

## **Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore**

**Fifty-First Session**  
**Geneva, May 30 to June 5, 2025**

### **PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: VOLUNTARY FUND**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat*

#### **NEED FOR REPLENISHMENT OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND**

1. Since the last two documents of the kind (documents WIPO/GRTKF/IC/49/3 and WIPO/GRTKF/IC/50/3), the WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities (“the Fund”) continues to be depleted, given the disbursements made by the Fund in relation to the Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Knowledge (“the Diplomatic Conference”) that took place at the WIPO Headquarters in Geneva from May 13 to 24, 2024 and the absence of fresh contributions made after the Diplomatic Conference until April 17, 2025 (see documents WIPO/GRTKF/IC/50/INF/4 and WIPO/GRTKF/IC/51/INF/4).

2. The Government of Australia contributed 29,795.36 Swiss francs (the equivalent of 50,000 Australian dollars at the date) on June 22, 2023, the *Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas* of Mexico contributed 8,239.99 Swiss francs (the equivalent of 167,555 Mexican pesos at the date) on August 7, 2023 and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation contributed 18,518.24 Swiss francs (the equivalent of 20,000 euros at the date) credited on February 8, 2024. Anonymous contributors contributed 872.60 Swiss francs, an amount that was credited on the account of the Fund on July 4, 2023, following up a call for voluntary contributions made by the Chair of the Committee during the Forty-Seventh Session of the Committee.

3. Under the present rules of the Fund as contained in Annex I<sup>1</sup>, the extent of support that the Fund can provide depends exclusively on the voluntary contributions made by donors. Due to a lack of available funds available in due time, the Fund has not been able to finance the participation of recommended applicants for funding with the view to the Forty-Eighth, Forty-Ninth and Fiftieth sessions of the Committee and will not be able to finance the participation of the recommended applicants for funding with the view to the Fifty-First Session either. Unless fresh contributions are made to the Voluntary Fund in due course, the Fund will not be able to finance the participation of the recommended applicants, if any, with the view to further sessions.

4. The WIPO Director General and the Chairs of the Committee have repeatedly and strongly encouraged Member States of the Committee and interested public or private entities to contribute to the Fund in view of the crucial and fully recognized need to ensure participation by indigenous and local communities, including at the Fiftieth Session of the Committee. In its last report, the Advisory Board of the Fund indicated the following: “The Advisory Board noted with great concern that the Fund remains depleted. It noted as well that no fresh contribution had been made to the Fund since the Forty-Ninth Session of the Committee. It recalled that none of the applicants recommended by the Advisory Board for funding with the view to the Forty-Eight, Forty-Ninth and Fiftieth sessions of the Committee could be funded. Furthermore, the Advisory Board was concerned that none of the recommended applicants could be funded with the view to the Fifty-First Session unless new contributions are made in due time. The Advisory Board strongly encouraged WIPO Member States and other potential donors to contribute further to the Fund so that the recommendations of the Advisory Board could be implemented with sufficient funding.” (See Annex to document WIPO/GRTKF/IC/50/INF/6, par. 3)

5. The Committee may recall that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) stated on its side the following in the Report on its Seventeenth Session that took place from April 16 to 27, 2018 (see UN Economic and Social Council document E/2018/43\*-E/C.19/2018/11\*, para. 58): “The Permanent Forum is concerned that the WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities is depleted, and emphasizes the critical importance of the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the negotiations of the [Committee] in accordance with article 41 of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]. To that end, the Forum strongly encourages the Member States of WIPO to contribute to the WIPO Voluntary Fund and invites them to explore and identify innovative ways of raising funds for the Fund, including through use of the regular budget of WIPO. The Forum also recommends that WIPO increase the number of indigenous participants through the regular budget and allow their full and effective participation in the negotiations”. In the Report on its Eighteenth Session that took place from April 22 to May 3, 2019 (see UN Economic and Social Council document E/2019/43-E/C.19/2019/10, the Forum called the Committee in its para. 9 “to use its core budget to fund indigenous peoples’ participation in the deliberations.”

6. It is recalled that, in view of the financial situation of the Fund at the time, the Chair of the Committee invited the Committee, at its Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth sessions, to reflect on new ways to replenish the Fund. (See document WIPO/GRTKF/IC/29/3.)

7. In 2021, when the WIPO Voluntary Fund was depleted, the WIPO General Assembly “(f) recognized the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the work of the Committee, noted that the WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities was depleted, encouraged Member States to consider contributing to the Fund, and invited Member States to consider other alternate funding arrangements.” (See document WO/GA/54/15 para. 168 (iii).)

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<sup>1</sup> The rules of the Fund, all practical details on the Fund, its operation, and the application procedure, are also available on the WIPO website: <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>.

8. In relation to the modalities applicable to funding the participation of representatives of invited observers representing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the Diplomatic Conference, the 2023 Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO took a decision that reads as follows: "(...) The funding will be provided by WIPO's Voluntary Fund and, in case of insufficient resources, through the budget allocated to the Diplomatic Conference. The modalities of allocation for such funding will follow the rules of WIPO's Voluntary Fund".<sup>2</sup>

9. In accordance with the rules of the Fund, detailed and updated information are provided in the Information Note WIPO/GRTKF/IC/51/INF/4 to be communicated to the Committee before its present session. This Information Note will include *inter alia* the level of the contributions and pledges received as at the date of the Information Note, the amount available in the Fund, the names of the contributors, the name(s) of the applicant(s) recommended for funding with the view to the Fiftieth Session (who were not be funded due to a lack of sufficient means in the Fund available in due time), the name(s) of the applicant(s) recommended for funding with the view to the Fifty-First Session (who will not be funded due to a lack of sufficient means in the Fund available in due time) and, finally, the names of applicants who have applied for funding with the view to the Fifty-Second Session, pending the renewal of the mandate of the Committee by the WIPO General Assembly.

#### APPOINTMENT OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

10. The decision setting out the objectives and operation of the Fund provides that "[a]part from the *ex officio* member, the members of the Advisory Board will be elected by the Committee on the second day of each of its sessions, on a proposal by its Chair, following consultation with the Member States and their regional groups and, respectively, representatives of accredited observers. Apart from that of the *ex officio* member, their mandates will expire with the opening of the following Committee session" (Article 8).

11. At its Fiftieth Session, the Chair proposed, and the Committee elected by acclaim, the following eight members of the Advisory Board to serve in an individual capacity:

- (i) as members of delegations of WIPO Member States:  
Susan ANTHONY (Ms.); Flor de María GARCÍA (Ms.); Houlton FAASAU (Mr.); Živilė PLYČIURAITYTĖ-PLYČIŪTĖ (Ms.); Tlalane SEBEKO (Ms.);
- (ii) as members of accredited observers representing indigenous and local communities or other customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions:  
June L. LORENZO (Ms.); Sonia Patricia MURCIA ROA (Ms.);  
Geiser PERRELET (Ms.).

12. The Chair of the Committee nominated Audrey NEEQUAYE (Ms.), Vice-Chair of the Committee, member *ex officio*, to serve as the Chair of the Advisory Board.

13. Since the mandate of the current members of the Advisory Board expired at the beginning of its Fifty-First Session, the Committee would need, on or before the second day of its Fifty-First Session, to elect the members of the Advisory Board. The rules governing the Fund leave open the possibility of past members being eligible for re-election.

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<sup>2</sup> See document A/64/13, par. 29 (v). The 2023 Assemblies took place from July 6 to 14, 2023.

14. *The Committee is invited:*

*(i) to strongly encourage its members and all interested public or private entities to contribute to the Fund in order to ensure the Fund's operation; and*

*(ii) to undertake the election of the members of the Advisory Board of the Fund on the basis of the proposal of the Chair on or before the second day of its session.*

[Annexes follow]

Establishment of the WIPO Voluntary Fund  
for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities  
as approved by the WIPO General Assembly (32<sup>nd</sup> session) and as subsequently amended  
by WIPO General Assembly (39<sup>th</sup> session)

*Resolved* to take appropriate measures to facilitate and encourage the participation of indigenous and local communities, and other customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, in the work of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concerning intellectual property relating to genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore;

*Recognizing* that the effectiveness of these measures depends in particular on appropriate financial support;

*Recognizing* moreover that the existence of an appropriate coordinated framework aimed at financing this participation would encourage such contributions;

[If the WIPO General Assembly decides to renew the mandate of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore in its current form or in a different form, or if the Assembly decides to create a new body responsible for the matters within the Intergovernmental Committee's remit in its current form (the possible bodies being designated hereinafter by the generic term "the Committee"),<sup>3</sup> *then* in that it is recommended that the Assembly [should decide]<sup>4</sup> to create a voluntary contribution fund, the name, objective, criteria for support and operation of which would be as follows:

I. NAME

1. The Fund will be known as the "WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities", hereinafter the "Fund".

II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

2. The Fund is established exclusively to finance the participation in the work of the Committee and other related activities of WIPO of the nominated representatives of accredited observers which represent indigenous or local communities, or otherwise represent customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions.

2 *bis*. Intersessional Working Group meetings that are part of the Committee's work program as referred to by the General Assembly, hereinafter "IWG meetings", will be considered as a related activity of WIPO within the scope of Article 2.

3. Since participation in the Committee's work is restricted by its rules of procedure to its members and accredited observers, and in order to ensure their capacity to participate fully in the Committee's work, the funded representatives should only be the nominated representatives of observers which are duly and previously accredited to the Committee, either as ad hoc observers accredited by the Committee itself, or as observers accredited to WIPO.

4. The creation of the Fund and its operation will not prejudice other established procedures, in particular by the general WIPO Rules of Procedure (WIPO 399 (FE) Rev. 3) implemented in

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<sup>3</sup> Note from the Secretariat: the General Assembly has taken such a decision. See par. 202 of the report of its Thirty-Second Session (document WO/GA/32/13)

<sup>4</sup> Note from the Secretariat: the General Assembly has taken such a decision. See par. 168 of the report of its Thirty-Second Session (document WO/GA/32/13)

document WIPO/GRTKF/IC/1/2 for the accreditation of indigenous and local communities and other observers, or to organize the effective participation of their members in the sessions. The operation of the Fund shall not pre-empt or override decisions by members of the Committee regarding accreditation and participation in the work of the Committee. It is understood that other direct contributions and other possible forms of direct assistance, either existing or in the future, designed to finance or facilitate such participation, may be pursued outside the framework of the Voluntary Fund, at the choice of the contributor.

### III. CRITERIA FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

5. Financial support from the Fund will correspond exclusively to the objective set out in Article 2 and 2 *bis* and to the following conditions:

- (a) support from the Fund will be strictly limited to the maximum resources actually available in the Fund;
- (b) each provision of support will relate to a single Committee session and any related activities held consecutively with the Committee session and/or to a single IWG meeting. Provision of support on one occasion shall not prejudice possible support for the participation of the same beneficiary on other Committee sessions or IWG meetings;
- (c) to be eligible for financial support, persons would need to satisfy each of the following criteria:
  - (i) be a natural person;
  - (ii) belong, as a member, to an accredited observer which represents indigenous or local communities, or otherwise represents customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions;
  - (iii) have been duly nominated in writing by the observer to represent it at the Committee session and/or the IWG meeting designated for the support and as possible beneficiary of support from the Fund;
  - (iv) be able to participate effectively and contribute to the Committee session and/or the IWG meeting intended for the support, such as through expressing experience in the field and the concerns of indigenous and local communities and other customary holders and custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions; and
  - (v) and whom the Advisory Board considers would not be able to take part in the Committee session and/or the IWG meeting concerned without support from the Fund, owing to a lack of alternative financial resources.
- (d) in ensuring a broad geographical spread of participation among the seven geo-cultural regions recognized by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Advisory Board should take due account of the need to support those who lack alternative financial resources, and particularly of those observers based in developing and least developed countries and small island developing countries.
- (e) the financial support granted by the Fund will cover:

- (i) as far as it relates to Committee sessions or IWG meetings, the purchase of a return economy class ticket, including taxes connected with the ticket, between the domicile of the beneficiary and Geneva or any other meeting place, by the most direct and cheapest route;
  - (ii) as far as it relates to Committee sessions only, living expenses in the form of a daily subsistence allowance at the rate specified by the United Nations for Geneva or for the city where said meeting is held, with an additional sum to cover expenses incurred at the time of departure and arrival at the applicable rate under the United Nations system;
  - (iii) as far as the financial support for hotel accommodation and living expenses for any particular IWG meeting is concerned, the WIPO Director General, acting as the manager of the Fund and using exclusively the financial means of the Fund, will apply the same funding arrangement that is applicable to funded State representatives who participate in the same IWG meeting; and
  - (iv) all other expenses related to the participation of the beneficiaries in the Committee session or/and the IWG meeting concerned will be excluded from the Fund's support.
- (f) if an applicant who has been selected to benefit from Fund support has to withdraw or is unable to take part in the Committee session and/or the IWG meeting concerned, any sums unexpended and recovered, apart from possible cancellation charges, will be transferred to the reserve of the resources available to the Fund and the choice which was made with regard to said applicant shall be considered null and void. The applicant will nonetheless be entitled to submit a new request for the following Committee session(s) and/or the following IWG meeting(s), provided that information is submitted giving a good reason for the withdrawal or nature of the event which otherwise made participation impossible.

#### IV. OPERATING MECHANISM

##### 6. The Fund will operate as follows:

- (a) fund resources will come exclusively from voluntary contributions by governments, NGOs and other private or public entities, and specifically shall not be drawn from the regular WIPO budget;
- (b) the administrative costs associated with the operation of the Fund shall be kept to a strict minimum and shall not entail the drawing of specific funds in credit from the regular WIPO budget;
- (c) the voluntary contributions paid into the Fund will be managed by the WIPO Director General, assisted by an Advisory Board. In this respect, the financial administration by the WIPO Director General and the auditing of the Fund accounts by the WIPO auditor will be undertaken in line with the procedures established, in accordance with the WIPO Financial Regulations, for the funds-in-trust set up to finance certain development cooperation activities conducted by WIPO;
- (d) decisions to extend financial support will be taken, for formal purposes, by the WIPO Director General, following an express recommendation by the Advisory Board. The recommendations made by the Advisory Board relating to the choice of beneficiaries will be binding on the Director General and not subject to appeal; and

- (e) deadline for submission will be settled as follows:
  - (i) duly documented requests for financial support enabling participation in a Committee session will be sent to the WIPO Director General by the applicants in their own name, so as to arrive at least 60 days before the opening of the Committee session which precedes the Committee session for which support is requested. Later requests will be considered at the following Committee session; and
  - (ii) separate and duly documented requests for financial support enabling participation in a particular IWG meeting will be sent to the WIPO Director General by the applicants in their own name, so as to arrive at least 60 days before the opening of the Committee session which precedes the IWG meeting for which support is requested, or by such earlier date as the Secretariat may, for practical reasons, determine and announce. Later requests will be considered at the following session of the Committee.
  
- (f) before each Committee session, the WIPO Director General will communicate for the information of participants an information note setting out:
  - (i) the level of the voluntary contributions paid into the Fund on the date on which the document was drafted;
  - (ii) the identity of the contributors (unless individual contributors have expressly requested to remain anonymous);
  - (iii) the amount of the resources available taking into account the funds disbursed;
  - (iv) the list of people who have benefited from the Fund's support since the previous information memorandum;
  - (v) the people chosen to benefit from the Fund but who withdrew;
  - (vi) the amount of the support allocated to each beneficiary; and
  - (vii) a sufficiently detailed description of the applicants seeking support for the following session or/and following IWG meeting(s).

This document will also be addressed by name to the members of the Advisory Board for examination and deliberation.





- (g) following the election of its members, the Advisory Board will be convened by the WIPO Director General to meet on the margins of the Committee session which precedes the Committee session or/and the IWG meeting(s) for which support is being considered, without prejudice to the right of its members to discuss informally any questions concerning their mandate between sessions of the Committee.
- (h) the Advisory Board must ensure that all the criteria for eligibility of applicants set out above, in particular in Article 5, are satisfied during its deliberations, and should agree on a recommended list of eligible applicants who should benefit from Fund support. The Advisory Board should also ensure, when adopting its recommendation, that:
  - a balance is maintained between the male and female beneficiaries, and between the geo-cultural regions from which they come, in successive Committee sessions or/and IWG meetings insofar as is possible; and
  - where necessary, the benefits are taken into account which the Committee's work may derive from the repeated participation in its sessions of the same beneficiary.

Finally, when adopting its recommendation the Committee shall take account of the available resources as reported by the Director General in the information note referred to in Article 6(f), and in particular it shall identify those applicants who are agreed and for whom funding is available, and those applicants who are agreed in principle but for whom insufficient funds are available. Those in the latter category should be given priority in decisions on funding for subsequent sessions of the Committee or/and IWG meetings.

The Advisory Board will be provided with administrative assistance for its deliberations by the WIPO International Bureau, in accordance with Article 6(b).

- (i) the Advisory Board will adopt its recommendation before the end of the Committee session on the margins of which it meets. This recommendation will identify:
  - (i) the subsequent Committee session and, should the case arise, the IWG meeting(s) intended for financial support (i.e. the subsequent session of the Committee);
  - (ii) the applicants whom the Advisory Board agrees should be supported for that Committee session and/or the IWG meeting(s), for whom funds are available;
  - (iii) any applicant or applicants whom the Advisory Board agrees should be supported in principle but for whom insufficient funds are available;
  - (iv) any applicant or applicants whose application has been rejected in accordance with the procedure in Article 10; and
  - (v) any applicant or applicants whose application has been postponed for further consideration until the next Committee in accordance with the procedure in Article 10.

The Advisory Board will immediately forward the contents of the recommendation to the Director General who will take a decision in accordance with the recommendation. The Director General will inform the Committee immediately and, in any cases, prior to the end of its current session, by means of an information note specifying the decision taken concerning each applicant.

- (j) the WIPO Director General will take the administrative measures necessary to implement his decision for the Committee session and, should the case arise, for the IWG meeting(s) concerned, in accordance with Article 6(b).

V. OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE ADVISORY BOARD

7. The Advisory Board will comprise nine members, including:

- the Chair of the Committee, appointed *ex officio* or, where that proves to be impossible, one of the Vice-Chairs nominated by the Chair as his or her deputy;
- five members from the delegations of WIPO Member States taking part in the Committee, reflecting an appropriate geographical balance; and
- three members from accredited observers representing indigenous and local communities or other customary holders or custodians of TK or TCEs.

The members will serve on an individual basis and will conduct their deliberations independently, notwithstanding any consultations that they might consider as appropriate.

8. Apart from the *ex officio* member, the members of the Advisory Board will be elected by the Committee on the second day of each of its sessions, on a proposal by its Chair, following consultation with the Member States and their regional groups and, respectively, representatives of accredited observers. Apart from that of the *ex officio* member, their mandates will expire with the opening of the following Committee session.

9. The Advisory Board will meet regularly on the margins of Committee sessions, subject to the requirement that a quorum of seven members, including the Chair or one of the Vice-Chairs, should be present.

10. A recommendation for the selection of any beneficiaries will require the agreement of at least seven members of the Advisory Board. If an application is not agreed upon, it may continue to be examined at the following session, unless that application received three votes or fewer. In the latter case, the request will be considered to have been rejected, without prejudice to the right of the applicant to submit a new request at a later date.

11. Each member of the Advisory Board who has a direct association with an observer which has applied for funding for a representative shall disclose that association to the Advisory Board, and shall abstain from any vote concerning any applicant nominated by that observer.

[Annex II follows]



WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities

FUND-RAISING

CASE FOR SUPPORT

I. **CONTEXT**

In 1998, WIPO launched a fresh policy initiative aimed at protecting traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions (or, expressions of folklore) against their misuse and improper dissemination and for managing the interface between intellectual property (IP) and genetic resources. Indigenous peoples and local communities are those mainly affected since their traditions, knowledge systems and cultural expressions form the basis of their identity and future development. Appropriate and effective protection requires a concerted approach by States. The WIPO Member States decided therefore to create a WIPO body expressly tasked with examining the standards which might be adopted at the international level to ensure protection. This body is the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (the IGC).

***A need to facilitate the effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the WIPO IGC***

Indigenous peoples and local communities rightly consider that they should be able to participate in decision-making processes relating to matters which affect them. Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007, also stipulates that “Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights...”

Indigenous peoples and local communities provide the IGC with experience, information, comments and suggestions which are essential to ensuring that the decisions taken meet the needs and expectations of beneficiaries.

The government delegations in the IGC have therefore unanimously recognized that “the participation of indigenous and local communities is of great importance for the work of the Committee”.

The need to facilitate participation has been even more pressing since December 2009, when the IGC embarked on **intense negotiations** on one or more international legal instruments to provide effective protection.

## II. THE VOLUNTARY FUND: OBJECTIVES, OPERATION AND RESULTS

Concrete measures have been taken by the WIPO Member States to ensure the effective and active participation of indigenous peoples and local communities as observers in the IGC.

Since April 2001, a fast-track accreditation procedure has been in operation in the IGC for all non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations; the IGC currently has more than 300 accredited observers, many of whom represent indigenous and local communities. IGC sessions are opened with an indigenous panel, in which members of indigenous and local communities speak of their experiences and perspectives. In 2011, the WIPO General Assembly asked the IGC to review its procedures with the view to “enhancing the positive contribution of observers” to the IGC process. The IGC adopted various practical initiatives in this regard in February 2012.

In parallel, many indigenous peoples and local communities have stressed and still stress that they encountered **insurmountable difficulties in financing the travel and accommodation costs** of their representatives during IGC meetings, and that those costs prevent them from participating effectively.

In order to address this legitimate concern, and following extensive consultations and a review of best practices prevailing within the United Nations system, **the WIPO General Assembly took the decision in 2005 to create the WIPO Voluntary Fund** for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities in order to finance the participation in the IGC of accredited observers representing indigenous and local communities.

The objective of this indispensable financing instrument and its rules of operation were clearly set out by the General Assembly, in formal decisions that provide the legal basis of the Fund<sup>1</sup>.

### *Objective of the Fund*

The Fund is designed exclusively to provide financial support to accredited observers representing indigenous and local communities, by covering the purchase by their representatives of a return economy class ticket by the cheapest route, and granting them a daily allowance and in some cases an additional flat rate to cover incidental expenses incurred at the time of departure and arrival.

### *Source of funding*

The WIPO Secretariat is not authorized to draw on the WIPO budget to keep the Fund in operation. **The Fund relies exclusively on voluntary contributions from donors.** That means that the Fund cannot operate unless it receives contributions from donors.

### *Operation of the Fund*

#### – **Transparency**

- The list of contributors and amount of donations, the financial situation of the Fund, the list of candidates for financial support and the list of funded participants with the

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<sup>1</sup> See the Annex to document WO/GA/32/6 as approved by the WIPO General Assembly (32<sup>nd</sup> session) and as subsequently amended by WIPO General Assembly (39<sup>th</sup> session). The rules of the Fund are available on [https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/igc/pdf/vf\\_rules.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/igc/pdf/vf_rules.pdf).

amount spent for each of them are communicated to the IGC at each of its sessions through an official Information Note<sup>2</sup>;

- the nine members of the Fund Advisory Board, which selects candidates to receive funding, are elected by the IGC plenary on the proposal of its Chairperson. Their mandate expires in practice at the end of the IGC session which elected them;
- the funding criteria, including geographical balance criteria, as well as the conditions governing financial support from the Fund, are clearly established by the Fund's rules;
- the WIPO Advisory Board adopts a formal report at the end of each of its meeting; the content of the report is sent to the WIPO Director General and communicated by him to the IGC through an official Information Note in an expeditious manner<sup>3</sup>.

– **Independence and inclusiveness**

- The nine members of the Fund Advisory Board serve independently and take their decisions in their personal capacity;
- candidates for funding are required to provide documents to support their application, in practice in the form of an application form and *curriculum vitae*, which facilitates the review of their application based on the funding criteria;
- the Advisory Board's recommendations are binding on the WIPO Secretariat which merely provides the necessary administrative support and implements these recommendations in strict conformity with the Fund's rules; and,
- three members of the Advisory Board are from accredited observers representing one or more indigenous or local communities.

– **Efficiency: no deductions from the Fund for administrative costs**

- The members of the Advisory Board meet on the margins of the IGC session in which they are participating. They are not paid or compensated for the tasks that they carry out;
- the Advisory Board is required to conclude its deliberations before the end of the session during which it meets;
- the WIPO Secretariat is not authorized to draw on the Fund to cover any administrative costs; and,
- a specific clause in the Fund's rules is designed to keep administrative costs to a strict minimum.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example WIPO Information Note WIPO/GRTKF/IC/50/INF/4. dated January 22, 2025, available on [https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_50/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_50\\_inf\\_4.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo_grtkf_ic_50/wipo_grtkf_ic_50_inf_4.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See for example WIPO Information Note WIPO/GRTKF/IC/50/INF/6 dated March 6, 2025, available on [https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_50/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_50\\_inf\\_6.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo_grtkf_ic_50/wipo_grtkf_ic_50_inf_6.pdf).

### **Results** (April 2006 – April 17, 2025)

A total of 701 applications<sup>4</sup> for funding in view of 41 sessions of the IGC (Fiftieth Session of the IGC included) and 2 meetings of the Intersessional Working Group (IWG) have been processed during 39 meetings of the Fund's Advisory Board.

From the Tenth until the Fiftieth Session of the IGC included and two meetings of the IWG, out of the 243 applications recommended for funding by the Advisory Board, 165 applications were funded by the Voluntary Fund, in support of the participation of 77 different representatives of various indigenous and local communities<sup>5</sup>.

With the view to the Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (Geneva, WIPO Headquarters, May 13-24, 2024), 11 applications were funded concurrently by the Voluntary Fund and through the budget allocated by the Diplomatic Conference, in line with the recommendation adopted by the Fund's Advisory Board at an extraordinary meeting on December 11, 2023.

### **III. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUND**

#### *Provisions relating to contributions*

- There are no restrictions regarding the minimum or maximum amount of a donation;
- the names of the contributors and the level of contributions and pledges received are publicized by an Information Note before each IGC session. Further modalities of acknowledgment can be discussed with contributors. However, donors may remain anonymous if they so wish;
- all contributions are allocated directly and exclusively to financing the participation of accredited indigenous and local communities in the sessions of the IGC; no administrative costs are borne by the Fund;
- taking into account that it is a collective Fund, it is not possible to depart from the Fund's rules in relation to any particular contribution; contributions cannot be earmarked by the donor for a particular category of beneficiary or expense;

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<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of the present "Case for support", any application which was re-submitted to the Advisory Board as a result of a previous postponement of its consideration by the Board is assimilated with an application that is different from the application that had been postponed.

<sup>5</sup> During this period, 25 applications were withdrawn by the relevant applicants. 46 applications recommended for funding by the Advisory Board could not be funded due to a lack of sufficient means in the Fund with the view respectively to the Nineteenth Session (one applicant), Twenty-Fourth Session (one applicant), Twenty-Sixth (four applicants), Twenty-Eighth to Thirty-Third Sessions (twenty-one applicants), Thirty-Sixth Session (three applicants), Thirty-Seventh Session (three applicants), Thirty-Eighth Session (two applicants), Thirty-Ninth Session (two applicants), Fortieth Session (two applicants), Forty-Sixth Session (one applicant), Forty-Seventh Session (two applicants), "back-to-back" Forty-Eighth and Forty-Ninth sessions (four applicants), Fiftieth Session (five applicants). One recommended applicant, who was first in the order of priority, was offered partial funding with the view to the Thirty-Eighth Session but declined the offer and was not funded. The recommended applicant who was second in the order of priority accepted this offer and was partially funded with the view to the Thirty-Eighth Session. One recommended applicant deceased before benefitting from the support of the Fund. None of the two recommended applicants with the view to the Forty-First Session and Forty-Second Session were funded, due to restrictions and policies in place at that time in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Those two recommended applicants were funded with the view to the Forty-Third Session.



- the Fund's Advisory Board independently selects candidates for support; if a contributor is represented within the IGC as a Member State, it may stand for election as a member of the Fund's Advisory Board;
- contributions are used in the order received in the Fund's bank account.

### **Reporting to donors**

Standard and public reporting regarding the use of the Fund is provided through an Information Note.

Additionally, the exchange of letters formalizing the contribution agreement between the donor and WIPO may include a clause for a more detailed periodic financial report on the use of the contribution.

The operation of the Fund is also subject to internal auditing.

## **IV. NEED FOR REPLENISHMENT**

Since its creation in 2005, the Voluntary Fund **has benefited from a wide range of contributions:**

in chronological order,

- the Swedish International Biodiversity Programme (SwedBio/CBM) (the equivalent of 86,092.60 Swiss francs)
- France (the equivalent of 31,684 Swiss francs)
- the Christensen Fund (the equivalent of 29,992.50 Swiss francs)
- Switzerland (the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property) (250,000 Swiss francs)
- South Africa (the equivalent of 18,465.27 Swiss francs)
- Norway (the equivalent of 98,255.16 Swiss francs)
- Anonymous donor (500 Swiss francs)
- Australia (the equivalent of 89,500 Swiss francs)
- Australia (the equivalent of 14,217.78 Swiss francs)<sup>6</sup>
- New Zealand (the equivalent of 4,694 Swiss francs)
- Australia (the equivalent of 37,835 Swiss francs)
- Canada (the equivalent of 18,268.75 Swiss francs)
- Finland (the equivalent of 16,227.93 Swiss francs)
- Germany (the equivalent of 16,158.98 Swiss francs)<sup>7</sup>
- Germany (the equivalent of 14,233.70 Swiss francs);
- Anonymous donors (817.10 Swiss francs);
- Australia (the equivalent of 29,795.36 Swiss francs);
- Anonymous donors (872.60 Swiss francs);
- *Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas* of Mexico (the equivalent of 8,239.99 Swiss francs), and;
- The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (the equivalent of 18,518.24 Swiss francs).

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<sup>6</sup> 782.22 Swiss francs were reimbursed on September 2, 2013 to the Government of Australia in accordance with the agreed terms for the use of the contribution made by the Government of Australia.

<sup>7</sup> 16,158.98 Swiss francs were reimbursed on January 8, 2021 to the Government of Germany in accordance with the agreed terms for the use of the contribution made by the Government of Germany.

totaling 784,369.36 Swiss francs until April 17, 2025.

**The balance of the Fund is depleted.**

The ability of the Fund depends on its replenishment through voluntary contributions. Member States and potential donors are strongly invited to contribute.

*For more information*

Rules concerning the objective and operation of the Voluntary Fund

[https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/igc/docs/vf\\_rules.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/igc/docs/vf_rules.pdf)

Details regarding the Voluntary Fund available online

<https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>

[End of Annexes and of document]