized the different outcomes obtained in Belarus under the 3 components of the project, the ABS regulation, the intellectual database and the inventory of genetic resources as an on-going process and the relevance of Traditional Knowledge, despite the absence of Indigenous Peoples in the country, with several recommendations to the Ministry of Culture. She also mentioned the role that Belarus had played with the support of the project in organizing different activities and trainings of relevance at the subregional level, showing the multiplier effect of the project in neighbouring countries. As the main challenges she referred to the restoration of the local breeds of animals and the local plant varieties, some of them at the verge of extinction, as they are disappearing at a very fast pace, and she called Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to establish an international initiative for the restauration and sustainable use of those resources calling also for integration of efforts in the mobilization of resources in the implementation of the Convention and its two protocols. She concluded looking forward to the preparation and implementation of the second phase offering their support, not only for its preparation and implementation but also for the implementation of the project in other countries within the region.

Sudan

EL Khitma EL Awad Mohammed, Senior Researcher of the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR), congratulated the team and the project because without this project they could have not made all the developments that have taken place in Sudan. She announced that the ABS law had been submitted that day to the Council of State for final approval and they expect to have this instrument in place in a matter of days. She thanked all the colleagues part of the project and she indicated the need to continue the project to continue to develop more capacities at the national level and in order to be able to establish more partnerships.

Kenya

Washington Ayiemba, Programme Management Specialist in UNDP Kenya, highlighted that the project has strengthened capacities in particular on Digital Sequence Information (DSI) in preparation for the international discussions that are taking place on the matter, but also in the development of the revised ABS legal framework of the country, underscoring that its approval is still pending despite the direct engagement of UNDP Resident Representative in high level discussions with the relevant Ministry. They expect to have the key framework adopted in the coming months. He thanked the team for the support provided and will provide comments and suggestions for the second phase at the appropriate moment.

South Africa

Janice Golding, focal point of Nature, Climate and Energy in UNDP South Africa, echoed all the comments in thanking and congratulating the ABS team for the tremendous work done and the ratings obtained by the project. She underscored the mobilization of 1 million dollars in co-financing of the project by the South African government as the best testimony of the commitment of the country to ABS and the project and a good example of the efforts taken by the government to mobilize bioeconomy to create the enabling conditions to harness natural capital and to create the green jobs. She also highlighted that despite the limited funds disbursed by the project at the national level (USD 350,000 per country) the project in South Africa has been able to put in place very critical building blocks for sustainability and scaling up of ABS, which have served as the basis to launch a 6.2 million dollars GEF project on ABS under GEF-7. In concluding, she thanked the Global ABS Project for creating a very vibrant and dynamic ecosystem on ABS in South Africa. Finally she presented four general recommendations to take into consideration in the development of a second phase of the project, namely: 1. identification and mapping of high technical expertise; 2. solid national ownership; 3. adopting a programmatic approach, including the pilot test on blockchain; 4. leverage through other internal partners, such as the Small Grant Programme, very much focused on GEF-7 on bioeconomies and the link with private sector.

Ecuador

Byron Lagla, Biodiversity Director at the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador, highlighted the main achievements of the project in the country, in particular the mobilization of indigenous peoples and local communities on ABS matters and the interinstitutional collaboration forged between the Ministry of Environment, the Secretary of State for Intellectual Property (SENADI) and INABIO to leverage ABS legal instruments and implementation. He thanked the continuous support provided by the team of the Global ABS project at the global and national level.

Colombia

Juan Camilo Roncallo, member of the Group of Genetic Resources at the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, underscored the importance of the research conducted under the project by the Instituto Amazónico SINCHI in the development of pigments from microorganisms with commercial value. The second highlight for Colombia was the design of an economic proposal for the fair and equitable. Third was the proposal of voluntary standards for the technical and input for the preparation of a draft legislation to ratify the Nagoya Protocol. The development of an online course to train users of genetic resources on ABS. He indicated that the key challenges are the increase in the number of users of genetic resources and improving the interactions and harmonization between governments and private entities around biotechnological developments, which must be done involving local communities.

Colleagues from Tajikistan, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Uruguay expressed their appreciation to the project through the chat box but did not make oral interventions.

This concluded the project board members participation.

6. Concluding remarks

Gerd Trogemann offered the floor to Alejandro Lago to make some conclusions and final remarks based on the comments received during the meeting and to explain the transition process.

Alejandro Lago expressed appreciation for all the comments and reflections made by the participating countries indicating that they would be incorporated, as appropriate, in the proposal and design of the second phase of the project. He explained that few days ago UNDP had extended Agustina Rato's contract and his own contract for a period of 5 months to continue the activities and support provided by the Global ABS Community and to prepare a proposal for a second phase of the project in order to approach potential donors. He underscored the importance of the full involvement of all the countries in the preparation of the proposal for a second phase of the project and announced that a round of regional meetings will be organized to receive all those inputs. He also requested the active support of the countries in the identification and mobilization of possible donors. The need to mainstream ABS into other policies and programmes was mentioned as a critical approach for the success of a second phase and, in that regard, a round of meetings with other UN agencies and other UNDP programmes to identify concrete areas of collaboration to be included into the second phase was also announced. He concluded indicating the plan to have a full-fledged proposal in the next couple of months to quickly initiate the contact with donors, highlighting that the second half of the year, with the celebration of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the super year for nature, brought an important window of opportunity for the realization of the second phase of the project.

Santiago Carrizosa acknowledged again the role that UNV has played in the first phase of the project not only providing technical advice and with the mobilization of volunteers but also in the mobilization of funds. He underscored the importance of identifying sources of co-financing at the national level and asked colleagues to communicate those sources to Alejandro Lago.

In his concluding remarks, Gerd Trogemann thanked again participating countries and colleagues for their support in making this project so successful, highlighting that the project has been a good example of how to overcome obstacles related to this type of global projects. He thanked national counterparts, colleagues at all UNDP Country Offices, UNV and the Global ABS team for their work and efforts. Finally, he thanked Alejandro Lago, as the manager of the project, and congratulated him for his successful management of the project, both with expertise and human touch, and his careful manner to navigate global waters as well as UNDP waters.

He closed the meeting with the approval of the final report and the progress report for 2021, looking forward to receiving the final evaluation of the project and a proposal of a second phase of the project.

Prepared by: Alejandro Lago
Alejandro Lago UNDP-GEF Global ABS Project Manager

Cleared by: Abusabeeb Elsadig
Abusabeeb Elsadig - Regional Programme Coordination, RBM and QA Specialist – Istanbul Regional Hub

Approved by: Gerd Trogemann
Gerd Trogemann, Manager, Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS, Chair of the Project Board

List of documents

1- Agenda
2- Project Progress 2021 and Final Report
3- Quality Assurance Report
4- Conclusions and Recommendations of the Terminal Evaluation
5- Powerpoint presentation- Status of the Project June 2021

Annex 1: List of Participants

Institution/Country	Name and Title
Project Board	
UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub Representative	Mr. Gerd Trogemann Manager Istanbul Regional Hub – Chair
UNV Representative	Ms. Hilda Paparoni Manager, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
Quality Assurance	Mr. Abusabeeb Elsadig, Regional Programme Coordination, RBM and QA Specialist
Representing the RBA region	
Comoros	Mr. Anlutar Mze Ahmed, Programme Analyst – UNDP Comoros
South Africa	Ms. Janice Golding - Focal Point: Nature, Climate & Energy- UNDP South Africa
Sudan	Dr. EL Khitma EL Awad Mohammed – Senior Researcher - Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR)
Representing the RBAP region	
India	Dr. VB Mathur, Chairman of the National Biodiversity Authority
Representing the RBEC region	
Belarus	Ms. Elena Makeyeva, Associate Professor, Head of the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing, Institute of Genetics and Cytology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, ABS National Focal Point in Belarus
Tajikistan	Mr. Sukhrob Irgashev, Head of Department for Sectoral and Intersectoral Cooperation on the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols
Representing the RBLAC region	
Colombia	Ms. Nathalia Casas, Coordinator Group of Genetic Resources, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development Mr. Juan Camilo Roncallo, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development Ms. Diana Mejía, National Coordinator of the Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Biodiversity - UNDP Colombia
Dominican Republic	Ms. Maria Eugenia Morales – Programme Specialist – UNDP Dominican Republic
Ecuador	Mr. Byron Lagla – Biodiversity Director – Ministry of Environment of Ecuador Ms. Monica Andrade – Coordinator of the Energy and Environment Section – UNDP Ecuador
Honduras	Ms. Astrid Mejía, Programme Specialist- UNDP Honduras

Uruguay	Mr. Flavio Scasso, Programme Specialist- UNDP Uruguay
<i>From UNDP-GEF Global ABS Project</i>	
Alejandro Lago	Project Manager
Agustina Rato	UNV Regional Coordination Officer, Global ABS Project
Jose Antonio Rayos	Project Associate
<i>Others</i>	
Santiago Carrizosa	Global Lead on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing, UNDP