

**Working Group on Indigenous Populations
(23rd Session)
United Nations, Geneva, 18-22 July 2005**

***Side Event
Call of the Earth / International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED)
Thursday 21 July 2005***

The theme of this year's Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was "Indigenous peoples and the international and domestic protection of traditional knowledge". Considering that this is a highly topical theme at a global level, it received special treatment at one of the sessions of the Working Group.

With this in mind, Atencio Lopez representing Call of the Earth Llamado de la Tierra, International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) and the Investigative Group on Biocultural Heritage, held discussions on 20 July 2005 at the 23rd Session. The discussions were in relation to Agenda item 5(b): Draft Principles and Guidelines on the Protection on the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples.

On Thursday 21 July 2005 in room 23, various indigenous delegates at the 23rd Session of the WGIP attended a roundtable meeting to discuss this year's theme. The meeting stressed that:

- (i) advances had been made at the international level; and
- (ii) significant advances had been made in the establishment of laws favouring the protection of traditional knowledge.

Discussions also took place regarding the urgent need for constitutional standards to be incorporated into law for real and effective implementation.

Another area touched on was the establishment of new international rules regarding free trade agreements or globalisation as it was considered that there was neither respect nor protection for indigenous peoples traditional knowledge in its various forms. Furthermore, indigenous knowledge continued to be robbed and pirated, generating great profits for pharmaceutical, food and textile companies and many others.

One topic which took some delegates by surprise was the new concept of Bio-Cultural Heritage. It was considered that as the topic was relatively new, it should be dealt more thoroughly in future events dealing with traditional knowledge.

Finally, delegates thanked event organizers for continuing to look for space to exchange ideas and experiences in this field. Furthermore, they called on diverse organisations within the United Nations system, particularly the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), to accelerate its studies and discussions on this topic, and in the not too distant future, so that indigenous peoples can rely on an international instrument or agreement protecting collective rights, that is to say, the international and national protection of traditional knowledge.