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## WIPO Members Make Forceful Case in Questioning the Legitimacy and Future Usage of Revised Geographical Indications System

**(Washington D.C., May 21, 2015)** New revisions to the Lisbon Agreement system for geographical indications (GIs) have been adopted using an illegitimate process, and the resulting agreement will be problematic for the countries that choose to use it, particularly in terms of protecting common food names and the erosion of existing intellectual property rights. These were messages shared by a strong coalition of nation members to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) during this month's Lisbon Agreement Diplomatic Conference in Geneva, which wrapped up today.

The heated debate demonstrated that protecting generic food and beverage terms – from “parmesan” and “feta” to “chorizo” and “chateau”, is gaining increasing attention as a critical, global market access issue.

“We saw a tremendous show of strength during the conference from the United States, Argentina, Australia, Chile, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Uruguay and other nations, calling on WIPO to create an inclusive and legitimate process in discussing the revisions, and fighting for targeted improvements to the proposal,” said Jaime Castaneda, Executive Director of the international Consortium for Common Food Names. “The leadership of these governments has shone a spotlight on the flaws in the current Lisbon Agreement, and has bolstered the resolve of many nations to defend the rights of their consumers and food producers in using generic names and terms.”

The U.S., Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Panama, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Uruguay together submitted a proposal last week asking that all WIPO members be given full voting status in the agreement's revision. In remarks made at the start of the conference, Ambassador Pamela Hamamoto spoke on behalf of the “deeply troubled” U.S. delegation in warning that WIPO was setting a precedent with “alarming implications for the future of WIPO as an organization.”

Despite these efforts, WIPO allowed a small group of nations – mostly European – exclusive control in revising and expanding the Lisbon Agreement. In closing remarks yesterday, Ambassador Hamamoto noted that both the process and outcome of the Lisbon Agreement negotiations “raise fundamental questions about the legitimacy of the new Geneva Act”.

“The revised Lisbon Agreement is dangerously vague and does not adequately protect common names,” Castaneda said. “Not only are the protocols on how to handle new GIs flawed, but countries that choose to use the Lisbon Agreement system are likely to trigger disputes as they run up against World Trade Organization and other trade commitments, as well as intellectual property obligations.”

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*The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) is an independent, international non-profit alliance whose goal is to work with leaders in agriculture, trade and intellectual property rights to foster the adoption of high standards and model geographical indication guidelines throughout the world. Those interested in joining can find information at [www.CommonFoodNames.com](http://www.CommonFoodNames.com).*