

## Symposium on “Conservation of Biodiversity in India held at GNLU

**Gandhinagar, Sep 12, 2019:** Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) organized a Symposium on “Conservation of Biodiversity in India: Issues and Challenges.” The resource persons for the same were Dr Aeshita Mukherjee, Team Leader, ABS Partnership Project, Deutsche, Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) (India), and Mr Sudarshan Singh Shekhawat, Partner, Technology Law Practice, Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan, New Delhi.

In his inaugural address, GNLU Director, Dr Shanthakumar said, “according to the latest UN research report, the biodiversity is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating. Around 1 million species of plants and animals face extinction. Human greed is responsible for this loss of biodiversity which will have a telling impact on the quality of human life. While resources are required to sustain life, they must be used in a sustainable way. We owe a duty unto future generations – duty to act responsibly.” He also referred to Mahatma Gandhi’s famous quote: “The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.”

Dr Shanthakumar further said that “as a token of commitment to the cause of conservation of biodiversity, from this academic year on, each student will plant a tree on the campus as one enters the GNLU programme and nurture the same during the programme duration. The tree will have a board with the name of the planter and it will be one more reason for the alumni to visit their alma-matter more frequently.” He also said that GNLU plans to bring out a Coffee Table Book on flora & fauna at GNLU campus.

In his first session, Mr. Sudarshan Singh Shekhawat discussed various provisions of ‘Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmer’s Rights Act, 2001’ relating to the registration of crops, examination process called DUS (Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability), Farmer’s Rights, Right of Compensation for farmers, infringement of rights and enforcement of rights under the act.

In his second session, Mr Shekhawat discussed the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, Seed industry and ABS regulations 2014. The three objectives of the act are to conserve biodiversity, to ensure equitable benefit sharing arising from the utilization of Indian Biological Environment and to avoid previous instances of certain harms to biodiversity. He said that “.”

Dr Aeshita Mukherjee discussed the role of UNEP in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem. She narrated about the Government of India and UNDP’s initiative of supporting the operationalization of the Biodiversity Act, 2002. She also explained the objectives of Biodiversity Act as per her research and understanding, which is conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefit. She then talked about the limitations in the smooth operation of ABS. Five cases were discussed in brief which related to ‘Access to Biological Reserves for Research’. Functions of National Biodiversity Authority were discussed briefly. She then went on to narrate the project she is associated with, which is Indo-German Access and Benefit Sharing Partnership Project. Three



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pillars on which ABS Partnership Project rests on are learnings from good practices, awareness, communication and development of an ABS monitoring system.

The final session of the day was on the policies related to environment and biodiversity. Analysis of various Forestry related schemes, programmes and projects was provided. Few other topics such as National Green Mission, Annual Reports of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for recent years were also discussed. She also stressed upon the importance of conservation of sacred grooves and UNESCO's World Heritage Site in Biodiversity Area.

The symposium was organized by the GNLU Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development

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