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Events convened on Friday, 31 March 2006

## Indigenous Forum at CBD COP 8: The Protection of Traditional Knowledge

Presented by the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)



Inti Montenegro de Wit, Quechua Aymara Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (ANDES): "Registers of traditional knowledge are not about the technical process, they are about the people, who are central to making such processes succeed" - referring to the use of modern technologies and the *kipus* traditional matrix tools in recording information about potato varieties in the Andes

Preston Hardison, Tulalip Tribes, gave an overview of issues concerning establishing registers for Traditional Knowledge (TK) adding that TK is documented to prevent the extinction of knowledge, to recover knowledge and for natural resource management. He said defensive documentation aims to register TK in order to defeat patents and to demonstrate prior art knowledge, indigenous knowledge accessible to the public prior to a patent application filing date. On the other hand, positive protection mainly aims to demonstrate possession of knowledge.

Hardison noted that registering cultural knowledge might put it at risk since it is liable to misappropriation. He elaborated on issues such as prior informed consent, the need to respect the force of customary law and the necessity of spiritual and cultural issues recognition in law. Hardison also addressed the issue of overburdening communities with documentation requirements.

Inti Montenegro de Wit, Quechua Aymara Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (ANDES), presented the Quechua Biocultural Heritage Register being used in the Potato Park in Peru, saying it aims to combine modern technology with traditional systems (*kipus*) utilized in the Andes for both recording and protecting TK. De Wit explained that the *kipus*, a traditional matrix tool, was a system used by the Incas for recording detailed information about goods and services, natural resources, statistics, demographics, laws, norms, ceremonies and rituals.

He noted that the Register is an internet-based, multimedia database developed by the Potato Park communities to document, protect and promote TK of Quechua peoples according to their customary practice and law. However, he stressed that people are very much involved in the process of managing data for the Quechua Biocultural Heritage Register by using the *kipus*, therefore making the people in effect "living records," while computer technologies play a subsidiary role in the registering of potato varieties or medicinal plants. He described the recording process, noting that communities utilizing the *kipus* are filmed and photographed by the Potato Park community and the recorded information is transferred to computers and to the interpretation centre.

De Wit noted that the Quechua Biocultural Heritage Register is categorized under the Indigenous Peoples and Local Community Database and Registers under the United Nations University Institute for Advanced Studies, but indicated that the relationship between national and local registers is ambiguous due to the absence of clear legal enforcement mechanisms provided under the national TK regime. He said that, despite this limitation, the Peruvian regime for the Protection of Collective Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples Related to Biodiversity (Law 27811 of July 2002) is advanced compared to that of other nations, establishing a *sui generis* system to protect indigenous peoples' rights.

### More information:

<http://www.iifb.net>  
<http://stories.icons.org>  
<http://www.andes.org.pe>

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## Human Resources Formation for Biodiversity Conservation

Presented by the Graduate Programme in Ecology and Conservation, Federal University of Paraná (UFP)

Márcia Marques, UFP, Brazil, outlined the three-day programme on Human Resources Formation for Biodiversity Conservation, which includes a workshop at the Auditório da Funpar on Saturday and a field visit to the Atlantic Rainforest and Morretes on Sunday. Marques said education should be directed by human actions towards a more equal and informed society, and educators should practice conservation and disseminate knowledge. She emphasized the importance of education, noting that countries with the greatest biodiversity are those with the fewest specialists.

Fabio Scarano, Brazilian Education Council for Graduate Studies (CAPES), spoke on capacity building on graduate programmes in Brazil. He indicated that CAPES has 60 to 70 graduate programmes in the country which have some focus on biodiversity conservation. Explaining the distinction made in Brazil between academic and professional Masters programmes, he said that whereas an academic Masters student is trained to produce science, a professional Masters student is trained to recognize good science and bring it to his/her workplace. Saying ecology is one of the leading sciences in Brazil, he urged forging of links between decision makers and academia to ensure that decision makers benefit from this expertise.

Fernando Santibañez, University of Chile, discussed outputs of a research programme on learning systems in formal education and postgraduate programmes, the intention of which is to create new "learning objects" for studying biodiversity at all levels of education in Chile using new technology. He demonstrated material created by this technology using animation and multi-media resources.

Robert Buschbacher, University of Florida, described attempts of the Tropical Conservation and Development Program to bridge conservation theory and practice through the university's Working Forests in the Tropics programme and the Amazon Conservation Leadership Initiative. He noted that the main problem is structural, in that universities are isolated into departments. He suggested ways to get around this problem, including joint faculty appointments. He presented an alternative "tiered" curriculum, that integrates region-specific language and cultural studies to support field research in tropical forests. He then described a protocol for collaboration with partners in the tropics to secure local support and ensure relevance.



Fabio Scarano, Brazilian Education Council for Graduate Studies (CAPES), urged building bridges between decision makers and the academic community, noting that while ecology is one of the leading sciences in Brazil, this expertise is not benefiting policy as it could

### More information:

<http://www.ufpr.br>  
<http://www.prppg.ufpr.br>  
<http://www.biologia.ufrj.br>  
<http://www.agrimed.cl>  
<http://www.capes.gov.br>  
<http://www.aproa.cl>  
<http://www.tropicalforests.ufl.edu/wft>  
<http://www.tropicalforests.ufl.edu/acli>

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Left to right: Márcia Marques, Federal University of Paraná; Fabio Scarano, Brazilian Education Council for Graduate Studies; Fernando Santibañez, University of Chile; and Robert Buschbacher, University of Florida, US