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WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

First Session
Geneva, May 31 to June 4, 1999

**WIPO FACT-FINDING MISSIONS ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE,
INNOVATIONS AND PRACTICES OF INDIGENOUS
AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: PROGRESS REPORT**

Prepared by the International Bureau

1. Main Program 11 of the WIPO Program and Budget for the 1998-99 biennium established a new set of activities aimed at responding to new challenges to the intellectual property system, including technological change, integration of global economic, cultural, trading and information systems, and emerging notions of the universal character of intellectual property rights. Accordingly, the Program called for exploration of the ways in which the intellectual property system can serve as “an engine for social, cultural and economic progress for the world’s diverse populations”.
2. One set of activities aimed at responding to these challenges is a series of Fact-Finding Missions (FFMs) on the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities, to be conducted in various regions of the world. The objective of the FFMs is to identify and explore the intellectual property needs, rights and expectations of holders of traditional knowledge and innovations, in order to promote the contribution of the intellectual property system to their social, cultural and economic development.
3. During 1998, FFMs were conducted to the South Pacific, East and Southern Africa, South Asia, and North America. In 1999, FFMs have been or will be conducted in Central America, West Africa, the Arab region, South America, and the Caribbean. Following each mission, interim mission reports (IMRs) have been prepared, and a Final Report containing methodology, data and findings will be published and disseminated as a WIPO publication. It is expected that the data gathered will provide a solid base of information for future work by WIPO in this area.
4. While all of the FFMs have not yet taken place, information reflected in the Interim Mission Reports will no doubt be of interest to the Permanent Committee, as it reflects the concerns, issues and needs of holders of traditional knowledge and other interested parties, that may be addressed in the future by WIPO. Thus the IMRs from three of the FFMs, to East and Southern Africa, South Asia, and Central America, are available on request.

5. The Permanent Committee is invited to note the information contained in this document and make any comment it may wish on the content thereof.

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