

A pair of ornate metal scales of justice, likely made of brass or bronze, sits on a polished wooden surface. The scales are balanced, with both pans hanging at the same level. The background is a warm, out-of-focus orange-brown color. The text 'World Intellectual Property Organization' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font in the upper left quadrant.

World Intellectual  
Property  
Organization

**WIPO**

**MUNUC 38**

**Model United Nations of the University of Chicago**

## CHAIR LETTERS

Dear Delegates,

It is imperative to me that I start by extending a warm welcome to MUNUC 38! My name is Rocio Portal and I am extremely excited to be serving as a Co-Chair for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) committee as part of Specialized Agencies. I hope you are all as excited as I am about this!

I am a fourth year student at the university majoring in Chemistry with a minor in Visual Arts, although my plans for the future are centered around going to law school to become a practicing patent attorney. Knowing this about me, it is also safe to assume that this committee's topics deeply interest me, and I hope that telling you about my STEM and legal intersection encourages you to become somebody who follows their interests wholeheartedly and fearlessly. Outside of my professional and academic interests, I am also a tour guide on campus, an undergraduate researcher for the Anderson group, and an editor for the Law Magazine. When I am not giving a tour or conducting experiments in the laboratory, I can be found picking up random hobbies or making earrings with my roommate, best friend, and co-chair, Daniela, for our small jewelry business.

This year, WIPO focuses on patent rights and their impact on global health and traditional knowledge. While both topics may appear to be quite different from one another, they are joined by one key fact: patents can and do affect diverse communities. Our overarching goal for this

committee is for you all to have fun and grow throughout the conference, whether it be as a delegate, public speaker, or simply as a person. As a first time co-chair, I want you all to know that the most important thing you can do is be open to not always knowing— and to use this uncertainty as a tool for learning. I look forward to meeting, bonding, and growing with you all.

Kindest regards,

Rocio Portal

Chair, World Intellectual Property Organization

[rportal@uchicago.edu](mailto:rportal@uchicago.edu)

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 38! My name is Daniela Santillan-Enriquez, and will serve as one of your chairs for the World Intellectual Property Organization. This year, I am very fortunate to be running this committee with my roommate and best friend, Rocio. I speak for the both of us when I say: we can't wait to see how you will surprise us, and how you will grow through the conference.

A little bit about me: I am a fourth year at The College majoring in Religious Studies and this is my fourth year staffing MUNUC! Previously I have served as an Under Secretary General, and Assistant Chair. I also staff our collegiate conference CHOMUN, where I work as a Crisis Director. Outside of the MUNiverse, I serve as a board member for the *Indigenous Student Association*, and *Quest+* for *FGLI students* on campus. When not busy with MUN and board activities, you can find me reading apocryphal gospels, analyzing Christian iconography, and figuring out modern Jewish thought. Off the religious studies, I am a science fiction novel lover, piano player, and jewelry maker...so it's always a busy time in Chicago.

Overall, I am excited to see you tackle the issues of the committee in a centered and robust way. I am particularly looking forward to seeing you guys learn—whether it be your first or last conference—there is always something to take away. I am convinced that this will be the case once again with our committee.



Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions to either myself (at the email below), or to Rocio.

Kindly,

Daniela A. Santillan-Enriquez

Chair, World Intellectual Property Organization

[dsantillane@uchicago.edu](mailto:dsantillane@uchicago.edu)

## HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

Formerly known as the United International Bureaux for the Protection of Intellectual Property (BIRPI),<sup>1</sup> the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is one of the 15 specialized agencies of the United Nations. WIPO serves as a bridge between invention and the marketplace, promoting the protection of intellectual property (IP) while encouraging innovation. The committee came into existence as a result of The Paris Convention of 1883 and the Berne Convention of 1886, where exhibitors and writers sought protection for their creations without fear of them being stolen once they were published.<sup>2</sup> BIRPI was established in 1893 to coordinate these international agreements that protected the rights of creators and ensured they could profit from their work. As global trade and international business increased, BIRPI was no longer sufficient enough to uphold these protections, and thus, was transformed into the WIPO in 1970 before becoming a United Nations specialized agency in 1974.<sup>3</sup>

The main responsibility of the committee since its inception has been to safeguard intellectual property and make rights accessible for all innovators across its 193 member states.<sup>4</sup> WIPO accomplishes this by providing policy forums, global services to resolve disputes, infrastructure to help connect IP systems internationally, and programs that can help communities use IP for their socioeconomic development. Currently, WIPO manages 28 treaties that cover patent, copyright, designs, trademark, and other intellectual property-related rights.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “A Brief History,” WIPO, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/history.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Explainer: A Brief History of the International IP Regime. <https://ipleadership.org/explainer-a-brief-history-of-the-international-ip-regime/> (accessed 2025-06-16).

<sup>4</sup> “Inside Wipo,” Inside WIPO, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/>.

<sup>5</sup> “Administered Treaties,” WIPO, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en>.

These treaties provide a legal framework for streamlining intellectual property laws across borders while facilitating application procedures and recognition of IP rights.

Over the decades, WIPO has adapted to address the growth of digital media, biotechnology, and the intersection of traditional knowledge with modern systems.<sup>6</sup> It also continues to support developing countries, focusing on access to medicine and digital equity. WIPO's role becomes more important in balancing the interests of creators and consumers alike as assets and innovation continue to grow.

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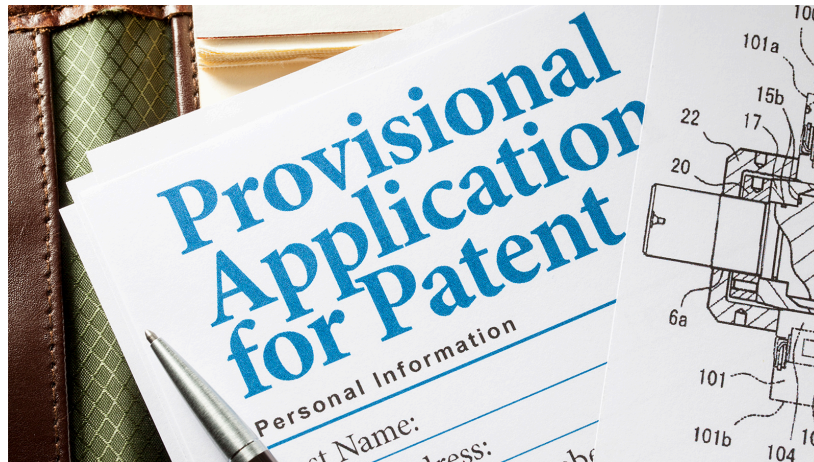
<sup>6</sup> Cooperation, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.wipo.int/cooperation/en>.

# TOPIC A: BALANCING PATENT RIGHTS AND GLOBAL ACCESS TO MEDICINE

## Statement of the Problem

### Patents

Patents are exclusive rights granted to inventors meant to stop others from making, using, or selling a particular **invention**.<sup>7</sup> Generally, patents are active for about 15 to 20 years from the date of filing, depending on the invention and jurisdiction. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), patents are meant to benefit both investors and society alike by providing legal protection and public access to information regarding inventions respectively.<sup>8</sup> Patents are also used as tools to encourage innovation given that they provide security for **intellectual property (IP)**.



*Patents are granted via applications filled out by companies or people.<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> “Patent Essentials.” United States Patent and Trademark Office - An Agency of the Department of Commerce, February 18, 2025. <https://www.uspto.gov/patents/basics/essentials#questions>.

<sup>8</sup> “Patents.” patents. Accessed June 30, 2025. <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/patents>.

<sup>9</sup> “Patent Application Filing Basics.” McAfee & Taft. Accessed June 30, 2025. <https://www.mcafeetaft.com/patent-application-filing-basics/>.

In the **pharmaceutical** industry, patents are important because they not only protect companies during the drug development process, but they also increase competition and encourage investors to continue funding the project.<sup>10</sup> Developing a drug requires years of work, research, and testing before it makes it into the hands of the public, and a patent's ensured exclusivity allows companies to recover the high costs of development. Having a patent ensures clinical trials are performed and drugs are effectively tested, resulting in trusted name-brand drugs such as Advil or Tylenol. Once the patent period ends, generic drugs of these patented medicines can be developed, offering a more affordable but less reputable alternative to the public.<sup>11</sup> Taking this into consideration, it becomes clear that patents are necessary for protection, and that WIPO's setting of global standards for this protection is important.

## Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare is defined as having the timely use of personal health services to achieve the best health outcomes, and it is an ongoing global challenge.<sup>12</sup> It can be seen in practice through access to health insurance, timely healthcare, and consistency in the source of this care. Having access to healthcare is important in promoting health, managing and preventing disease, and reducing disability.<sup>13</sup> People often experience variable access to healthcare depending on race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status. These health disparities can then contribute to differences in health outcomes

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<sup>10</sup> "Why Are Patents Important to Drug Development?" Infinix Bio, April 3, 2024.

<https://www.infinixbio.com/why-patents-important-drug-development/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Generic Drugs." Friends of Cancer Research, September 13, 2024.

<https://friendsofcancerresearch.org/glossary-term/generic-drugs/>.

<sup>12</sup> "Access to Healthcare and Disparities in Access." 2021 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report. Accessed June 28, 2025. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK578537/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Access to Health Services." Access to Health Services - Healthy People 2030. Accessed June 28, 2025. <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/access-health-services>.



across different communities and countries alike — something that is key to address as part of acknowledging the challenge that is affordable, reliable healthcare for all.<sup>14</sup>



*7-year-old gets her ears checked by a doctor at a clinical center in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>15</sup>*

Its accessibility is facilitated by the WIPO, as it plays an important role in balancing the intersection between global intellectual property, innovation, and access to medical technologies.<sup>16</sup> IP policies are essential to turning innovative ideas into solutions that are able to help people in need. Pharmaceutical companies, research institutions, and nonprofits known as **Product Development Partnerships** (PDPs) work together to respond to global health challenges by working collaboratively with their IP policies to develop new medicines and health

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<sup>14</sup> Nambi Ndugga, Drishti Pillai. “Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers.” KFF, September 16, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-questions-and-answers/>.

<sup>15</sup> “Advancing Racial Equity in U.S. Health Care.” State Disparities Commonwealth Fund, April 18, 2024. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/apr/advancing-racial-equity-us-health-care>.

<sup>16</sup> “Global Health and IP.” global-health. Accessed June 30, 2025. <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/global-health>.

technologies, improve access to treatment for diseases, and address various health needs that may be neglected.<sup>17</sup>

Effective IP management allows diverse PDPs to share ideas and innovations while also protecting their own knowledge and inventions. Each of the PDPs operates independently and distinctly but they all have a central goal of improving global health outcomes by ensuring equitable access to healthcare. While it is difficult to strike the right balance between protection and access, these organizations are crucial for making treatments available to underserved populations and reducing health disparities around the world.

## Impact of Patents on Global Health

Patents also can often have several impacts on global health. By granting inventors exclusive rights to produce and sell their creations, patents encourage pharmaceutical companies to continue investing in the development of new medicines. Without patents, these companies may be less willing to spend large amounts of money on research or clinical trials given that others would be able to replicate their work at no cost. The patent system is crucial in driving medical innovation that can treat or prevent diseases, therefore improving health worldwide.<sup>18</sup>

However, the exclusive rights granted by patents often result in high prices being attached to the medicines that make it into the market as a way for pharmaceutical companies to recover research costs and turn a profit. The cost can then limit access to essential medicines, especially in developing countries where people may not be able to afford them.<sup>19</sup> Another

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<sup>17</sup> “Driving Health Innovation Using Intellectual Property.” global-health, March 6, 2025.

<https://www.wipo.int/en/web/global-health/w/blogs/driving-health-innovation-using-intellectual-property>.

<sup>18</sup> “Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights.” World Health Organization. Accessed June 30, 2025. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241563230>.

<sup>19</sup> “Stop Patent Abuse and Unleash Generic and Biosimilar Price Competition.” Association for Accessible Medicines, November 13, 2024.

<https://accessiblemeds.org/campaign/abuse-patent-system-keeping-drug-prices-high-patients/>.

important impact to consider is that the patent protection period delays the production of generic and therefore cheaper medicines, leaving the public without affordable treatment options for years. This contributes to global health challenges for those living in countries without the necessary resources to obtain name-brand medicines, ultimately deepening existing inequalities.

There are several cases where patents have restricted access to life-saving medicines. One of the most prominent examples of this is **insulin**, a drug that remains very costly in numerous countries despite having been developed over a century ago.<sup>20</sup> The high prices of insulin make it difficult for those with diabetes to manage their condition and receive proper care. More recently, patents on COVID-19 vaccines limited the ability for low and middle income countries to produce their own variation of the preventative medicine quickly, leaving their population at risk.<sup>21</sup>

Patents limiting access to medicines has crucial implications for global public health. It makes it difficult to control diseases and improve health worldwide, and it also affects progress towards poverty and inequality reduction between countries. This committee will focus on finding solutions that ensure affordable access to medicines while still encouraging innovation.

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<sup>20</sup> Ewen, Margaret, Huibert-Jan Joosse, David Beran, and Richard Laing. "Insulin Prices, Availability and Affordability in 13 Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries." *BMJ Global Health*, June 11, 2019. <https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/3/e001410>.

<sup>21</sup> Gold, E. Richard. "What the COVID-19 Pandemic Revealed about Intellectual Property." *Nature News*, October 7, 2022. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41587-022-01485-x>.



*Scientists conducting research during the drug discovery process.<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>22</sup> “6 Reasons to Attend Drug Discovery 2022.” Drug Target Review. Accessed June 30, 2025.  
<https://www.drugtargetreview.com/news/105430/6-reasons-to-attend-drug-discovery-2022-especially-if-you-are-an-early-career-professional/>.

## History of the Problem

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### Intellectual Property Before Patent Laws

Since ancient times, merchants and craftsmen alike have protected their techniques in an effort to remain competitive and safeguard their skills. In fact, Hammurabi's Code of Laws from 1754 BCE had a section on trade secrets, establishing that anybody who is taught a craft by an artisan cannot return home, to protect the artist's craft.<sup>23</sup> This early example shows that the idea of protecting specialized knowledge has been important for thousands of years.

As societies evolved, the way people went about protecting their crafts evolved as well. During the medieval period in Europe, knowledge was controlled via the guild system. **Guilds**, or groups of artists and merchants, organized regulation around a specific trade by setting standards for quality, training apprentices, and protecting the interests of the craftsmen and members that were involved in them.<sup>24</sup> Guilds also had unique stamps that set them apart from one another, acting as symbols of reliability while forming brand recognition much like patents do today.

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<sup>23</sup> "Part II: Strategic Roles of Trade Secrets in the Innovation Ecosystem." *WIPO Guide to Trade Secrets and Innovation*, [www.wipo.int/web-publications/wipo-guide-to-trade-secrets-and-innovation/en/part-ii-strategic-roles-of-trade-secrets-in-the-innovation-ecosystem.html](http://www.wipo.int/web-publications/wipo-guide-to-trade-secrets-and-innovation/en/part-ii-strategic-roles-of-trade-secrets-in-the-innovation-ecosystem.html).

<sup>24</sup> Fisher, Martini. "The Birth of Branding: Trademarks and Craft Guilds in Medieval Europe." *Medium*, Medium, 17 Nov. 2024, [medium.com/@martinifisher/the-birth-of-branding-trademarks-and-craft-guilds-in-medieval-europe-8ff9f413432e](https://medium.com/@martinifisher/the-birth-of-branding-trademarks-and-craft-guilds-in-medieval-europe-8ff9f413432e).





*A medieval baker with his apprentice.*<sup>25</sup>

Though guilds controlled knowledge and skills at the local level, royal privileges and monopolies also played a role in restricting or protecting trade. These privileges gave individuals or groups of people the rights to produce, sell, or profit from certain goods across an entire region or country. Rulers often granted these rights as a form of political or economic strategy, aiming more to achieve censorship and control than to protect the intellectual property of their constituents.<sup>26</sup> Given that the permissions were not standardized, it was clear the system was corrupted and needed to have more consistent enforcement.

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<sup>25</sup> “Medieval Guilds.” *History Learning*, [historylearning.com/medieval-england/medieval-guilds/](http://historylearning.com/medieval-england/medieval-guilds/).

<sup>26</sup> Hesse, Carla A. “Intellectual Property, 700 B.C. - A.D. 2000.” *American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 20 Dec. 2018, [www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/intellectual-property-700-bc-ad-2000](http://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/intellectual-property-700-bc-ad-2000).

## Early Development of Patent Laws

As the limitations of guilds grew and royal privileges increased, people demanded a more formal and just system to protect innovators. With the growth and advancement of commerce and technology, governments began establishing more formal patent systems, with one of the first being the Venice Statute of 1474. This law guaranteed that people would have exclusive rights over their inventions, provided they were useful, for a period of 10 years.<sup>27</sup> The goal was to strengthen the economy in Venice, attract innovators, and provide legal protection that gave inventors the confidence to share their ideas without fear.

Following Venice's steps, European countries began to create their own patent systems and laws. The Statute of Monopolies of 1624 in England, for example, aimed to address the existing corruption in royal privileges by limiting the king's power to grant monopolies. However, the statute also made an important exception: these monopolies could be granted in the form of patents on new inventions.<sup>28</sup>

These early forms of patent laws formed the foundation for modern intellectual property systems. Inventors received exclusive rights and protections for a certain amount of years in exchange for making their ideas public. This system was key in keeping a balance between social advancement and rewarding innovation.

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<sup>27</sup> "Venetian Patent Law - 1474." *History Walks in Venice*, 4 Aug. 2025, [historywalksvenice.com/2024/03/venetian-patent-law-1474/](https://historywalksvenice.com/2024/03/venetian-patent-law-1474/).

<sup>28</sup> Glendon, Mary Ann "The Origin of the Common Law." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 13 Sept. 2025, [www.britannica.com/topic/common-law/The-16th-century-revolution#ref465718](https://www.britannica.com/topic/common-law/The-16th-century-revolution#ref465718).

## Expansion to Pharmaceuticals

Early patent systems were designed to protect industrial and mechanical innovations, but the role of patents expanded rapidly with the rise of modern science and medicine. Historically, medicines were not typically patented and remedies were often based on knowledge of herbs that was passed down from generation to generation.<sup>29</sup> However, by the 19th and 20th century, new discoveries in biology and chemistry led to the development of complex life-saving drugs that ultimately created an entirely new market for innovation.

The pharmaceutical industry grew, and so did the need for investments in scientific research to help advance medicine. Producing a new medicine takes years of experimentation, clinical trials, and government approval, and without protection all of this effort would be stolen by other companies immediately after release. One of the first examples of the need for this shift was Bayer's development of aspirin in 1899. Bayer attempted to patent aspirin globally but lost control of its trademark in the United States, allowing companies to replicate and sell aspirin freely.<sup>30</sup> Another issue related to intellectual property theft was increased risk of copycat manufacturing in countries that did not have patent protections for medicines. In India, companies were allowed to produce generic versions of foreign medicines without having to pay for this reproduction during the 1970s.<sup>31</sup> These occurrences ultimately led to pressure from companies for stronger protection. Thus, the high costs and time input involved in producing medicines, along with cases where this was disregarded under faulty intellectual property systems, resulted in an expansion of patent protections into pharmaceuticals.

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<sup>29</sup> Elendu, Chukwuka. "The Evolution of Ancient Healing Practices: From Shamanism to Hippocratic Medicine: A Review." *Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 12 July 2024, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11245246](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11245246).

<sup>30</sup> "Bayer Patents Aspirin, March 6, 1899." *History.Com*, A&E Television Networks, 27 May 2025, [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/march-6/bayer-patents-aspirin](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/march-6/bayer-patents-aspirin).

<sup>31</sup> Andrade, Chittaranjan, et al. "The New Patent Regime: Implications for Patients in India." *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Jan. 2007, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2900001/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2900001/).

## Wealth Disparities and Limited Access

Global wealth disparities are deeply connected to the issue of access to medicine arising from patents. During the colonial era, European powers took resources from their colonies, leaving behind weakened economies and underdeveloped healthcare systems.<sup>32</sup> Even after gaining independence, many of these post-colonial nations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia continue to face economic challenges due to debt and lack of infrastructure.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, wealthier nations have been able to build stronger healthcare systems and accumulate the resources needed to secure medical technology for their populations.

When patents were expanded into the pharmaceutical industry these inequalities became even more apparent. Patents give companies the legal rights to set high prices for their new medicines, making treatments unaffordable for low-income and middle-income countries.<sup>34</sup> This created a system where access to medicine is determined by wealth and not by need.

The divide was clearly seen during the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1990s, when necessary drugs were available for high-income countries but unattainable and far too expensive for developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV/AIDS rates were high, millions of people died while antiretroviral drugs were locked behind patent protections.<sup>35</sup>

The important thing to note in the history of this problem is that patents have historically protected innovators as we have discussed, but simultaneously rendered minority groups vulnerable.

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<sup>32</sup> “Tracing Historical Determinants of Health: Intersections of Colonialism, Neocolonialism & Global Health Policies & Practices.” *PUBH 110*, [pubh110.digital.uic.edu/section-1-5-tracing-historical-determinants-of-health-intersections-of-colonialism-neocolonialism-global-health-policies-practices/](http://pubh110.digital.uic.edu/section-1-5-tracing-historical-determinants-of-health-intersections-of-colonialism-neocolonialism-global-health-policies-practices/).

<sup>33</sup> Briceño-Garmendia, Cecilia, et al. *Infrastructure Services in Developing Countries: Access, Quality, Costs and Policy Reform*, documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/476891468782346365/pdf/wps3468.pdf.

<sup>34</sup> “Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights.” World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241563230>.

<sup>35</sup> *Patent Protection and Access to HIV/AIDS Pharmaceuticals in Sub-Saharan Africa*, [www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/about-ip/en/studies/pdf/iipi\\_hiv.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/about-ip/en/studies/pdf/iipi_hiv.pdf).

## Past Actions

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### International Patent Systems

Existing global agreements, such as the TRIPS agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO), aim to improve access to medicines by allowing flexibility within IP laws. One example of this is their establishment of compulsory licensing, where governments are allowed to bypass any existing patents to produce generic versions of medicines for domestic use if necessary for the advancement of public health.<sup>36</sup> However, vague language in the treaty's flexibility raised barriers for low- and middle-income countries that did not have the political support or economic infrastructure to implement the permissions effectively. In an attempt to correct this, the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health was released, affirming that every country under the WTO has the full right to protect public health and take full advantage of the agreement's provisions.<sup>37</sup> Other WIPO treaties like the Patent Cooperation Treaty made it easier for inventions to be protected across different countries by enabling the filing of an international patent.<sup>38</sup>

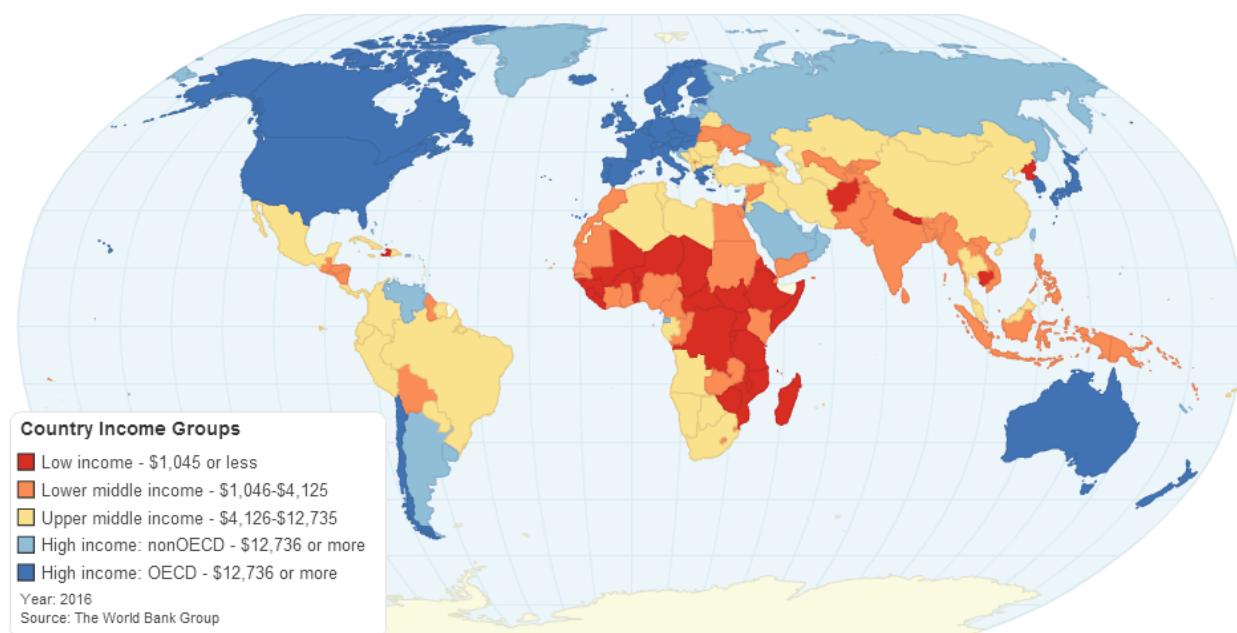
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<sup>36</sup> “6 Reasons to Attend Drug Discovery 2022.” Drug Target Review. <https://www.drugtargetreview.com/news/105430/6-reasons-to-attend-drug-discovery-2022-especially-if-you-are-an-early-career-professional/>.

<sup>37</sup> “World Trade Organization.” *WTO*, [www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/minist\\_e/min01\\_e/mindecl\\_trips\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_trips_e.htm).

<sup>38</sup> “Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).” *WIPO*, [www.wipo.int/treaties/en/registration/pct/](http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/registration/pct/).





*Map showing low, middle and high income countries.<sup>39</sup>*

## WIPO Multilateral Initiatives

Outside of aforementioned agreements, WIPO and its partners have led several initiatives to try to balance patent rights and the global access to medicine. In 2007, the WIPO Development Agenda was adopted to ensure that intellectual property policies still push forward general societal goals, such as public health and development. The Development Agenda included 45 recommendations, ranging from technical assistance to norm-setting, and even technology transfers between countries to bridge the digital divides.<sup>40</sup> While the agenda was detailed and lengthy, progress has been slow given it was non-binding and more suggestions than requirements. Despite efforts, developed and developing countries remain divided on access to medicine, with affordability being at the forefront of the problem.

<sup>39</sup> ChartsBin. "Country Income Groups (World Bank Classification)." *ChartsBin*, [chartsbin.com/view/2438](https://chartsbin.com/view/2438).

<sup>40</sup> "The 45 Adopted Recommendations under the WIPO Development Agenda." *WIPO*, [www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/agenda/recommendations.html](http://www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/agenda/recommendations.html).

Another effort undertaken was WIPO Re:Search, where pharmaceutical companies and research institutions were given a database to voluntarily share patents, data, and treatment development plans for **neglected tropical diseases**.<sup>41</sup> Although the initiative was helpful for diseases whose treatments have little commercial market, it does not extend to high-profit drugs like vaccines. Its reliance on voluntary participation left the deeper structural challenges of patent systems present, as pharmaceutical companies and research institutions prefer to not share any information that may be better kept as a trade secret with a price tag attached to it. It is important to note that Re:Search has closed as of 2022 as well.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, WIPO has invested in databases such as PATENTSCOPE, meant to make global patent filings publicly accessible.<sup>43</sup> Having this database makes it possible to see which medicines are under protection, but having transparency has still not proven enough. Many governments still lack the technological capacity to analyze complex patent data, and even if they could, they may not have the resources to act on it.

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<sup>41</sup> EN, Meghana Sharafudeen. “WIPO RE:Search: Advancing Science for Neglected Tropical Diseases, Malaria and Tuberculosis.” *WIPO*, [www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4423](http://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4423).

<sup>42</sup> “Wipo Re:Search.” *BIO Ventures for Global Health*, 2 Jan. 2024, [bvgh.org/wipo-research/](http://bvgh.org/wipo-research/).

<sup>43</sup> Wipo. “Patentscope.” *WIPO*, [www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4203](http://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4203).



*WIPO member states at an assembly.*<sup>44</sup>

## Current Challenges and Need for Solutions

There are ongoing debates on how to effectively balance global access to healthcare and the protection of IP. One of the bigger challenges with the implementation of agreements is that they can often create pressure from pharmaceutical companies, leading to threats of withdrawing investments. This pressure can then lead to inaction on protecting public health in an attempt to maintain economic ties between governments and innovators or investors. While some argue that patents are necessary in funding research and medicine development, others maintain that essential medicines should have reduced protections so that they are more easily accessible in all countries.<sup>45</sup> WIPO and international relations alike are key in addressing challenges, as they can

<sup>44</sup> “The Fifty-Ninth Series of Meetings of the Assemblies of WIPO Member States and the Exhibition Russia: The Territory of Inventiveness and Creativity.” *Office-Russia*, [www.wipo.int/en/web/office-russia/w/news/2019/news\\_0012](http://www.wipo.int/en/web/office-russia/w/news/2019/news_0012).

<sup>45</sup> “Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights.” World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241563230>.

help create more fair patent systems. While all of the initiatives mentioned have contributed to greater awareness, collaboration, and cooperation, there are still improvements to be made in the global access to medicine.

## Possible Solutions

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### Reformation of Patent Flexibilities

One solution is to strengthen the flexibilities already provided by some initiatives, like compulsory licensing in the TRIPS agreement. Encouraging their broader use while protecting states would minimize fear of political or economic retaliation and incentivize their implementation. Additionally, expansion of voluntary licensing arrangements, like the Medicines Patent Pool, which allows patent holders to share rights with generic manufacturers,<sup>46</sup> may prove helpful in providing a middle ground between exclusivity and complete open access. These solutions are not meant to replace patents, but instead provide more balanced systems to confront public health emergencies.

### Alternative Incentives and Capacity Building

New incentive structures to reward innovation, like prize funds or advance market commitments could push for drug development without raising prices. Having higher income member states work together to help low or middle income countries build manufacturing capacity through technology transfer, training, and infrastructure support could help reduce their reliance on imports of necessary drugs and improve response times for health crises. These solutions provide a framework for a more long-term plan.

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<sup>46</sup> “Patent Pooling & Voluntary Licensing for Public Health - MPP.” *Medicines Patent Pool*, 29 May 2024, [medicinespatentpool.org/what-we-do/licensing-for-public-health](https://medicinespatentpool.org/what-we-do/licensing-for-public-health).





*Drug manufacturing company and technology used to manufacture patented drugs.<sup>47</sup>*

## Global Cooperation and Transparency

Stronger international cooperation is very important. Expanding the connection between WIPO, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization could build the foundation for a new treaty with clearer rules and regulations for balancing innovation and access. There also needs to be greater transparency amongst member states around the patent landscape such that governments are able to negotiate fairer prices and reduce inequalities in access.

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<sup>47</sup> “The Structure and Departments in a Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company.” *GetReskilled*, 15 Feb. 2024, [www.getreskilled.com/pharmaceutical-companies/structure/](https://www.getreskilled.com/pharmaceutical-companies/structure/).

## Bloc Positions

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### Pharmaceutical Companies

While not UN member states, pharmaceutical companies play key roles in patent policy and global access to medicine. Major pharmaceutical firms argue that strong intellectual property rights are essential to recover the billions of dollars invested in the research and development of innovations. They stand by the idea that initiatives like compulsory licensing and the TRIPS agreement weaken patent licensing, undermining incentives for the creation of new treatments. Even though these companies do not vote in WIPO or the UN, their influence is seen in the policies of where these companies are headquartered, and they frequently speak out against proposals that favor the expansion of generic drug production.

### Countries Not Concerned with Access to Global Medicine:

#### High-Income

High-income countries, such as the United States and Japan, usually find themselves aligning with the views of pharmaceutical companies, supporting strict patent enforcements and opposing exceptions. Their governments argue that innovations and their growth depends on strong IP protections, asserting that reducing these protections can lead to deterred private investments in the development of new medicine. Some member states, however, support limited measures to help improve global access, like voluntary licensing or international health program funding, in an attempt to balance public health needs and industry incentives. The position of the high-income countries rely on prioritizing the protection of intellectual property while making some exceptions for selective mechanisms that can help increase the availability of essential medicines.

## Countries Concerned with Access to Global Medicine: Low and Middle-Income

Low- and middle- income countries, such as India and many of the African states, favor affordable access to life-saving medicines and greater use of TRIPS flexibilities. Middle-income states with strong generic industries push for initiatives like compulsory licensing and technology transfer to expand the local production of essential generic drugs in the country. On the other hand, low-income states, often lacking domestic manufacturing capacity, tend to advocate for international funding, patent waivers, and global programs that help secure affordable imports of medicines. This bloc argues that while strict patents can be profitable for innovators, they also act as a barrier in procuring treatment during public health crises. Overall, this bloc aims to create a balance that prioritizes human lives.

## Glossary

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*Invention* - a product or a process that provides a new way of doing something or offers a new technical solution to a problem that surpasses trivial solutions.

*Intellectual property* - a work or invention that is the result of creativity and that enables an application for a patent, trademark, or copyright license.

*Pharmaceutical* - meaning medicinal drugs being manufactured, used, or sold

*Product Development Partnerships (PDPs)* - important stakeholders in responding to global health needs

*Insulin* - hormone produced by the pancreas to regulate blood sugar levels in the body. For diabetic people, insulin is not naturally produced by their pancreas, and instead, they use insulin medication.

*Guilds* - medieval organization of artisans or merchants.

*Neglected tropical diseases* - a group of infectious diseases that primarily affect impoverished populations in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, such as malaria and tuberculosis.

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## TOPIC B: PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

### Statement of the Problem

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**Traditional Knowledge (TK)** is defined as the know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity.<sup>48</sup> However, as per the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), there are two sub-definitions for TK. The first, “TK in a general sense”, embraces the content of knowledge itself as well as traditional cultural expressions, including distinctive signs and symbols associated with TK. With traditional cultural expressions being forms in which traditional culture manifests itself.<sup>49</sup> This can be in the form of dances, art, symbols, and artifacts, for example. The second sub-definition is that of “TK in the narrow sense”, which refers to knowledge as such, in particular the knowledge resulting from intellectual activity in a traditional context, and includes know-how, practices, skills, and innovations.

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<sup>48</sup> “Traditional Knowledge.” traditional-knowledge. Accessed June 27, 2025.  
<https://www.wipo.int/en/web/traditional-knowledge/tk/index>.

<sup>49</sup> “Expresiones Culturales Tradicionales.” traditional-knowledge. Accessed June 27, 2025.  
<https://www.wipo.int/es/web/traditional-knowledge/traditional-cultural-expressions/index>.



*Artisanal Crafts for sale at a local market.<sup>50</sup>*

As per the WIPO, TK can also be seen in at-large activities, such as agriculture, science, technology, and medicine. Traditional Knowledge is often most commonly associated with Indigenous people and practices, defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “referring to, or relating to, the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else”.<sup>51</sup> This definition is more nuanced. For example, a person who has been living in America for 100 years, would not always be considered indigenous. The source Indigeneity is also debated — as some consider it a matter of genetics, whilst the most common association is being in communion and part of a particular culture.

<sup>50</sup> CC0-Photographers. “무료 이미지 : 사육제, 색깔, 바자, 시장, 생명, 제전, 공예, 기예, 경험, 행사, 전통, 재미있는, 아프리카 사람, 문화적, 남아프리카, 요하네스 버그, 레 데디 문화 마을 3000X2000 - - 1049326 - 무료 이미지.” PxHere, March 8, 2017. <https://pxhere.com/ko/photo/1049326>.

<sup>51</sup> Indigenous | definition in the Cambridge english dictionary. Accessed June 27, 2025. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/indigenous>.



*Members of the WIPO encourage Indigenous people and others who might hold  
Traditional Knowledge to protect their TK.<sup>52</sup>*

Indigenous people, and thus their TK, may benefit from patents, trademarks, and protections—the latter being either in public, or as a confidential trade. However, it is important to note that TK which comes from ancient roots and oral tradition is usually not protected by conventional **Intellectual Property (IP)** systems. Because of this, there are two types of protections that exist for all types of TK, as outlined below.

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<sup>52</sup> Kinsella, Stephan. “Falkvinge: The Analog Letter: It’s Entirely Reasonable to Demand That Our Children Inherit the Rights of Our Parents.” C4SIF.org, December 19, 2012.  
<https://c4sif.org/2012/12/falkvinge-the-analog-letter-its-entirely-reasonable-to-demand-that-our-children-inherit-the-rights-of-our-parents/>.



## Defensive Protection

Defensive protection is a set of strategies to ensure that third parties do not gain illegitimate or unfounded IP rights over TK, which will be discussed more in forthcoming sections. This is mostly in place for companies that sell their products profiting off TK. Examples include beauty products claiming to come from Indigenous medicine, or paid retreats that encourage tourists to engage in closed practices.

## Positive Protection

Positive protections prevent unauthorized use, and active exploitation of TK by the originating community itself. Within the community, the legal efforts are mostly in terms of positive protection, which grants the rights that empower communities to promote their traditional knowledge, control its uses, and benefit from its commercial exploitation.<sup>53</sup> This is also one of the main motivators for the committee, as we will discuss in the section below.

## Purpose

This committee seeks to better understand these protective methods and seek ways in which cultures can benefit from measures given by the WIPO without overstepping. The goal is to give individual cultures the autonomy and direction to see how they wish to protect their TK. Scholars who work in conjunction with the WIPO have created outlines to encourage Indigenous autonomy when it comes to controlling the usage and protection of TK. The most common

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<sup>53</sup> Centerforartlaw. “Safeguarding Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expression through Intellectual Property Systems - Center for Art Law.” Center for Art Law - At the intersection of visual arts and the law, February 3, 2023. <https://itsartlaw.org/2023/02/01/safeguarding-traditional-knowledge-and-traditional-cultural-expression-through-intellectual-property-systems/>.

strategy is that of “Free, Prior, Informed Consent” (FPIC).<sup>54</sup> This, along with other treaties and strategies will also be discussed in further sections of the background guide.

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<sup>54</sup> “Traditional Knowledge.” BBNJ Treaty. Accessed June 27, 2025.  
<https://bbnj-mgr.fas.harvard.edu/traditional-knowledge>.



## History of the Problem

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### Biopiracy

Traditional Knowledge goes as far back as the Indigenous groups that claim it. A lot of these TKs span centuries of age — with most of them coming from pre-colonial eras in their respective zones. However, the protection of these TKs is a relatively modern occurrence. As conscience around the protection of Indigenous groups arose, so did the need to protect their ideas and traditions. This was particularly done as there was an observed increase in the appropriation and marketability of TKs by members of groups that do not participate in them. This act of using TK for commercial gain is known as **biopiracy**.<sup>55</sup> Some examples of biopiracy through the years include:

1. Maca, from the Andean People in Peru: A root taken by mouth to increase fertility in males and to alleviate menopause in women. Many corporations have made this root easily available to the market—without giving proper profits or appreciation to the Andean People.<sup>56</sup>
2. Tepezcohuite, from Central America, Mexico, and Brazil: A tree sought after for its oil and bark. It is said to have properties that can create smoother skin and rejuvenate it. Like Maca, it has been exploited by American companies as a “skin care” product.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Nayak, Meera. “The Misappropriation of Traditional Knowledge.” *Denver Journal of International Law Policy*, April 30, 2019. <https://djilp.org/the-misappropriation-of-traditional-knowledge/>.

<sup>56</sup> “Maca: Overview, Uses, Side Effects, Precautions, Interactions, Dosing and Reviews.” WebMD. Accessed July 9, 2025. <https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-555/maca/>.

<sup>57</sup> Davidson, Katey. “Does Tepezcohuite Have Medicinal Properties?” *Healthline*, July 28, 2022. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/tepezcohuite>.

3. Hoodia, from San Tribes in Southern Africa: A cactus plant used as an appetite suppressant. Commercially, it is sold as a weight-loss companion, but traditionally used by the San Bushmen in Africa as a war tactic to fight hunger.<sup>58</sup>
4. Ayahuasca, Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon: A hallucinogenic tea made by brewing a variety of plants. To Indigenous Groups, it represents health and is used in spiritual guidance for their own practices. To those outside of those groups, it has been exploited in the form of spiritual retreats by people seeking to become “enlightened”.<sup>59</sup>



*Tepezcohuite Plant.*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Hoodia: Overview, Uses, Side Effects, Precautions, Interactions, Dosing and Reviews.” WebMD. Accessed July 9, 2025. <https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-1079/hoodia>.

<sup>59</sup> Cleveland Clinic. “What Is Ayahuasca?” Cleveland Clinic, June 17, 2025. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/ayahuasca>.

<sup>60</sup> NATURAL, BIOESTETICISTAS Y COSMÉTICA. “Tepezcohuite (Mimosa Tenuiflora).” BIOESTETICISTAS y Cosmética Natural, May 11, 2015. <https://bioesteticistas.blogspot.com/2015/04/tepezcohuite-mimosa-tenuiflora.html>.

## Beginnings and Rise of Biopiracy

The rise of biopiracy comes in as early as colonization began.<sup>61</sup> An example is found in Marco Polo's "explorations" in India and China — which were instrumental in forming the Spice Route. This route was used to profit off indigenous plants found in their respective locations, with spices being some of the most coveted by Europeans. So much so that this pushed Spanish colonialist Christopher Columbus to find an alternate route to India, during a period of turmoil between the English, the French, and the Spaniards. This led to the "discovery" of the American continent — and also the beginning of the exploitation of indigenous civilizations in the continent.

This exploitation saw a different outlook as time went on, with appropriation taking a modern approach in the ways in which commerce was being done. With the surge of social media, TKs became advertised as a miraculous alternative. Influencers from backgrounds not pertaining to those indigenous groups utilizing said TKs became more popular, with some of them basing their entire accounts or platforms based on these TKs. An important note is that these influencers are also aiding in the revenue of corporations who sell these appropriated products. By generating engagement, the products became well-known, thus exacerbating the monetary gains of these companies — which in turn incentivizes them to continue and expand their production of these products.

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<sup>61</sup> Imran, Yoonus, Nalaka Wijekoon, Lakmal Gonawala, Yu-Chung Chiang, and K. Ranil De Silva. "Biopiracy: Abolish Corporate Hijacking of Indigenous Medicinal Entities." *The Scientific World Journal* 2021 (February 18, 2021): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/8898842>.



*Influencers began to use TKs as a revenue generator, selling the indigenous practices for their benefit.<sup>62</sup>*

## Outcomes

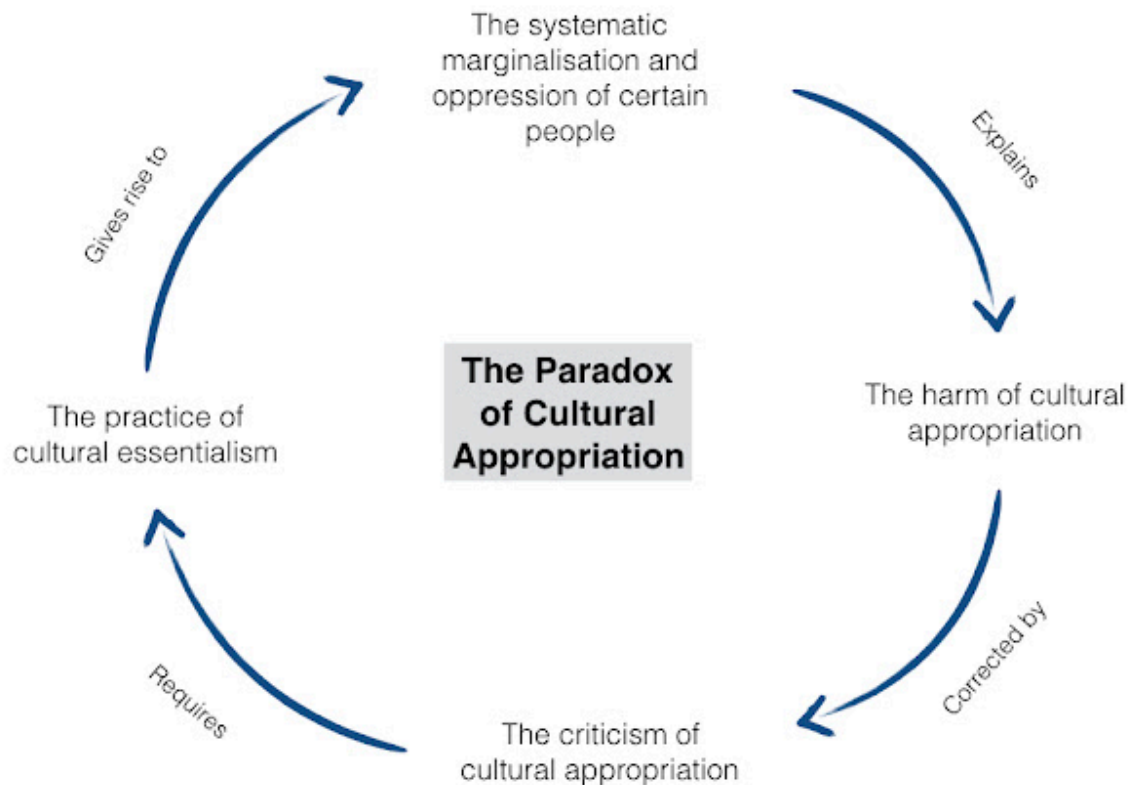
With these examples in mind, we can observe how through time the TKs of Indigenous Groups have been appropriated not only by people seeking alternative medicine, but more massively by corporations. The first mention of protecting TKs and their Indigenous Groups was made in 1994, in the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. Critically, the Treaty is the first WIPO agreement that explicitly acknowledges Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.<sup>63</sup> From then on, other work has been done in order to prevent or minimize the level to which TKs are being appropriated. These measures will be further discussed as we move forward with the background guide. But what is

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<sup>62</sup> Kogital, and Hal. “Fenomen İletişiminin Başarısız Olmasındaki 10 Neden!” Kogital, July 12, 2018. <https://www.kogital.com/tr/haberler/10-common-reasons-why-influencer-marketing-campaigns-fail/>.

<sup>63</sup> Gopalakrishnan, N.S., Srividhya Ragavan, and Narendran Thiruthy. *Wipo treaty on intellectual property, Genetic Resources and associated traditional knowledge: Opportunities for Biodiversity Rich Nations*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4914236>.

most important for you to note is the chain of engagement that goes into the availability and exploitation of TKs.



*A graphic better explaining the cultural appropriation mechanism. This makes it easier to understand the exploitation of TKs.<sup>64</sup>*

<sup>64</sup> Danaher, John. "Philosophical Disquisitions." August 2018. Accessed July 14, 2025. <https://philosophicaldisquisitions.blogspot.com/2018/08/>.

## Past Actions

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A variety of actions have been put forward through time in order to better combat this issue. Below you will find a number of them for your better research.

### FPIC: Free, Prior, Informed, Consent.

The following structure has been set forth by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).<sup>65</sup> Whilst not a legislation, it is a guideline that has been set in stone in order to better counterattack exploitation of TK. Its basis is around the consent of those cultures that “own” a specific TK. It seeks to give them the autonomy to “commercialize” their TKs.

**Free:** Stipulates that the consent is given voluntarily without any form of coercion, intimidation, or manipulation by third parties. This involves an internal discussion process from those groups to whom the TK pertains. This also means that this internal process is free of third-parties, meaning self government.

**Prior:** The consent is sought out in advance of any authorization or commercialization.

**Informed:** The consent is sought out from an informative lens, meaning that the third party seeking consent is well-versed on the importance and cultural value of the TK.

**Consent:** The collective discussion from the TK party has been made out of their own will and value. This guideline also ensures that the TK party is completely informed of the intentions of the commercialization. Ultimately giving them the consent to fully decide whether sharing their TK to this level is either of benefit or support for themselves.

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<sup>65</sup> “Traditional Knowledge.” BBNJ Treaty. Accessed August 28, 2025.  
<https://bbnj-mgr.fas.harvard.edu/traditional-knowledge>.





*Ethnic Groups, such as those in the Cordillera of the Philippines seen above, should be able to have the first word when it comes to the commercialization of TK.<sup>66</sup>*

## WIPO Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on IP, Genetic Resources, TK, and Folklore (2000-Present)

This committee of the WIPO conducts text-based negotiations to finalize agreements on international legal instruments for the protection of TKs, and among other things. Sessions of the IGC begin with presentations made by representatives of indigenous and local communities.<sup>67</sup> The IGC meets multiple times a year in order to discuss issues pertaining to the protection of

<sup>66</sup> Partlow, Judy Flores. “Ethnic Group from the Cordilleras in the Philippines.” Flickr, September 22, 2025. [https://www.flickr.com/photos/judy\\_ph/6927714853](https://www.flickr.com/photos/judy_ph/6927714853).

<sup>67</sup> “Intergovernmental Committee (IGC).” igc. Accessed August 29, 2025. <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/igc/>.



TKs. Each session of the IGC usually lasts five working days, and takes place at the WIPO headquarters in Geneva. Whilst representatives of the WIPO member states take a substantial part of the negotiations, the global nature of the TKs ensures diverse participation.

In 2001, an accreditation procedure was established to register accredited observers of Indigenous practices. Later in 2004, it was decided that sessions would be preceded by panel presentations from leaders of Indigenous groups and local communities to whom TKs belong to. This ensures that the voices of communities are being taken seriously when making decisions about their IP.

## Possible Solutions

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### Legal

The WIPO can take a variety of legal measures. One of them includes finalizing and strengthening negotiations within IGC. This can be done by establishing global standards for recognition, **benefit-sharing** and protections of TKs. Such measures can be applied to other treaties and protocols of the WIPO. Examples include consolidating coverage to include more intangible TKs, so as to not allow for loopholes in abuse. One way of doing this would be to create an international compliance body to monitor violations. Lastly, there should be an opportunity to record TKs (managed by the communities to which they pertain themselves). This allows for a better defensive protection against biopiracy.

### Economic and Development

An option for economic and development measures are benefit-sharing mechanisms. This includes mandatory clauses in research and commercial contracts to ensure royalties and acknowledgement to indigenous committees, and others who represent the “ownership” of a TK. There should also be financing, fair-trade certification and capacity building so communities are able to commercialize on their own TK if wanted.



*A comprehensive education will ensure the ethical and better understanding of TKs.*<sup>68</sup>

## Cultural and Educational

Education is an essential part of anything. Without education, there is no way to navigate an issue, much less in an ethical way. Therefore, the WIPO should propose awareness and capacity-building, at the governmental, community, and commercial levels, particularly focusing on IP rights, negotiation skills, and other contracts. There should also be an integration into sustainable development goals, which would link TKs to other issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainability and agriculture management.

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<sup>68</sup> CC0-Photographers. “Free Images : Audience, Course, Learning, Nancy Ballesteros, Kathia, Internet Marketers, Adult School, Courses for Adults, Academic Conference 4288x2848 - - 681808 - Free Stock Photos.” PxHere, February 11, 2017. <https://pxhere.com/en/photo/681808>.

## Bloc Positions

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### Indigenous Communities and Allied Groups

This bloc will focus on demanding cultural sovereignty, community based IP rights and overall protection about the inadequate commercialization of TKs. Tackling these issues can be done in conjunction with previous actions taken by the WIPO as discussed in the Past Actions and Possible Solutions sections. Possible ideas to focus on include:

- Calling for unique legal frameworks tailored to traditional cultural expressions
- Insisting on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPC)
- Advocating for **local ownership** and community registries of TK
- Pushing for inclusion of elders and councils on the WIPO
- Seek legal recognition of **traditional communities'** laws
- Link TK protection to broader goals of cultural sustainability



*The voices of Indigenous Communities should take precedence in every conversation about*

*TKs.<sup>69</sup>*

## Global South Countries with Traditional Communities (Africa, Latin America, and Parts of Asia)

This bloc should be in favor of supporting stronger protection mechanisms for TKs and recognition of indigenous intellectual rights through legal frameworks and binding treaties. This can be done not only within the boundaries of their countries, but also at a greater level in conjunction with the WIPO. Possible areas to focus on include:

- Advocating for international agreements
- Demand the protection of community ownership
- Push for the establishment of a global TK database
- Support benefit-sharing mechanisms

<sup>69</sup> 1, Youth and Family Services October, and Youth and Family Services. “Learn about Indigenous Peoples’ Day.” Open for Exploration tag line., October 1, 2025. <https://smcl.org/blogs/post/learn-about-indigenous-peoples-day/>.



- Oppose excessive control by larger and more affluent countries



*The WIPO Conference Hall where most conversations about TK take place.<sup>70</sup>*

## Global North and Western States

Having perhaps the most resources out of every other bloc, there should be a focus to use that power to leverage the playing field. These resources should be used ethically and sustainably in conjunction with less developed nations and indigenous groups/communities for their benefit.

Some key areas to tackle include:

- Support national-level protections and implement those at the international level
- Encourage disclosure of origin requirements and patent applications

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<sup>70</sup> Organization, World Intellectual Property. “WIPO Conference Hall.” Flickr, October 6, 2025. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wipo/15288644059>.

- Provide support to their own indigenous and traditional communities when it comes to decision making
- Promote collaboration between indigenous communities and larger corporations who seek the commercialization of TKs
- Emphasize innovation incentives



## Glossary

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*Benefit-Sharing* - The equitable distribution of benefits that arise from the use of resources or participation in research.

*Biopiracy* - Appropriation of indigenous biomedical and cultural knowledge.

*Intellectual Property (IP)* - Products of the intellect that have commercial value. This includes copyrighted property, artistic works, ideas, patents, and others.

*Local Ownership* - Control and management of resources, ideas, or projects by local communities.

*Traditional Communities* - Refers to indigenous groups or others who maintain ownership of Traditional Knowledges.

*Traditional Knowledge (TK)* - Knowledge that is gained through tradition or anecdote. Usually has been maintained by a community through generations and is of importance to the culture.

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