

Tanzania's policy on biodiversity prospecting and drug discovery programs

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Abstract

Tanzania is endowed with a rich natural resource. The biodiversity comprises over 10 000 plant species, a rich fauna and marine resources. The collection of biological resources is guided by a set of formalities, namely: (i) entry visas, (ii) research permits, (iii) designation of a relevant collaborating host institution or organization, and (iv) eventual joint field work with the collaborating host institution. A facility exists whereby an institution within the country can collaborate with a technologically developed institution or country through mutual research agreement in short and long-term programs. In such a case, Tanzanian scientists collect and export biological materials for drug testing by the collaborating partner. The research agreement is based on the understanding that benefits of the discovery are shared among all parties, namely, the host country's collaborating institution(s), government and indigenous cultures. Rules and regulations governing biodiversity prospecting fall under the categories of (a) floristic resources, (b) fauna or animal substances and (c) marine biological resources. The collection and export of CITES-listed organisms is governed by a separate policy package. Various national institutions are directly involved in overseeing the implementation of these policies. In this paper, these are reviewed to accommodate new conventions concerning research management policies on biological diversity and the sustainable utilization and conservation of these resources.

Keywords: Policy, Biodiversity, Drug discovery, Intellectual property rights, Tanzania