

21 February 2001

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Jorge Iván Mora Godoy, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, at the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities, on agenda item 5: The sustainable use of biological resources: Systems and national experiences for the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China has followed with great interest the expert meeting on “Systems and national experiences for the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices,” which has highlighted the role that traditional knowledge plays, in key sectors such as, traditional agriculture, traditional medicine and folklore. The Group of 77 and China acknowledges the useful exchange of national experiences presented during the Expert Meeting by a large variety of experts, including representatives from the indigenous communities. The Group of 77 and China notes with appreciation that the papers presented to the Expert Meeting has been made available on the Internet.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the coordination between the work of the secretariat and that of other organizations such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). We would like to extend our appreciation to the secretariat for preparing document TD/B/COM.1/38, which we consider provides, jointly with the outcome of the expert meeting a good basis for our deliberations.

The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the outcome of the expert meeting, reflects accurately and in a balanced manner the diversity of views expressed and summarizes the experts’ conclusions and recommendations for Governments to consider in protecting traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, as well as recommendations to UNCTAD and other international organizations. Based on this outcome, the Group of 77 and China believes that the Commission should consider action to be taken at the national and multilateral levels, in cooperation with indigenous and local communities.

The Group of 77 and China supports the recommendations made by the experts at the national level, with emphasis in the need to:

- To raise awareness of the role and value of traditional knowledge and its contribution to the development process.
- To promote, where appropriate, the commercialization of traditional knowledge-based products and services, involving indigenous and local communities in this endeavor, consistent with the sustainable use of biological resources. In doing so, cultural and spiritual values should be respected.
- To explore suitable instruments, including sui generis systems for the protection of traditional knowledge.

The expert meeting made a number of recommendations at the multilateral level that the Group of 77 and China would like to support and bring to the attention of the Commission.

- There should be continued and enhanced coordination between the work programmes of the intergovernmental organizations concerned, such as the CBD, WIPO, WHO and UNCTAD.

- To explore minimum standards of an international sui generis system for the protection of traditional knowledge.

Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China would also like to highlight and support the recommendations that were made to UNCTAD, working in cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations.

- Promoting regional workshops with a view to exchange national experiences.
- Assisting member states and indigenous and local communities in exploring policies and measures to harness traditional knowledge for trade and development, including through the UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force (CBTF) and the Biotrade Initiative.
- Assisting interested developing countries in exploring sui generis systems for the protection of traditional knowledge, including in examining possible multilateral aspects of such systems.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China allow me to emphasize the importance that our group attaches to working towards agreed conclusions on this very important subject.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.