



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

Geneva, August 9, 2013

**Francis Gurry, Director General
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**

Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) embody significant innovation and creativity and contribute to the diversity and richness of the planet's civilizations and cultures. They also contribute to the cultural identity, sustainable development and social cohesion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and, globally, to the conservation of the environment, the promotion of food security and the advancement of public health.

The enhanced promotion, preservation and protection of TK and TCEs are called for by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who seek greater control over if and how their TK and TCEs are accessed and used outside the traditional context.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities have, therefore, a direct stake in the negotiations underway at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) with the objective of reaching agreement on an international legal instrument or instruments which will ensure the effective protection of TK and TCEs. The negotiations also address the relationship between intellectual property and genetic resources, another issue of seminal interest and importance for Indigenous Peoples. The negotiations take place within the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (the IGC).

In this regard, this year's theme for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, "Indigenous peoples building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements", advocates for the need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) reflects a global understanding on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and it directly addresses intellectual property protection in its Article 31, which refers to Indigenous Peoples' "right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions".

Consistent with Article 18 of the UNDRIP, various modalities to ensure the full and direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in the IGC's negotiations are in place, including the WIPO Voluntary Fund, participation of Indigenous-selected experts in expert drafting groups, Indigenous Panels which precede each IGC session, and a WIPO-financed secretariat for Indigenous and local community participants during each session. In addition, WIPO offers the opportunity for an Indigenous Fellow to work within the WIPO Secretariat as a full and direct member of the team that works on TK, TCES and genetic resources.

In April this year, the Secretariats of WIPO and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) successfully co-organized an Indigenous Expert Workshop on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions. WIPO funded the participation of the seven invited experts, a Member of the Permanent Forum, and a member of the Permanent Forum Secretariat. The results of the Workshop were reported to the IGC when it met in July 2013. The WIPO Secretariat is also providing support to Mr. Paul Kanyinke Sena, the current Chair of the Permanent Forum, in his completion of a TK-related study for the Forum. These activities are among the comprehensive responses of WIPO to the Permanent Forum's recommendations made to WIPO in 2012.

It is with deep appreciation and respect that the WIPO joins today in celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 2013.

[End of Message]