

Opening Statement for the Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Thank you, Chair

Greetings, *gawis ay agew taku am-in*. Since time immemorial, the planet's biological and genetic diversity has thrived under our stewardship and within our sacred lands and waters. Our peoples have long known the importance of maintaining balance with the natural world and ensuring that future generations have access to genetic resources essential for our survival. As the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, we carry the significant responsibility of advocacy for the 476 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

We are here because a significant amount of the world's wealth – both private and government – has been generated from our genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, often to our detriment. As we begin this Diplomatic Conference, our right to full and effective participation must be ensured, as these matters impact our peoples and their futures. We are here to strengthen protection for our genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, and not to further strengthen patent systems that have been tools of dispossession. We need positive protections. The time to adopt a binding instrument is now.

Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their ...genetic resources" and traditional knowledge. It also provides that "states **shall** take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights," "in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples." When our Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge are impacted, our "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" will be essential in the implementation of the legal regime.

We know there are competing interests in these negotiations, and we are grateful for those member states who have made good faith efforts to recognize and uphold our rights. We reiterate:

1. That the instrument should enshrine implementation in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples.
2. That Indigenous Peoples who are the origin or source of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge must be disclosed.

These principles are fundamental to the legitimacy of this instrument. Without them, this instrument will not be fair or effective in protecting, respecting, and promoting our rights regarding genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Finally, we acknowledge with gratitude that participation of Indigenous representatives at this Conference was enabled through funding from the WIPO core budget. We look forward to the continuation of this practice throughout the implementation and administration of the legally binding instrument that this Conference will adopt.

Thank you, Chair.