

## GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Dear Chairman, dear Director General, your excellences ambassadors, honorable representatives of the member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia to greet you all at the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Assemblies of the member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization and to wish you good health and successful work.

At the very beginning of my statement, allow me to express my kind gratitude to the chairman, Ambassador Omar Zniber and his vice-chairs as well as the Secretariat of the World Intellectual Property Organization for the exceptional organization of this important event, perfect in every way. You have demonstrated that the system this big, with numerous and complex competences, can successfully perform its activities for the benefit of the intellectual property protection, even in such difficult circumstances of pandemics of Covid 19.

The previous year was, in every way, exceptional for the World Intellectual Property Organization, as demonstrated by brilliant results – there was a significant increase in the number of PCT applications and applications filed on the basis of the Madrid and Lisbon Agreement; a great number of accessions to the agreements administered by the WIPO was noticed; the Beijing Treaty and the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. All WIPO services worked successfully and the increase of the use of the WIPO Global Databases was recorded. Results were also achieved with regard to the normative work in the framework of the WIPO committees and its working groups. For the Republic of Serbia, special importance was given to the cooperation with the WIPO with regard to the development of WIPO IP Policies in universities and R&D institutions, cooperation in the development of IP business services (IPAS system has been upgraded, EDMS system was changed, data exchange with the IPO of Serbia has been established) and cooperation in the field of mediation of IP disputes. On this occasion, the delegation of the Republic of Serbia congratulates Director General Mr. Francis Gurry and his team on the achieved results and thanks for the support given to the Republic of Serbia in the previous period.

New unprecedented circumstances in the modern world history influenced all of us to change our habits to a certain degree, and even our relation to life and work. When it concerns my country, the Covid 19 pandemics requested the Government action in order to preserve the life and health of people. Due to the very strict measures that the Government of the Republic of Serbia introduced in the middle of March of this year – strict quarantine of our citizens and continual prevailing campaign on the necessity of respecting measures of social distancing and wearing of protective masks, Serbia managed to pass through the most difficult period of crisis with the relatively low number of victims. As everywhere in the world, also in the Republic of Serbia, the greatest heroes of this crisis are our healthcare workers. We all owe a world to those people and I believe that time is yet to show how their expertise and sacrifice was crucial to keep the scope of this tragedy from being much larger.

However, a man is a being of habit that accustoms to all circumstances – as Dostoyevsky used to write. The Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia, as the central body competent for the protection of intellectual property in the country continued to perform its duties in the changed regime of work, but almost equally efficiently just like before the outbreak of the crisis. If there is something good with regard to this crisis – it may be the fact that the circumstances obliged us to reach more for the development of the digital technologies and their efficient implementation in our work. IT experts of the Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia, in the short period of time, managed to secure that a great number of our employees, with no difficulties, has been passing decisions in the domain of patents, trademarks, industrial design and other IP rights remotely, from their homes. At this very moment, half of the employees work on line. We intensively worked on the promotion of our IT services. At this moment, almost 70% of all industrial property applications are received on line, and when it concerns submissions, half of that is received over the Internet. In cooperation with the Government Office for IT, we work on the development of service called e- application and I believe that before the New Year, we shall send most of our administrative acts through the Internet. Client visits to the Office are still not allowed, and we hold the meetings exclusively over the Internet.

In these strange, difficult and tragic circumstances for the whole world, the Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia is preparing for the celebration of the important jubilee – the celebration of the centenary of our existence and operation. Established immediately after the end of the First World War, the Office survived numerous temptations, changes of social and political systems and ideologies, but it never lost its identity and stopped working, except in the short period in the course of the Second World War. The celebration of 100 years of the Office shall be a good opportunity to recapitulate its interesting history. On that occasion, among other things, a monography about the Office shall be published for the first time, with the assistance and support of the WIPO, and we wish to express our warm gratitude.

The celebration is expected with the good news about the progress of Serbia on the list of Global Innovation Index by four places in comparison to the previous year. We are now on the 53<sup>rd</sup> place and I hope that in the future years we shall make even more progress. In the previous year, Serbia dedicated to the modernization of its legal system and passed a serial of laws harmonized with the European legislation and also intensified its fight against piracy and counterfeiting. All those things are results worth noticing.

I wish to take advantage of this opportunity, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia and on my personal behalf, to congratulate new Director General Mr. Daren Tang on his appointment and to wish him happiness and success in his work. I am convinced that under his leadership the WIPO will continue to develop and make progress.

Please allow me to express my congratulations to Mr. Francis Gurry, for his dedicated work and successful management of the WIPO that lasted more than a decade. His work represents valuable heritage which inspires every one of us engaged in this subject matter, it has been time of prosperity and ascent of intellectual property in the world.

For the Republic of Serbia, that period shall be remembered as exceptionally fruitful and successful, in particular when it concerns the international dimension of our work in the field of intellectual property. Words fail when I wish to express gratitude to Mr. Gurry and his team for all the support we have received in all those years. His visit to Serbia and the Intellectual Property Office on October 26, 2010 still remains in our memory as exceptional honor and a memory that we shall never forget in Serbia.

The Republic of Serbia shall continue the constructive cooperation with the WIPO and its member states in order to establish the well balanced and stable system of intellectual property.