



NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH

STATE of NEW MEXICO

364 Navajo Route, Tree Meadows

Shiprock, New Mexico 87420

April 17, 2024

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
Secretary, U.S. State Department
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary, Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Diplomatic Conference on
Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (May 13-24, 2024)

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Haaland, and Secretary Raimondo:

On behalf of the Native American Church – State of New Mexico (NAC-SNM), consistent with our mission, we write this letter to uphold the legal interests of Native American Church (NAC) practitioners throughout the United States, Indian Country, New Mexico, and Navajo land. NAC-SNM was founded in the 1970's with a foundational aspect of its mission is to support the protection of American Indian ceremonial, spiritual and traditional practices held sacred since time immemorial. This includes the protection of sacred medicinal plants used in traditional indigenous ceremonies based on traditional knowledge, which are characterized as Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK) in World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) negotiations.

The government-to-government consultation between the U.S. and Tribal Nations on the negotiations and the international instrument has been inadequate. Thus, we are writing to urge your offices to ensure that the position of the United States government at the upcoming WIPO Diplomatic Conference on GRATK is in favor of a legally enforceable international instrument with protections for Indigenous Peoples that are as strong as or stronger than the current draft language of the instrument.

Finally, NAC-SNM stands with Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), which includes the Navajo Nation, that genetic resources and culturally important plants/traditional medicines are vital to

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maintaining our cultures and identities. In that regard, the United States' position in the WIPO negotiations must not only seek to prevent harm to tribes from the misappropriation, misuse, and exploitation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, but it must also assure that any legal instrument contributes to the protection of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

We urge the support of a legally binding instrument with meaningful and strong protections for Indigenous Peoples with respect to their genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

We appreciate your attention to the concerns shared by our counsel, Linda Benally, during the meeting with the State and DOI teams yesterday. Our members are citizens of tribes, and like COLT member tribes, committed to ensuring that indigenous cultural knowledge and practices are being preserved and shared in ways that honor ancestral wisdom. We are grateful that tribal leaders included us in their meeting with you. We all speak for the protections our people need.

If your office would like to discuss this letter, we encourage you to contact Linda Benally at 623-308-2329.

Ahéhee' (thank you),

/s/ Leathan Dayish

Leathan Dayish

Vice-President

Native American Church-State of New Mexico

/s/ Terry Dayish

Terry Dayish

Native American Church-State of New Mexico

Delegate-at-Large, New Mexico, NACNA

nacnewmexico.org

Native American Church - State of New Mexico, established on July 27, 1981, supports the protection of American Indian religious, ceremonial, spiritual and traditional practices held sacred since time immemorial.