

Opening Remarks
Assistant Director General
IGC 43
May 30 to June 3, 2022

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director General, it's a pleasure to welcome you all to this 43rd session of the IGC.

First, allow me to congratulate you, Madam Chair, for your election. Congratulations go to the two Vice-Chairs as well.

I would like to recognize and acknowledge the preparatory work done by the Chair, Ms. Lilyclaire Bellamy, and the valuable contributions of the two Vice-Chairs, Mr. Jukka Liedes and Mr. Yonah Seleti.

I would also like to acknowledge the preparation and guidance of Group Coordinators and all Member States.

In October 2021, the General Assembly agreed to renew the mandate of the WIPO IGC for the 22/23 biennium. An agreement on a work program for the IGC for the biennium was also reached:

- Two sessions on GRs in 2022
- Two sessions on TK/TCEs in 2022
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You will recall that IGC 42 agreed to establish an *ad hoc* expert group on GRs.

The Experts met on Sunday, May 29 (i.e., yesterday), and had fruitful discussions at the meeting.

Our thanks to the talented and experienced experts.

Our Thanks also to the chair of the *ad hoc* expert group, Mr. Paul Kuruk, who will report to the IGC on yesterday's *ad hoc* expert group meeting later today.

We hope that delegates and observers will benefit from the discussions of the *ad hoc* expert group.

Just to recall, this is the second session of the IGC under the renewed mandate, and the only remaining session on GRs.

It is recalled that delegates at IGC 42 discussed the different approaches and options reflected in the "Consolidated Document Relating to Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources" and revised the text. The revised consolidated text is before this session as document 43/4. Much work is still needed by negotiators with a view to creating further convergence on the pending issues.

As referred to in the mandate, a Chair's Text of a "Draft International Legal Instrument Relating to Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources" is before the session as document 43/5.

The new mandate of the IGC requests the Secretariat to "continue to update studies and other materials relating to tools and activities on databases and on existing disclosure regimes relating to GRs and associated TK, with a view to identifying any gaps". Such reports have been produced as documents 43/6 and 43/7.

I would like to call upon Member States to show flexibility and pragmatism, and urge Member States to make this effort, and to do so in a spirit of compromise, so that this long-standing item can be brought to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to acknowledge the many contributions that indigenous people and local community experts make to the process, and their wish to participate as directly and as effectively as possible.

On the WIPO Voluntary Fund, the Canadian and Finnish donations contribute to ensuring that the voices of indigenous peoples and local communities can be delivered in person at IGC 43 and IGC 44 in September.

The WIPO Voluntary Fund will again run out of money later this year.

I encourage Member States to consult and identify ways to raise further contributions to the Fund.

I would like to remind delegations of the need to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities within the IGC's negotiations and the importance of the Fund in facilitating this.

The theme for the indigenous panel at this session is "Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources: Views of Indigenous Peoples and Local Community Youth".

I should like to Welcome Ms. Jessica Vega Ortega from Mexico, who is a co-chair of the Global Youth Indigenous Caucus; Mr. Aaron Jones from the United States of America, who is a Treaty Rights Protection Specialist for the Tulalip Tribes Treaty Rights and Government Affairs Department; and Mr. Aslak Holmberg from Finland, who is the Vice President of the Saami Council, representing the Finnish Sámi Central Organization.

Speaking of indigenous peoples and local community youth, I would like to recall the *WIPO Photography Prize for Indigenous Peoples and Local Community Youth*, organized by the Traditional Knowledge Division. Themed Climate Change and Climate Action: Mother Earth through our Lenses, the WIPO Photography Prize encourages Indigenous and local community youth to express themselves on climate change and climate action – while raising their awareness on how copyright can be used to protect their creativity expressed in the photographs. The thirty shortlisted photographs are being exhibited in the lobby of the New Building. All delegates are invited to visit the exhibition during the week.

There are three reasons for progress:

- 1.(Relatively) new Administration, with renewed focus on underserved communities in the IP system. IGC fulfilling that mission.
2. Improved epidemiological situation, so hope intensified and renewed energy in IGC negotiations
3. New Chair (and bureau). First time we have a Madam Chair in over 22 years of the IGC's establishment. We hope that is a sign of renewed focus and intensified efforts to make history in the coming weeks, months and (not too many) years.

I thank you for your attention.
