

Frequently Asked Questions – Accreditation to the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC)

Please note that this is an informal guide to applications for accreditation as an *ad-hoc* observer to sessions of the *Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC)*. It remains subject to the WIPO Rules of Procedure and any other rules of procedure adopted by the IGC.

1. What is the IGC?

The *Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC)* was established by the General Assembly of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2000 as a policy forum for the discussion of intellectual property issues arising in the context of the protection of genetic resources (GRs), traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs). Under its present 2012/2013 mandate, the IGC has expedited its work on text-based negotiations with the objective of reaching agreement on a text(s) of an international legal instrument(s) which will ensure the effective protection of GRs, TK and TCEs.

2. Who may participate in the IGC sessions?

Participation in the IGC is open to a wide array of stakeholders involved in the issues under discussion. Broadly speaking, three main categories of participants exist within the IGC: WIPO Member States, international and regional intergovernmental organizations and international and national non-governmental organizations.

3. Which organizations may apply for accreditation to the IGC?

Applications for *ad-hoc* observer status within the IGC are welcomed from international, regional and national non-governmental organizations. Individuals may not apply for accreditation. The following is an important checklist of issues to be considered regarding the criteria for eligibility:

- a. The organization should essentially be concerned with intellectual property matters within the competence of WIPO;
- b. The organization should be able to demonstrate an existing relationship between its activities and the issues under discussion within the IGC;
- c. The aims and objectives of the organization shall be in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of WIPO and the United Nations;
- d. The organization shall have authority to speak for its members through its authorized representatives and in accordance with the rules governing observer status.

4. When may an organization apply for accreditation to the IGC?

Applications may be received at any time of the year. Completed application forms, for consideration in any given session of the IGC, must, however, be received no later than 60 days before the commencement of the session at which the application is to be considered.

5. How does an organization apply?

Application forms may be downloaded directly from the website at:

<http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>. The forms are available in English, French and Spanish. Applicants are expected to fill out every section of the application form. The complete application must be accompanied by all the required information. Completed applications should be sent to grtkf@wipo.int or may be sent by fax to: +41 223 388 120 or by post to:

World Intellectual Property Organization
Traditional Knowledge Division
34, chemin des Colombettes, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Only completed applications will be processed for consideration by the Committee. Applications should be submitted in Microsoft word or PDF formats.

6. Is an organization required to apply for accreditation to the IGC each time its representatives wish to attend an IGC session?

No. Once an organization's application for accreditation has been accepted at any given session of the IGC, its representatives are entitled to attend all following sessions of the IGC. No further accreditation application is required.

7. How are applications to the IGC decided on?

Decisions on applications are made by the IGC in plenary. As a preliminary step, the Secretariat ensures that applications received are duly completed. Completed applications are thereupon submitted to the IGC with the exact information as received from the applicants. The IGC, in its opening plenary session, is invited to take note of the organizations seeking accreditation, and, in the absence of any objection, the organizations are accredited. A successful application's accreditation becomes effective immediately.

8. Can an organization participate in the session at which its application is decided?

Yes. *Ad-hoc* observers are encouraged not to travel to Geneva until they have received confirmation of the decision of the Committee regarding their accreditation. However, as decisions on accreditation are taken by the Committee in the opening plenary, *ad-hoc* observers may participate from the moment their application is agreed to.

9. How will I know about the decision on my organization's application?

Once the decisions have been taken on applications for accreditation in any given session, the WIPO Secretariat will send official notifications to all applicants, informing them of the Committee's decision regarding their applications. These notifications are usually sent out within the first week after the close of the session. Organizations wishing to attend the sessions at which their application is to be decided, may request to be notified informally by the Secretariat immediately decisions have been taken to enable them participate, if their applications are approved.

10. What opportunities does a successful application to the IGC confer on an organization?

Principally, accreditation to the IGC process confers *ad-hoc* observers with the opportunities of representation and participation during sessions of the IGC.

Representation: An accredited organization may designate its representative(s) to any given session of the IGC. Upon registration, a seat bearing the organization's name plaque is reserved for the registered representative. Though no limits are placed on the number of representatives that may attend per organization, only one seat may be guaranteed to each accredited organization.

Participation: *ad-hoc* observer status entitles *ad-hoc* observers to participate, in the sessions of the Committee, in accordance with the rules of procedure for observer participation. Accredited *ad-hoc* observers may be given the floor by the IGC Chair and may thereupon make oral contributions and, generally, engage with Member States in the course of the negotiations. To enhance participation during the sessions, the WIPO Secretariat traditionally organizes a briefing for accredited *ad-hoc* observers on the first day of the session.

11. Can an accredited ad-hoc observer make written submissions?

Ad-hoc observers may not submit written statements, comments etc. in the formal sessions of the Committee. WIPO has, however, created a popular Observer Submissions Web Page (<http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/ngo/index.html>) on which comments and submissions of *ad-hoc* observers may be uploaded. Written submissions may be sent to the WIPO Secretariat for uploading at grtkf@wipo.int.

12. What is the difference between a WIPO Permanent observer and an ad-hoc observer?

WIPO Permanent Observers are accredited by the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO in line with criteria laid out on the WIPO website.

(<http://www.wipo.int/members/en/admission/observers.html>) Such Permanent Observers are entitled to attend and participate in sessions of all WIPO's Committees. Furthermore, they are entitled to attend and participate in the annual General Assembly. *Ad-hoc* observers accredited to the IGC may, however, participate only in IGC sessions.

13. Can an organization's ad-hoc observer status be revoked?

Yes, the revocation of ad-hoc observer status may be effected through a decision of the Committee.

14. Can an organization receive funding for participation in the IGC meetings?

Accreditation does not entitle an organization to funding. The WIPO Voluntary Fund was established in October 2005 to facilitate the participation of representatives of already accredited organizations representing indigenous and local communities within the IGC.

An *individual* may apply for funding from the Voluntary Fund to participate in the IGC session if:

- a. he/she is nominated by an organization which has already been accredited to the IGC;
- b. the nominating organization represents indigenous peoples and local communities; and,
- c. the applicant has a track record of working with indigenous peoples and/or local communities.

15. How can I apply for funding?

Applicants for funding from the Voluntary Fund are expected to download, complete and fill out the application form (<http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>). Completed application forms must be received by the WIPO Secretariat no later than 60 days before the session preceding the session for which funding is sought. This is due to the fact that funding decisions for any particular session are made by the Advisory Board of the Voluntary Fund, during the previous session. For instance, an applicant who seeks funding to IGC 3 must submit his or her application for funding at least 60 days before IGC 2 as the decisions for funding to IGC 3 will be taken during IGC 2.

16. What does funding to the IGC cover?

Successful applicants to the Voluntary Fund are entitled to return air-tickets to and from Geneva, a daily subsistence allowance (DSA) for the entire period of the session, which is expected to cover subsistence expenses, an insurance cover for the period of the session and terminal expenses (TE).