



June 30, 2020

Patrick Reilly

Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES)
U.S. Department of State

Re: Docket No. DOS-2020-2017

Comments regarding: Digital Sequence Information of Genetic Resources

On behalf of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), thank you for the opportunity to provide input on future U.S. engagement with the Nagoya Protocol. As one of the oldest and largest life sciences societies with more than 30,000 members in the United States and around the globe, our mission is to promote and advance the microbial sciences.

ASM believes that data availability and data sharing are critical to our mission to advance the microbial sciences. We are moving boldly toward a world of open science, and in doing so we must support policies that facilitate access to genetic resources, the appropriate use of those resources, and encourage sharing of benefits from utilization of genetic resources.

ASM stands in support of the comments submitted to the State Department by the Nagoya Protocol Action Group in response to Docket Number DOS-2020-2017. As noted in their comments, “open access to digital sequence information is foundational to many current practices including taxonomy, biotechnology, and agriculture. As demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, digital sequence information allows rapid tracing of infection pathways and can help in mitigating disease increase. Similarly, digital sequence information enables disease tracking for plant and animal epidemics and is essential for protecting the national food production system.

Open access to digital sequence information enables provider countries to unambiguously identify and trace their unique genetic resources. Training in utilization of digital sequence information will improve equitable utilization of genetic resources and sharing of benefits.”

ASM encourages the continued open availability of digital sequence information on genetic resources. Through open communication and by working together, ASM is confident that we can move boldly into an era of open science. ASM and its members look forward to next steps in this endeavor and stand ready to assist you. For more information, please contact Allen Segal, ASM Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, at asegal@asmusa.org or 202-942-9294.

Sincerely,

Stefano Bertuzzi, PhD, MPH
ASM Chief Executive Officer