



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

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Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and cultures contribute to the richness of the world's innovation and creativity. Their traditional practices contribute to equitable development and proper management of the environment. Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) are essential for the affirmation of their distinct cultural identity.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) leads the development of a balanced and effective international intellectual property system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all. Intellectual property can play a key role in the economic, social and cultural empowerment of Indigenous Peoples. The WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) is currently working to reach agreement on an international legal instrument or instruments which will ensure the effective protection of TK and TCEs, and regulation of the interface between intellectual property and genetic resources. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are important actors in achieving a universal intellectual property system which further recognizes all forms of innovation and creativity and safeguards the unique status and identity of Indigenous Peoples.

This year's theme for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: "Bridging the gap: implementing the rights of indigenous peoples", viewed in an intellectual property context, makes a direct reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly Article 31, which refers to the "right of indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression". Article 31 contributes to providing guidance to WIPO's work on the protection of TK and TCEs.

WIPO Member States have established several mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to make substantive contributions to the WIPO negotiations. Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities participate directly – and very valuably – in these negotiations.

WIPO's capacity-strengthening activities also address the interests and concerns of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including our practical workshop for Indigenous Peoples and local communities on intellectual property and TK. WIPO's Indigenous Fellow Program offers the opportunity for an Indigenous Fellow to work within WIPO's Traditional Knowledge Division.

It is with deep appreciation and respect that the WIPO joins today in celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and we look forward to maintaining our valuable and warm collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and local communities."

[End of Message]