

UN aims for biodiversity treaty by July 2012

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An aerial photograph shows a riverway in West Kalimantan on Indonesian Borneo island. A global treaty on the harvesting of genetic resources will probably be ratified by July 2012, the UN executive secretary on biological diversity has said

A global treaty on the harvesting of genetic resources will probably be ratified by July 2012, the UN executive secretary on biological diversity said Tuesday.

So far, 25 countries have signed the Nagoya Protocol but 193 countries committed to support it when it was adopted in October 2010, said UN official Ahmed Djoghlaif.

"By July 2012, 50 will have ratified," said Djoghlaif at the sidelines of a biodiversity forum in the Philippines.

He said the protocol, forged at a conference in Japan, comes into force

as a treaty once it is ratified by 50 countries.

The agreement sets out new rules for the collection of genetic resources such as [wild plants](#) to make medicines, cosmetics and other products.

It also calls for a fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of [genetic resources](#) between the company that develops the new product and the country where the resources -- such as a wild plant -- originated.

Djoghlaif said the ratification of the protocol was being slowed by legal complications and translation problems but that there was more than enough support for it among countries.

"All governments have different ratification processes. It's not a matter of a lack of political will," he told AFP.

He said the protocol would encourage countries to preserve their natural resources in hopes that they would benefit if medicines or other products are made from them.

He cited the example of the vaccine for [avian flu](#) which is derived from an organism from China but which was developed by a Swiss company, and added that 76 percent of [cancer drugs](#) were derived from natural or partly-natural sources.

Djoghlaif said many countries failed to realise the value of their [biological diversity](#), leading to its waste and destruction.

He cited studies from The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, a UN-supported group of scholars who estimated that about \$3 trillion-worth of biodiversity is lost each year.

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