

PRESS RELEASE
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The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Union for Ethical BioTrade sign a cooperation agreement.

The Union for Ethical BioTrade signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD) to work jointly on encouraging companies involved in the cosmetics, personal care, food and beverages industries to adopt and promote ethical biodiversity sourcing practices in line with the objectives of the CBD.

A 2008 CBD report on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) found that “the personal care and cosmetic, fragrance and flavour, and food and beverages industries, with exceptions of a few companies, appear to have incorporated few if any of the lessons and requirements of the CBD into their practices, have low levels of awareness of ABS issues, and remain poorly organised and represented at CBD meetings. Some companies have been charged with biopiracy due to their ignorance of the CBD”. The report quotes one expert as saying that “the fragrance and flavour companies actively search out innovative new ingredients in nature, in particular the ingredient supply companies, and they don’t feel any need to sign agreements, pay royalties, or otherwise provide benefits. Most have never heard of the CBD”¹.

The CBD and the Union for Ethical BioTrade have, among others, agreed to cooperate on the following: the joint organisation of meetings on biodiversity and business; training of business on the CBD; briefing of business on CBD negotiations and provision of business views into these negotiations.

Rik Kutsch Lojenga, Executive Director of the Union for Ethical BioTrade said “the agreement will help increase awareness on the CBD requirements in the cosmetics, personal care, food and beverages industries, and encourage these sectors to get more actively involved in the on-going ABS negotiations scheduled to be finalised by 2010”.

As part of the agreement, the CBD will be granted observer status on the Board of the Union for Ethical BioTrade. The [International Finance Corporation](#) (IFC) and the [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development](#) (UNCTAD) already have such status.

The Convention on Biological Diversity was created in 1992, as a follow-up to the Earth Summit in Rio, and has 168 signatory countries. The objectives of the CBD are: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. BioTrade and the work of the UNCTAD [BioTrade Initiative](#) has been recognised in various CBD decisions.

Set up by a group of companies and non-private organizations in Europe, the USA, Africa and Latin America, the not-for-profit Union for Ethical BioTrade promotes ethical sourcing of ingredients that come from native biodiversity, paying attention to social and ecological issues. It does this by supporting members in their efforts to meet a set of principles and criteria developed by the UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative. These principles and criteria include conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, fair and equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity, and respect for the rights of actors involved in BioTrade.

For more information, contact:

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¹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2008). Access and Benefit-Sharing in Practice: Trends in Partnerships Across Sectors. Montreal, Technical Series No. 38, 140 pages.

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