



Press Brief

Article 8 (j): Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices

Why is this important?

The traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities can make significant contributions to sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity. But such knowledge is at risk of disappearing or being unfairly exploited. Most indigenous and local communities are situated in areas where the vast majority of the world's genetic resources are found. They have cultivated and used biodiversity in a sustainable way for hundreds or thousands of years, and transmitted their collectively-owned knowledge of the natural world orally from generation to generation.

Traditional knowledge is valuable not only to those who depend on it in their daily lives, but to modern industry and agriculture, fisheries and environmental management as well. Many widely used products, such as plant-based medicines, health products and cosmetics, are derived from traditional knowledge. Other valuable products based on traditional knowledge include agricultural and non-wood forest products as well as handicrafts. Some traditional practices of indigenous and local communities — such as customary laws, cultural values, agricultural practices and use of natural medicines — have been proven to enhance biodiversity and promote healthy ecosystems.

However, the contribution of such communities to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity goes far beyond their role as natural resource managers. Their skills and techniques provide valuable information to the global community and a useful model for biodiversity policies. Furthermore, as on-site communities with extensive knowledge of local environments, indigenous and local communities are most directly involved with conservation and sustainable use.



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What news to expect in Nagoya?

At COP 10, as well as focusing on issues of customary sustainable use of biodiversity, Parties are expected to adopt a code of ethical conduct to ensure respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities; as well as two additional indicators for the status of traditional knowledge relating to land use-change in traditional territories of indigenous and local communities and in the practice of traditional occupations.

COP 10 will also address the more effective engagement of local communities in the work of the Convention. The programme of work for article 8(j) will also consider tasks related to the implementation of the International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing which include: guidelines for benefit sharing, and prior and informed consent; identification of obligations of providers and users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge; guidelines for reporting and preventing the unlawful appropriation of traditional knowledge; guidelines to assist Parties in developing legislation to implement 8(j) which requires that TK is respected, preserved and promoted with the approval of the knowledge holders.

Finally, future meetings of the Working Group on Article 8(j) will include a new agenda item, an in depth dialogue, and Parties will consider at COP 10 whether the first in depth dialogue should be on Climate Change, Protected Areas or on the modalities of benefit sharing (arising from ABS).

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