

UNU/IAS IDDRI Roundtable

Paris, 6-7 November 2003

The Role of User Measures in ABS Governance

The existing international ABS regime is a mixture of national, regional, and international law and policy, including both hard and soft law instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bonn guidelines. Since the entry into force of the CBD attention on regulation of ABS has tended to focus on measures taken by provider countries to implement the CBD's ABS objectives. However, with the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines greater attention has been given to the promotion of a range of measures that countries – particularly developed countries – could take in their role as users of genetic resources accessed from other Parties. The call by the World Summit on Sustainable Development for negotiation of an “international regime on benefit sharing in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity and taking into account the Bonn guidelines” provides further impetus for investigating and implementing “user measures”. The issue of User Measures is one of the principal agenda items of the forthcoming meeting of the Working Group on ABS, in December 2003.

With a view to enhancing dialogue and investigation of potential user measures UNU/IAS and IDDRI are collaborating to convene a roundtable of experts, to discuss three challenging issues relating to user measures in Europe, these are:

- Technology transfer
- Competition law, unfair trade practices and intellectual property
- Access to Justice

The Roundtable will seek to promote an open debate of existing and potential user measures which may be adopted or adapted to enhance the realisation of the CBD's ABS objectives. The Roundtable will promote dialogue between experts directly involved in ABS projects and the formation of ABS law and policy, with a wider range of experts from amongst legal practitioners, economists, the European Community institutions, and the academic community with a view to promoting a more informed debate of user measures, their practicality and feasibility.