

# THE WIPO CONVENTION – LIFE BEGINS AT 40!

It was an *abracadabra* moment... that took place 40 years ago, on April 26, 1970. Two small, French-speaking, Swiss-led "bureaux," rooted in a couple of 19<sup>th</sup> century treaties, were transformed into a single, multilingual, member-state-driven international organization. That organization would soon become a UN specialized agency and would adopt a new treaty – the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) – that would not only bring it world renown and financial stability, but revolutionize the international patent system.

It was on that day, four decades ago, that BIRPI became WIPO – or, to put it less succinctly, the *Bureaux internationaux réunis pour la protection de la propriété intellectuelle* became the World Intellectual Property Organization.

so revised the Organization's two key treaties – the 1883 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (then with 77 members, now 173); and the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (then with 58 members, now 164). It also modified five special agreements established under the Paris Convention, mainly dealing with the registration and classification of marks, registration of industrial designs, and the protection of appellations of origin. The Convention was signed in English, French, Russian and Spanish, ushering in a new era of multilingualism within the Organization.

On a structural level, three governing bodies were set up within WIPO: the Conference, the General Assembly and the Coordination Committee. These were to meet regularly, in contrast to the previous arrangement under BIRPI whereby Member States of the Paris and Berne Conventions (which BIRPI had been set up to service) had made decisions on an *ad hoc* basis for some 87 years – mainly in diplomatic conferences of revision held, on average, every 20 years. Control of BIRPI's activities and finances had been essentially exercised by Switzerland, the Bureaux's host country, which also appointed the staff, including the Director. With the entry into force of the WIPO Convention, this control passed to Member States and, to a certain extent, the WIPO Director General elected by those States.

## Just a beginning

In the last 40 years, the 6 original treaties managed by BIRPI have grown in number, in tandem with a changing technological landscape, and now count 24, including the WIPO Convention. The Organization's Member States currently stand at 184 and its working methods have changed beyond imagining with the arrival of wireless technology and the web. Intellectual property (IP) and the innovation at its heart have taken on a new global significance, increasingly recognized as a means of wealth creation, of improved living stan-



**The Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization was hammered out in the halls of the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm.**

The "magic wand" responsible for this metamorphosis – the Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization – had been crafted during a five-week-long conference of BIRPI member states in the halls of the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm in 1967. The agreement reached at that time, and distilled into the text of the Convention, not only established WIPO but al-

*“The technological, economic and social changes since 1970 have transformed the international IP landscape. In those 40 years, WIPO has also changed, growing into a dynamic, forward-looking and truly global entity, focused on the use of IP to promote innovation and creativity for economic, social and cultural development.”*

WIPO Director General Francis Gurry

dards and, perhaps most important, of developing solutions to the daunting challenges related to climate change, spiraling energy needs, food security and public health, that are facing us all.

At age 40, WIPO has taken on these new challenges, implementing programs to encourage the use of the IP system as leverage for economic development and focusing on cooperation with other UN organizations to find solutions to global problems. The road ahead for the Organization and the international IP system promises to be rocky in parts but also fascinating, as the IP landscape morphs and changes under the influence of accelerating advances in technology, rapid globalization and an increasingly sophisticated and all-encompassing digital environment. WIPO will continue to spearhead international discussions on these and other such IP-relevant issues.

In this anniversary year, WIPO will launch a new corporate logo (see page 4) and expand its headquarters with a new building that will allow all staff to be brought onto one site. This year also marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Intellectual Property Day – the date of which was set to coincide with that of the entry into force of the WIPO Convention. The WIPO Magazine traces the story of IP Day over the last decade and highlights the chord it has struck with Member States. It records the innovative ways the IP community has used this annual opportunity to showcase the enormous contribution inventors and artists make to enriching our daily lives. It will also highlight the theme for this year’s celebrations: Innovation – Linking the World.

## WIPO 2.0: New YouTube™ Channel Launched

Watching videos has become one of the most popular online activities. The video-sharing site YouTube™ – just another Internet startup a few years ago – is now one of the most visited websites with over a billion views a day. Going where the audience is, WIPO has set up a YouTube presence: the WIPO channel. Aimed at the general public, the channel features documentaries and interviews with artists, creators and inventors showing how creativity and innovation affect their own and our lives, giving IP a human face. A selection of informational and promotional videos, as well as videos in French and Spanish, round off the offer.



Interactivity is an important feature of the WIPO channel. Users are not only encouraged to rate, comment on and subscribe to the videos, but also to share their own content by becoming “IP Reporters,” local correspondents of the WIPO channel in their own neighborhood. IP Reporters from around the world are invited to submit videos telling their own story, or that of their favorite authors, inventors or entrepreneurs, and how IP protects their works and allows them to profit from their talents. WIPO also welcomes submissions of video content covering events and activities organized to celebrate World IP Day.

To find out how Dr. Ramón Barba’s invention benefits mango growers in the Philippines, what Jamaican musician Shaggy thinks about copyright, and how counterfeit medicines have affected Tolomeo’s life, visit WIPO’s YouTube channel, which already has as many as 70 videos available. Stay tuned, as more content from both WIPO and its IP Reporters will be added throughout the year.