

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

August 9, 2024

Daren Tang, Director General, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

At WIPO, we are committed to fostering a balanced and effective global intellectual property ecosystem that benefits everyone, everywhere. We believe that intellectual property can and should act as a powerful catalyst for job creation, business growth and economic, social, and cultural development in all parts of the world.

Indigenous Peoples' unique knowledge systems and cultural expressions date back to time immemorial and continue to thrive in the present day. It is critical that these communities feel connected to intellectual property and see it as a strategic tool that they can harness effectively.

On May 24 of this year, we reached a major milestone in these efforts when all 193 WIPO Member States agreed, by consensus, to a [landmark new Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge](#). This is the first WIPO Treaty with provisions specifically for Indigenous Peoples.

This historic achievement – long advocated for by many Member States and Indigenous Peoples representatives – will not only safeguard wisdom and protect biodiversity, but also increase transparency in the patent system and strengthen innovation.

Representatives of Indigenous Peoples played a crucial role in this success, participating actively in the preparatory process, and in both formal and informal negotiations. We hope this success flows to other areas of our work, including [ongoing negotiations](#) on the protection of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Beyond the normative agenda, WIPO is proud to deliver a range of projects and programs designed to support Indigenous Peoples at the grassroots level.

For example, WIPO's [Community Enterprises Program](#) supports women entrepreneurs from Indigenous Peoples to make effective use of intellectual property for the benefit of their community-based enterprises. Within this framework, we have provided specialized support to over 100 entrepreneurs from 63 countries.

This includes Maria Rosero and Nury Ruano, Indigenous Pasto women from southern Colombia, who lead a 33-member community weavers' network that creates exquisite ponchos, shawls, and handbags using traditional methods and incorporating culturally significant designs and symbols.

Through the program, Maria and Nury developed an intellectual property strategy and business plan to elevate their collective enterprise. This led to an application for a collective mark, which by belonging to the entire association, fosters a sense of unity and joint ownership, while also adding value to unique goods and products. To help the community make the most of their intellectual property, with the support of the Funds-in-Trust (FIT/JP) Japan Industrial Property Global, we are facilitating the purchase of equipment to further enhance product quality.

Indigenous Peoples also benefit from WIPO's work in support of geographical indications, as well as bespoke projects such as an upcoming initiative in Australia on intellectual property and Bush Foods for First Nations peoples.

Later this year, we will also host the second edition of our [High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Peoples, Traditional Cultural Expressions and Fashion](#). This forum aims to build relationships, increase mutual understanding, and explore forward-looking ways to facilitate ethical and fair collaborations between Indigenous Peoples and fashion companies.

We are also committed to raising awareness about intellectual property amongst Indigenous Youth. Now in its fourth running, the [*WIPO Photography Prize for Indigenous Youth*](#), celebrates the creativity of young members of Indigenous Peoples and raises awareness on how copyright can be used by them to protect their photographs and creative expressions. This year's theme focuses on how communities' lifestyles, beliefs and cultures are fundamentally related to their health and well-being.

While diverse in focus and scope, all these initiatives share a common goal: leveraging intellectual property to create meaningful and positive outcomes for Indigenous Peoples around the world.

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we proudly reaffirm our commitment to continuing this work strategically, respectfully and in partnership with the communities we are privileged to serve.