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The Commission on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism

Background:

Established in 1978 by the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), and affiliated with the International Association of Legal Science (IALS), the Commission has more than 350 lawyers, anthropologists and other social scientists, representing all regions of the world. It is concerned with the interaction of multiple normative orders (folk law, religious law, international and national law) in both theory and practice. The growth of the Commission reflects a growing awareness of the contemporary existence of legal plurality, not only in countries with indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, but also in the industrialized societies as such. The Commission's primary purpose, according to its Constitution, is "to further knowledge and understanding of folk law and legal pluralism, with a focus upon theoretical and practical problems resulting from the interaction of folk law and state law". Its activities include, where appropriate, "assisting in making sympathetic and constructive contributions to the solution of problems connected with the interaction of folk law and state law, and thus to the future of indigenous, ethnic and social groups, governed by folk law, in the modern world".

The Commission's three major current activities are: the issue of a Newsletter (thrice every two years); the organization of international symposia; and the initiation and encouragement of Regional Working Groups in different parts of the world. In addition, the Commission has established a program of international courses in the theory of legal pluralism, usually offered in conjunction with the International Congress.

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