

Keep talking while everything gets sequenced: how the Pandemic Agreement, global health, and genetic resource governance are keeping pace with digitisation?

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One of the responses to COVID-19 has been the development of a multilateral instrument under the World Health Organization: the Pandemic Agreement. Aimed at strengthening equity, transparency, and cooperation in public health, it also recognises the principles of One Health and the importance of data and benefit-sharing concerning genomic sequences. Adopted in May 2025, states agreed on a core text but left the details of a Pathogens Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) mechanism open for future negotiation. These negotiations took place in a challenging context for the WHO, marked by contestation and difficulties common to other Access and Benefit-Sharing frameworks. Health and environmental governance now appear fragmented and outpaced by the dematerialisation of genetic resources, particularly in the context of Digital Sequence Information (DSI). Once considered a technical issue, DSI has become a central concern across international regimes on health, biodiversity, agriculture, and marine resources. Adopting a critical approach to international law within the context of regime complexes, this paper analyses the emerging PABS mechanism in light of ongoing DSI debates, overlapping institutional frameworks, and legal fragmentation, and asks whether this fragmented architecture can still uphold equity and respond effectively to global crises such as pandemics and biodiversity loss.

Keywords: *Pandemic Agreement, Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing, Regime complex, Digitisation, DSI, Genetic resources*

1 INTRODUCTION

Adopted in May 2025 and accompanied by operational modalities still subject to negotiation in its annexes, the Pandemic Agreement represents a promising step towards a

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