

**Validation Workshop on the Draft AU Guidelines for the
Coordinated Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS
Welcoming remarks-Dr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, Director HRST**

Distinguished

ABS Focal Points and negotiators of Member States

Representatives of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative

Representatives of stakeholder groups

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you all to this important meeting which marks a very important milestone in the ongoing support of the AUC to the Member States in matters of Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources (ABS). As you know this meeting is the result of the successful collaboration between the AUC Department of Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST) and the ABS Capacity Development Initiative of the GIZ which is believed to fit into yet a broader partnership between the Commission and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Dear Colleagues,

The development of the Draft AU Guidelines came as a result of the call made by Member States at different fora to harmonize and coordinate Africa's voice in a concerted manner in order to make a meaningful impact on how the different countries utilize their natural resources, how they benefit from the wealth of the existing traditional knowledge and make available ways and means of negotiating mutually agreed terms on access.

At the political level the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government have already decided in one voice that issues of biological diversity should be among the priority areas of the African Union and called on the Commission to report on initiatives

implementing this decision. What is more, the African Ministers Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), besides formally establishing the African Group of Negotiators on biodiversity last year has endorsed the process of the development of the AU Guidelines on ABS also calling for African countries to ratify the Nagoya Protocol on ABS and further scale up measures to implement it at the national level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The need for Africa to utilize science and technology to build its own economy cannot be overstated. The abundance and variety of its biological resources await efficient systems for their protection and utilization in a sustainable manner. It is also up to individual countries to implement what has been agreed at the regional level by effectively using regional tools at the domestic level.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the African negotiators on ABS who had been instrumental, in the course of the various years of the negotiations ensuring that the Nagoya Protocol at least contains the minimum requirements of an international legal instrument on ABS which are favorable for Africa. I would like to reiterate the fact that your work is still not over, Africa still needs your active engagement in the course of the discussions under the interim period till the Protocol comes into force i.e. the Intergovernmental Committee on the Nagoya Protocol (ICNP) and the outstanding issues of the CBD discussions such as those on Article 8(j).

Having said this, I thank all ABS focal points, resource persons and stakeholder groups for setting aside your valuable time to contribute to this important process. Last but not least I thank the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, our reliable partner with a common vision, we believe our joint efforts will go long in making positive impacts in environmental conservation and utilization for socio-economic development of our countries.

I wish you all successful deliberations!