



DNA Barcoding of Biodiversity in Central and Western Africa Call for Participation in a Regional Meeting 24-26 October, 2008, Abuja, Nigeria

The National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), in partnership with the Consortium for the Barcode of Life (CBOL) and Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) announces a three-day regional meeting on “DNA barcoding” to be held at the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja, Nigeria. Potential participants from Central and Western African countries are invited to send expressions of interest to the organizing committee. Limited funds will be available to support participation in this three day workshop.

The workshop is directed at upper level researchers and project managers/coordinators. The organizers seek the participation of:

- biodiversity researchers and policymakers
- taxonomists with and without experience in molecular biomarkers
- agricultural, environment, and public health scientists
- private sector companies who use, or will use barcoding

DNA barcoding is a new technique that uses a short gene sequence from a standardized position in the genome as a diagnostic tool for identifying species. Barcoding is intended as a reliable, cost-effective tool for documenting biodiversity research, controlling disease vectors, pests, and invasive species, protecting endangered species, and other regulatory areas in which species identification is critical. CBOL is an international initiative that promotes the development and use of DNA barcoding. The Consortium is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and is hosted by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., USA. CBOL has more than 150 Member Organizations from more than 45 countries on six continents, and is devoted to the full participation of developing countries.

Goals of the workshop are to:

- Clarify concepts and applications of barcoding
- Raise awareness as to the uses of DNA barcoding among researchers, research organizations, and potential users
- Raise awareness to the pitfalls of barcoding, focusing on the responsible application of the technique
- Explore the potential applications of DNA barcoding to environmental challenges facing countries in central and western Africa
- Clarifying funding opportunities to participate barcoding thrusts

In addition, a component of the workshop will be used to:

- Assess the greatest needs and opportunities for DNA barcoding in the region. Some emphasis will be put on promoting barcoding in the least developed countries;
- Initiate the formation of a steering committee for barcoding with the intent that this committee will draw up an action plan for central and western Africa, and establish an intra-regional network and intercontinental partnerships to implement the action plan.

CBOL anticipates working with institutes and countries in central and western Africa to implement the resulting action plan, and to cooperate with regional partners through:

- In-country training activities such as short courses for researchers and advanced students on technical aspects of DNA barcoding and associated specimen curation;
- Research training fellowships that will allow researchers and technicians to spend adequate periods of time in partner laboratories for advanced training and pilot research projects;
- Infrastructure improvement such as equipment acquisition; and
- Other forms of high-priority capacity-building identified during the regional meeting.

Send expressions of interest to Christine Onyia: xtieo@yahoo.com

Please indicate if you wish to apply for travel funding, as some funding may be made to a limited number of participants (contingent upon availability of funds).

For more information on CBOL: www.barcoding.si.edu.