

## WORKSHOP 11 OCTOBER 2019

### BRIEF SUMMARY

#### **1. A short quote (in English) from *Alexander KILCHEVSKY*, Deputy Chairperson of the Presidium of NAS of Belarus**

Welcoming speech by **Mr Vladimir GUSAKOV**, Academician, Chairperson of the Presidium of NAS of Belarus, presented by **Alexander KILCHEVSKY**, Deputy Chairperson of the Presidium of NAS of Belarus.

#### **A short quote**

The problem of biological diversity conservation is of primary importance in the environmental policy of the Republic of Belarus.

The Republic of Belarus is a Party to about 20 International Conventions and Treaties aimed to protect the environment. All of them are interconnected and reinforce each other, addressing a specific problem in the framework of achieving the global goal of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the environment. The centerpiece of environmental treaties is the Convention on Biological Diversity the Republic of Belarus became a Party to in 1993, and thereby committing itself to its Provisions.

The two main objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to ensuring safety when working with genetically modified organisms, as well as to ensuring access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, are achieved through the implementation of two Protocols to the Convention – the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

The Republic of Belarus acceded to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in 2003 and to the Nagoya Protocol in 2014.

This regulatory norm changed the format of relations between countries in the area of access to genetic resources, the exchange of biological, especially genetic resources, which for many years had been the subject of commercial interest in pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies. Access to them was not regulated and many countries suffered from such uncontrolled export of plant and animal genetic resources, which in turn led to a sharp reduction in genetically and economically valuable species and a decrease in the level of biological diversity of ecosystems.

The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus is directly involved in fulfilling the country's obligations under the Convention, as well as Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols to it, providing scientific support for International Technical Assistance GEF Projects with the participation of UNEP and UNDP.

In March 2018, the Institute of Genetics and Cytology, NAS of Belarus, launched the Global UNDP-GEF Project “Strengthening of human resources, legal frameworks and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol in the Republic of Belarus” with 24 participating countries. The aim of the project is to provide financial support to countries to harmonize national legislation with the Provisions of the Nagoya Protocol, develop an administrative and institutional framework to ensure its effective implementation. The successful closeout of this proves the effective participation of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in International Technical Assistance Projects provided by large international funds with the UNDP participation.

## **2. A short quote (in English) from Tatiana Zheleznova, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.**

Welcoming speech of **Mr Alexander KORBUT**, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, presented by Ms Tatiana Zheleznova, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

### **A short quote**

Belarus as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity is actively involved in the process of its implementation and aims to achieve its objectives set, including, both the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, biosafety and access to genetic resources and sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.

While work in the first two directions has been constantly ongoing since the first day the Convention entered into force, to achieve the 3<sup>rd</sup> objective, the most difficult one, it will be necessary to develop a special legal framework to ensure access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge – the National Heritage of our country – and to ensure sharing of benefits under International Treaties.

In order to elaborate an international regime to promote and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits between providers and users of genetic resources, the Nagoya Protocol was developed. The Republic of Belarus has been a Party since 2014.

The Protocol identifies measures that ensure legal access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them and their utilization monitoring pursuant to the principle of transparency.

One of the main objectives of the International Technical Assistance Project “Strengthening of human resources, legal frameworks and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol in the Republic of Belarus” realized by the Institute of Genetics and Cytology, NAS of Belarus, is the integration of the Nagoya Protocol’s Provisions into the legislation of the Republic of Belarus. To develop such a national framework is one of the main objectives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection as the State Administrative Body responsible for the implementation of Nagoya Protocol’s Provisions in the Republic of Belarus. This is substantial and painstaking work that requires efforts, time and human resources.

The project made it possible to involve highly qualified experts in the analysis of the legislation in force in Belarus and study the experience of other country Parties to the Protocol. Based on the analyzed materials, proposals for related supplements and amendments to legislation with a view of harmonizing it with the Nagoya Protocol have been included in the Plan for the Development of Regulatory Legal Acts in 2020 by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

## **3. A short quote (in English) from Alexandra SOLOVIEVA, UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus.**

### **A short quote**

At this landmark event, which sums up a year and a half of such important project implementation as “Strengthening of human resources, legal frameworks and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol”. In terms of budget and duration, the project is very modest. However, its results are of great importance for the conservation of biodiversity not only in Belarus, but also in the whole region.

I would like to express special gratitude to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus for their active participation in and contribution to the successful project

implementation, the results of which help Belarus develop effective legal frameworks for genetic resources' access and sharing.

I would also like to express gratitude to our important development partner, the Global Environment Facility, whose financial support has helped achieve significant results for the country in this direction.

One of the three missions of the Convention on Biological Diversity aims to provide equal benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. Many countries, including Belarus, are taking measures to conserve, restore and manage these invaluable natural resources. However, the issue related to the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources owned by countries remains vital.

Experience has proven that genetic resources belonging to one country can be widely utilized by other countries, while the host country cannot use these resources due to weak human and institutional capacities, lack of innovation and investment for the development of biotechnologies.

The Nagoya Protocol, which entered into force in October 2014 and has been ratified by 116 countries by now (Belarus acceded to the Nagoya Protocol in 2014), helps ensure the fair utilization of genetic resources between different countries and combat biopiracy.

Fair sharing of benefits arising from the transferred genetic resources allows to develop human potential and related technologies in the provider countries; boost investments to support research potential and the development of biotechnologies. This has a positive effect on the socio-economic development and in addressing complex environmental problems – the requisite conditions to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Project outcomes will help Belarus give momentum to the formation of genetic resources' market in the country and stimulate the exchange of experience in this area.

In September, together with 70 national partners, we held first national consultations on determining 2020-2025 UNDP Strategic Directions of Work in Belarus. The conservation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge under the Nagoya Protocol was clearly identified as the priority by the participants.

I am also very pleased to note that the project was our first experience in partnership with the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology, NAS of Belarus.

#### **4. A short summary from Elena's presentation summing up the key project achievements, particularly on establishing the ABS legal framework & highlights of other major project's achievements/outcomes/impacts.**

##### **A short summary from Elena's presentation**

Proposals for supplements and amendments to the legislation in force to ensure the Nagoya Protocol implementation in the Republic of Belarus have been included in the 2020 Plan for the Development of Regulatory Legal Acts by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

Proposals for and amendments to the Code of Culture have been submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus to include the term "traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources" and mechanisms regulating access to such knowledge and protecting the rights of TK holders in the Code.

An Interactive Database has been developed to monitor the utilization of genetic resources pursuant to the requirements of Article 17 of the Nagoya Protocol.

**Highlights of other major project's achievements/outcomes/impacts, as you see it fits, while keeping them brief.**

**Component 1**

Proposals for supplements and amendments to the legislation in force to ensure the Nagoya Protocol implementation in the Republic of Belarus have been included in the 2020 Plan for the Development of Regulatory Legal Acts by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

Proposals for and amendments to the Code of Culture have been submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus to include the term “traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources” and mechanisms regulating access to such knowledge and protecting the rights of TK holders in the Code.

**Component 2**

▶ DNA Barcode Reference Library of rare and endangered wild plant species created on the basis of the Republican DNA Bank of a Human, Animals, Plants and Microorganisms of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology, NAS of Belarus (more than 60 species out of 100 collected samples of biological material analyzed)

▶ A training event for 40 specialists from 7 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine) on the use of a DNA barcoding technique to screen the species diversity in the territories under study held

▶ An Interactive Database to monitor the utilization of genetic resources pursuant to the requirements of Article 17 of the Nagoya Protocol developed

▶ A new website of the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing (ABS NCC), which operates as the National Clearing-House for regulating access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing (National ABS CH), developed and launched.

**Component 3**

▶ A group of experts in the field of folklore, ethnography, cultural studies and linguistics to study and collect information on national traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources formed

▶ Conceptual Provisions of the National Code of Conduct developed as a pillar for building trust between providers and users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge based on analysis findings with regard to international practices in the field of their development and utilization

▶ A project proposal to establish local communities (herbalists, wild-hive beekeepers) and associations (Belarusian Traditional Horse Breeding Association) and to build capacity (capacity-building) with a view of preserving traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources and restoring local agricultural breeds (red breed of cattle, black-and-white breed of pigs) and horse-drawn (Poleskaya and Belarusskaya light draft breeds) animals on the verge of extinction

▶ A database developed to store information and records on traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources collected during 2018-2019 field expeditions, their systematization and further replenishment.

**Overall project outcomes.**

17 activities held: 2 international and 15 national workshops and training events

422 participants: 66,35% – female, 33,65% – male

**Publications:**

4 books and 16 Articles in periodicals

100 leaflets with the text of the Nagoya Protocol

1000 leaflets with the description of the Nagoya Protocol, its objectives and targets; with the description of medicinal herbs traditionally used by Belarusians to maintain health and as foodways.

**IRCC:**

7 ABSCH Internationally Recognized Certificates of Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol during the transfer of genetic resources of the Republic of Belarus to foreign GenBanks (USA) and Scientific Research Institutions (Canada, Russia) issued.

**Project proposals:**

4 project proposals prepared to continue the activities in the area of conservation, including restoration of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge of Belarus; strengthen mechanisms regulating legal access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge; enhance the level of interdisciplinary collaboration of NAS of Belarus, health care and educational institutions to develop the concept of active longevity based on the traditional utilization of genetic resources in ethnomedicine and cuisine.

**5. A short summary of the key project's achievements on safeguarding and documenting traditional knowledge (based on Tatiana VOLODINA and/or Alla STASHKEVICH's presentations)****T. Volodina**

**General info.** The state-of-the-art classification of traditional knowledge of Belarusians is based on the fact that their data belong to a particular field of knowledge: they distinguish folk meteorology, astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology, pharmacology, etc. Traditional knowledge of Belarusians is fixed mainly in oral form, as well as in written sources and material culture artifacts. An important project objective was to analyze all sources with a view of clarifying the specifics of the traditional knowledge accumulation by Belarusians over centuries.

**Key project's achievements:**

- Field studies in a number of Districts of Belarus. The collected materials are stored in the electronic archive of the K. Krapiva Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore, NAS of Belarus
- Methods to detect TK holders improved, including work with them
- A special questionnaire "Ethnobotany and Ethnozoology of Belarus" drawn up
- Based on field data, two parts of documentary "Koznaya travinka – lyachinka" (Every grass-blade is a remedy) created
- Field data collected, archived and are being prepared for publication
- The utilization of animal world genetic resources in the area of Belarusian ethnomedicine and ethnoveterinary monitored
- Monograph published. *The book is devoted to the plant world knowledge, vision and rituals in the Belarusian village of 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. History of ethnographic data collection about plants is highlighted, including traditional phytotherapy and use of wild plants in foodways.*

## **Horizons**

- Conservation and effective utilization of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources stipulates their documentation and comprehensive study
- Field studies in the rural areas of Belarus should be continued to identify TK holders of animal and plant worlds
- Possibilities of practical use of such knowledge should provide economic benefits to local communities, and thus, contribute to their sustainable development.

## **A. Stashkevich**

### **Recommendations:**

- Ensuring of interagency cooperation, developing a common policy for the traditional knowledge and practices safeguarding, protection of their intellectual rights
- Amendments to the Code of Culture of the Republic of Belarus, Civil and Administrative Codes on the protection of rights of traditional knowledge holders and bearers of practices to be introduced
  - Identification, inventory, digitalization, creation of common databases
  - Ensuring of community participation in regional and local politics at the decision-making level, creating management plans and advisory councils under power structures
  - Popularization through mass media, publications, TV, social networks, cultural tourism
  - The development of various forms of education, including among holders
  - Development of Codes of Ethics for the Protection of the Rights of Holders of ICH

*If the world is unable to bring about truly sustainable development, ICH will remain at risk; but if ICH is not safeguarded, it will be impossible to make sustainable development a reality.*

### **Key recommendation for Belarus.**

**Acknowledge traditional knowledge as the Intangible Cultural Heritage.**

**6. A short summary (one or two paragraphs) from Kirill CHIKHMATOV's presentation on the new national ABS Clearing House website (we will include a hyperlink) and on the Database to Monitor the Use of Genetic Resources**

**The main objective of the Database development** is to monitor the utilization of genetic resources that allows tracing and controlling the stages of GRs transfer and coordinating communication and information exchange between the participants of access.

### **Database use shall provide for:**

- Systematization and automation of a system enabling to keep record of communication flow cases between participants of GRs exchange – legal entities and individuals, authorized bodies of the Republic of Belarus and of other countries
- Record and coordination of communication of all GRs transfer participants and exchange of information using software interface, including record of GRs transfer participants
- Possibility to maintain reference books of:

Genetic resources

GRs transfer participants (GRs providers and users)

Documents related to GRs transfer

- Monitor and control every stage of GRs transfer procedure
- Possibility to exchange documents between GRs transfer participants and CNA in the online mode

- Compile reporting documentation on every reference book
- Store images and documents related to the GRs access procedure

**Website:** [abs.igc.by](http://abs.igc.by)

**Main objective of the website development** is to improve the National Clearing-House to regulate access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits (ABS NCC website).

**By means as follows:**

- Providing information on the Nagoya Protocol requirements
- Information exchange with the Global Clearing-House for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing
- Fulfilling international commitments on the Nagoya Protocol by the Republic of Belarus

**New website version:**

- New design in corporate range of colors
- Restructured sections, topics and information update
- Possibility to access Interactive Database “On Monitoring GRs Utilization of the Republic of Belarus”
- Possibility of authorized users to have remote connection to the database for access to its stored data using browser
- Integrated news feed of the CBD website ([www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int))
- Possibility to keep record of website users
- Adaptive website design to the screen size of various devices