

## Swiss Academy of Science – ABS Awareness Raising and Capacity-Building for academic, non-commercial research

At the Swiss Academy of Sciences we firmly believe that non-commercial public good research is essential to achieve the first two goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity: the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Moreover, this research generates (non-monetary) benefits for education, advancement of science and technology transfer. We advocate research done in a mutually trustful atmosphere and encourage scientists to conduct it in accordance with existing international codes and standards.

It was with this philosophy that, after the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines in 2002, the Swiss Academy of Sciences launched a program on capacity-building and awareness-raising for the academic community in Switzerland. This program was funded, developed and carried out in partnership with the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.

The program was based on an investigation of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and the state of information within the Swiss research community. The assessment revealed low or insufficient knowledge among researchers about the Convention on Biological Diversity and the obligations resulting from the ABS regime. Yet it also revealed problems of the researchers with the complicated procedures for accessing resources abroad.

In the course of the program several instruments were developed, including awareness-raising and capacity-building strategies for Swiss academic researchers; a good practice manual for access and benefit sharing for non-commercial academic research; and a sample ABS agreement on Mutually Agreed Terms, which is the first of its kind ABS agreement.

The agreement contains suggestions for terms and clauses to meet the needs of both, the providers of genetic resources and the researchers seeking access. It offers a choice of optional clauses for the essential components of an ABS relationship in order to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits. These clauses allow parties to the agreement to take account of each other's specific needs and circumstances, to choose the clauses most appropriate to their situation and to their intentions, and so to create their tailor-made MAT.