



Digital Sequence Information | Pre-CBD COP16 Informal Work

Sponsored by the Government of Norway & Bezos Earth Fund

Document prepared by Meridian Institute and Access and Benefit-Sharing Capacity Development Initiative

Overview

As announced in November 2023 at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources (DSI) in Geneva, Switzerland, the Government of Norway and Bezos Earth Fund have provided funding to the [Meridian Institute](#) (Meridian) for broad and inclusive informal work on DSI through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16). The Government of Norway also announced the continued co-financing of the multi-donor [Access and Benefit-Sharing Capacity Development Initiative \(ABS CDI\)](#), hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Other governments and interested organizations are providing support for additional informal activities.

The informal work of Meridian and ABS CDI is distinct from both the formal CBD negotiation process and the DSI Informal Advisory Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources (IAG). Meridian and ABS CDI will seek to build on the work of the OEWG and help tackle key issues outlined in the annex to the report from the first meeting of the OEWG in November 2023 ([document CBD/WGDSI/1/3](#)). The annex is structured around five “clusters” of issues and outlines areas of potential convergence within each as well as areas in which there is a need for further discussion of possible elements of a multilateral ABS mechanism, including a global fund. Meridian and ABS CDI will coordinate closely with the CBD Secretariat and the co-chairs of the IAG to ensure complementarity – in both timing and substance – between the informal work and ongoing formal processes.

On 8 December 2023, the Government of Norway released a call for suggestions from CBD National Focal Points (NFPs) on the informal process on access and benefit-sharing, and has received a number of responses as of January 2024. Meridian and ABS CDI have developed a joint workplan for a series of informal meetings to be convened during the intersessional period (see table below). The workplan reflects suggestions from NFPs as well as conversations with various negotiators, stakeholders, and rightsholders regarding how informal discussions can add value to the formal process.

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The aim of Meridian and ABS CDI is to conduct an informal process that is broad, inclusive, and transparent. The organizers will strive to engage and gather perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders, rightsholders, and parties with the aim of aiding negotiators in their understanding of DSI generation, storage, and use, as well as policy options for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI. In particular, Meridian will carry out ongoing consultations with representatives from the private sector with the aim of ensuring they are well acquainted with and participating in the CBD processes. Meridian and ABS CDI will also author and/or commission knowledge products to inform and complement the outputs of the meetings outlined below as another way to support the formal negotiation process.

Ultimately, the activities outlined below are intended to help negotiators, stakeholders, and rightsholders come to a mutual understanding about DSI with the goal of fulfilling the mandate set out in [COP15 decision 15/9](#) for COP16. By nature of the limited time remaining until COP16, an informal process will not be able to address all areas in which there is a need for further discussion outlined in the annex of CBD/WGDSI/1/3. To highlight the intended linkages between the proposed informal meetings and the formal process, the table below includes notes on which topics from the IAG agenda and/or the clusters in the aforementioned annex will be addressed. Furthermore, while Meridian and ABS CDI will begin to execute the activities listed below immediately, both organizers will remain open to adjusting the workplan plan as possible and appropriate to adapt to advancements in the negotiations and other unforeseen circumstances.

The meetings, unless indicated otherwise in the description, are by invitation only. The organizers will aim to identify relevant and appropriate negotiators, stakeholders, and rightsholders to participate in each meeting, and will keep the groups large enough to allow for a diverse range of views yet small enough to facilitate candid and productive informal exchange. If you have questions about a specific meeting listed below or feel you would be a good candidate to participate based on the 'target participants' listed, please reach out to the lead organization for the activity. Meridian and ABS CDI will update this list as dates, locations, and exact topics are determined.

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Proposed Meetings

Meeting	Purpose	Target Dates & Locations	Target Participants	Modality	Lead Organizer
European User & Negotiator Dialogue	Discuss modalities for a multilateral access and benefit-sharing mechanism for DSI and react to the outcomes of OEWG1. Related to: Feb, Apr, and May IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	18-21 Mar 2024 Vilm, Germany	European Industry and Academic Users & Select Negotiators (Invite only)	In person	Meridian
African Science-Policy Dialogue Preparation Webinar	Prepare participants attending the African Science-Policy Dialogue.	26 Mar 2024 (TBC)	African Negotiators & Users (Invite only)	Webinar	ABS CDI
African Science-Policy Dialogue on DSI @ International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) / African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU IBAR)	Form a network to share and learn about regional DSI use policy implications. Related to: Jan and Feb IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Week of 23-25 Apr 2024 Nairobi, Kenya (TBC)	African Negotiators & Users (Invite only)	In person	ABS CDI
Stakeholder & Rightsholder Exchange & Dialogue	Discuss data governance and relationship with/implications for benefit-sharing. Related to: Jan and Mar IAGs; clusters C & D of CBD/WGDSI/1/3.	7-9 May 2024 Paris, France	Global Stakeholders from Industry and Academia & Indigenous and Local Rightsholders (Invite only)	In person	Meridian
Webinar on DSI Products	Raise awareness on the potential of DSI products for benefit-sharing. Related to: Jan IAG; cluster A of CBD/WGDSI/1/3.	Jun 2024	Open Invitation	Webinar	ABS CDI
Global South Negotiators and Practitioners Dialogue	Exchange views on DSI use and policy implications. Related to: Feb, Mar, Apr, May, and Jun IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Week of 10 Jun 2024 Cali, Colombia	Global South Negotiators & Industry and Academic Users (Invite only)	In person	Meridian
Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) Science-Policy Dialogue	Form a network to share and learn about regional DSI use and policy implications. Related to: Feb, Mar, Apr, May, and Jun IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Week of 10 Jun 2024 Cali, Colombia	GRULAC Negotiators & Industry and Academic Users (Invite only)	In person	Meridian
Webinar on DSI and IPR	Raise awareness of and build upon World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) material on the potential and limits of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) as they relate to DSI. Related to: Feb IAG; cluster E of CBD/WGDSI/1/3.	Jul 2024 (TBD)	Open Invitation	Webinar	ABS CDI

Meeting	Purpose	Target Dates & Locations	Target Participants	Modality	Lead Organizer
Asia Pacific Science-Policy Dialogue	Form a network to share and learn about regional DSI use and policy implications basing the discussions on the outcomes of the African Group and GRULAC Science-Policy Dialogues. Related to: Jan and Feb IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Jul or Aug 2024 (TBD)	Asian Negotiators & Industry and Academic Users (Invite only)	Virtual meeting	Both
Global Exchange of DSI Users and Regulators	Increase common understanding of expectations in and functions of the DSI system; also analyze post-OEWG 2 outcomes and plan for COP16. Related to: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, and Jun IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Sep 2024 (TBD after 15 Sep 2024) 2,5 days South Africa	Global Negotiators, Stakeholders from Industry and Academia & Indigenous and Local Rightsholders (Invite only)	In person	Both
Third Informal DSI Retreat	Increase the understanding of positions and convergence/divergence before COP16. Related to: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, and Jun IAGs; topics from CBD/WGDSI/1/3 TBD.	Immediately following the Global Exchange South Africa	Global Negotiators and Other Guests (Invite only)	In person	ABS CDI
Futureproofing Webinars	Explore how to futureproof the DSI system, including various topics such as: DSI and AI and Future-proofing Benefit-Sharing. Related to: cluster E from WGDSI/1/3.	Recurring	Open Invitation	Webinars	Both
Official Side Events during COP16	Inform negotiators and stakeholders about the outcomes of the informal process.	21 Oct– 01 Nov 2024	Open Invitation	Side events	Both
Marginal Convening(s) COP16	Discuss the future of the DSI landscape post-COP16.	21 Oct– 01 Nov 2024	Global Negotiators, Stakeholders from Industry and Academia & Indigenous and Local Rightsholders	In person, small roundtables	Both
Innovative Finance Virtual Roundtables	Discuss the potential role(s) of novel financial tools in DSI benefit-sharing and resource mobilization with financial practitioners and other key stakeholders. Related to: Apr IAG; clusters A, B and D from CBD/WGDSI1/3.	Recurring	Financial Experts, Stakeholders, & Negotiators (Invite only)	Virtual	Meridian
Inter-fora Virtual Meetings	Ensure alignment and cross-pollination between the various international instruments working on DSI. Related to: Feb IAG; cluster E from WGDSI/1/3.	Recurring	Negotiators Stakeholders from Industry and Academia & Indigenous and Local Rightsholders (Invite only)	Virtual	Both