

Final Statement on behalf of Civil Society Organisations present at ABSWG-9

Dear Co-Chairs, I would like to link central concerns of civil society with the specific language of this ABS Protocol. I would also like to thank the Co-chairs and all Parties to give us access to information and effective participation at all levels of these negotiations.

- 1) Citizens around the world have a deep longing for justice, and in a globalised world this includes justice at the international level. “Affordable access to justice” including an “ombudsperson’s office” for us is the core, not the “minimisation of transaction costs”.
Do not forsake our longing for justice!
- 2) Addressing “historical debt” and redressing past injustices is one of the difficult tasks we face. Access to genetic resources has a dark past of colonialism, transgressions, misappropriations and implicit injustices. A general amnesty for past political crimes, sometimes, is useful in re-establishing legal certainty. However, a general amnesty is not acceptable if the criminals and their descendants continue to gain large profits from these past acts. The ABS Protocol has not yet escaped the danger of becoming an instrument legitimising the profiteers of past injustices.
Do not force us to fight an instrument under the CBD!
- 3) When citizens use their face creams and tooth pastes and get their vaccinations they are interested to know whether their consumer products have a history decent with regard to environmental impact and the rights of the original owners of genetic resources and traditional knowledge. A certificate and effective check-points under the ABS Protocol would facilitate progress towards inclusive sustainable consumption patterns, excluding biopiracy.
Do not put us to shame! Give us the instruments for decent behaviour!
- 4) Confidence and trust in fairness, equity and justice, also in international relationships regarding benefit sharing, are the basis and precondition for the necessary stable political will for the conservation objective of the CBD at the national level. The “temporal scope” for this is “for many generations to come”.
Do not undo the efforts of your citizens engaged in establishing such a stable basis for conservation!
- 5) Researchers are highly trained and intelligent people used to paperwork in the context of ordering equipment, scientific publications, project and funding proposals, contractual arrangements and patent applications.
Dear researcher co-citizens, please apply your intelligence and training to do the small additional paper work for the ABS Protocol!
- 6) If progress in negotiations is getting difficult or stalls, the easy way out is to blame the process. Reflections on the lack of political will and the lack of inter-ministerial consensus may be more helpful to promote creative and productive engagement for the process ahead.
Dear delegates, be mutually supportive with your citizens striving to create the necessary consolidated political will!
- 7) International negotiations are always addressing the task to get countries “into the boat”, even if they have very diverging minority views. But what to do if someone withholds all the elements with which could enable us to build a boat with decent seats for all of us? What to do if the whole boat is put into brackets or sunk?
Dear delegates, do continue your untiring efforts to bring the necessary elements for the boat back from your capitals! Civil society representatives, present here, will also resist post-negotiations depression and continue our best efforts towards establishing justice in the context of access and benefit-sharing.