



Message on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Geneva, August 9, 2011

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Traditional cultures are of immense cultural, historical, spiritual and economic value to Indigenous Peoples all over the world. They are key elements of their identity, livelihoods, well-being and sustainable development. Traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions also hold potential economic value - they can establish a basis for community enterprises and cultural industries, and, in so doing, contribute to economic development and poverty reduction.

The challenge is, however, to achieve a balance between protection of traditional cultures from misappropriation and promotion of their use on equitable and culturally appropriate terms. It also lies in ensuring that the communities who are their custodians and guardians can benefit economically from their traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression, while maintaining respect for those aspects of traditional cultures that communities do not wish be exploited commercially.

The theme of this year's commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is very timely as Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and accredited observers, many of whom represent Indigenous Peoples, are engaged in text-based negotiations towards the development of an international legal instrument or instruments to ensure the effective protection of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

WIPO's norm-setting and capacity-building work on defining the appropriate role of intellectual property in the protection, preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions are an important contribution to better understanding and implementation of the United Nation Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and, in particular, its Article 31 that specifically deals with Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property over their cultural heritage.

It is with deep appreciation and respect that the WIPO joins today in celebrating Indigenous Peoples' cultures as a means of preserving their identities, ensuring their subsistence and promoting creativity and innovation.

[End of Message]