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Global Protection for Genetic Resources & Traditional Knowledge

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A Significant Milestone in May 2024: The Adoption of the WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK)

In May 2024, a pivotal advancement was achieved with the adoption of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK). This landmark treaty introduces a comprehensive global framework, mandating patent applicants to disclose origins if their inventions incorporate genetic resources or traditional knowledge. Specifically, applicants are required to specify the country of origin or the particular indigenous community involved, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in intellectual property processes.

For Nigeria, a country endowed with an extraordinary wealth of biodiversity and a rich tapestry of traditional practices, this international development serves as a crucial instrument in the fight against "biopiracy."

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By legally binding patent applicants to acknowledge and disclose their sources, the treaty ensures that local communities are not only recognized but also positioned to benefit economically and socially when their cultural and natural heritage contributes to modern scientific progress. This recognition can lead to equitable sharing of benefits, fostering sustainable development and preserving the invaluable traditional knowledge that has been passed down through generations.

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