

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

WIPO DIRECTOR GENERAL DAREN TANG, OPENING REMARKS TO LAUNCH OF WIPO'S AI INFRASTRUCTURE INTERCHANGE GENEVA, MARCH 17, 2026

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the launch of WIPO's AI Infrastructure Interchange.

Let us start with a moment of reflection.

Everyone joining us today, whether physically or online, has relied on some type of reliable and seamless infrastructure to be here.

Airports and roads.
Fiber optic cables and WiFi networks.

We don't often think too much about these when they work well. But we must not forget that time, effort and expertise was invested by many for this to have happened. In the early days of the locomotive, railway networks were isolated, limited and expensive. Different countries built tracks using different gauges. Trains that ran on one network could not run on another. Passengers and goods had to stop, unload and transfer before continuing their journey.

To address this, experts came together to try to make the different tracks connect better. Once the tracks could "speak the same language," transport networks became faster, more efficient and truly interconnected or inter-operable, and rail transport began to achieve their potential of serving people, economy and society.

A more recent example is music streaming. When music moved from physical formats to online formats, the industry had to develop new digital infrastructure for metadata and other information to flow along the digital supply chain. Today, that all too invisible but critical digital infrastructure allows creators and consumers to connect at the touch of a finger on a mobile screen.

Both examples show us that when new technologies emerge, the potential for that technology to serve the world is only realized when we also come together to address the infrastructure issues underlying the technology. This applies to Artificial Intelligence as well.

AI is not just a type of technology, but one that has the power to change the nature of innovation and creativity, posing challenges but also opening new opportunities for the global IP ecosystem.

But like the locomotive and digital music, overcoming the challenges and finding the opportunities will require open, transparent and expert discussions concerning the relevant infrastructure issues.

This is why WIPO is launching the AI Infrastructure Interchange or AI3I.

AI3I will provide a neutral, open and professional space where creators, rights-holders, developers and technical experts come together to exchange ideas and explore real-world solutions.

In particular, conversations will revolve around issues like facilitating access to data at scale, identification and attribution standards, watermarking, fingerprinting, rights management, and even the use of AI to address IP enforcement and infrastructure – issues that need engagement and discussion in order to help innovative and creative ecosystems work well, help innovators and creators flourish, and help AI reach its full potential as a force for good.

I want to make sure that there is no misunderstanding about the aims of AIII – this is not a forum designed to set international norms, dictate policy or impose domestic legal standards. And Member States are rightly driving the discussions on relevant policy issues at the appropriate formal forums at WIPO, for example, at our Standing Committees. So AIII is meant to complement and support the discussions of our Member States.

My colleagues have worked hard over the past months in the lead up to today and we are excited about this initiative, including the establishment of the Technical Exchange Network. We welcome more to join the Network as well as to engage on the topics to be discussed. Since this is a gathering of stakeholders who are interested in IP and AI issues, let me also take this opportunity to reiterate some of the other work we are doing at WIPO on IP and AI issues.

At WIPO, we have long recognized the transformative impact of AI on IP. Since 2020, we have established a dedicated AI division and launched the WIPO Conversations on IP and Frontier Technologies, which has engaged nearly 17,000 participants from 172 countries. These inclusive, open and neutral sessions have given a voice to all Member States and many stakeholders on a range of issues - from generative AI and synthetic media to rights management and regulatory frameworks - reflecting the fast pace and complexity of technological change.

But as the scale of the impact of AI on innovation and creativity has become clearer, so too have the needs of our stakeholders.

There is now a demand for more focused, practical and up-to-date discussions, moving beyond identifying questions to sharing solutions and best practices. To meet this need, the WIPO Conversations on IP and Frontier Technologies – which was always intended to deal with all types of Frontier Technologies and not just on AI – will be adjusted to focus on IP and AI issues.

This will take the form of a new Global Forum on AI and IP, which will be an annual, open and inclusive event dedicated solely to allowing Member States to have a forum to discuss IP and AI issues in a broad, holistic and strategic manner. We plan to hold this event in late September this year.

At WIPO, we believe offering a forum for dialogue is essential, but that we can do more too to help Member States grapple with IP and AI issues. As part of our support these efforts, we released a WIPO AI Policy Toolkit and Generative AI guide last year, which has been downloaded over 30,000 times, providing practical guidance to policymakers and innovators worldwide.

And to drive home the transformative power of AI, we have organized IP management clinics and capacity-building programs to help hundreds of startups and officials across the Middle East, Latin America, ASEAN, and now Africa and Kazakhstan use IP to protect and promote their AI driven innovations. Our Agriculture 4.0 project and new AI Accelerator in Kazakhstan are helping innovators apply AI in fields from healthcare to agriculture.

Internally, we are also walking the talk by energetically applying AI within WIPO for efficiency, better customer service and to ensure that we harness the transformative power of digital technologies to serve you better as Member States and stakeholders.

In conclusion, as we take this next step with AIII, our focus remains clear: to deliver real-world impact for creators, innovators and the broader IP community.

But as we explore this exciting new world of AI and its impact on IP, innovation and creativity, let us also not forget that the role of technology is to empower, enable and support the human creator and innovator, and that the spark of human ingenuity, inventiveness and innovation must remain at the core of the IP system.

Let me close by expressing my deep appreciation to the many WIPO colleagues whose dedication has brought us to this moment.

I look forward to working with you all to move this important work forward.