

ASIPI
(Inter-American Association of Intellectual Property)
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Opening Remarks
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Ms. Elisabeth Siemsen do Amaral, President of the Executive Committee of the Inter-American Association of Intellectual Property, or ASIPI,

Distinguished Members of ASIPI's Executive Committee, Working Groups, and Country Delegates,

Distinguished Members of the IP community in the Americas and the Caribbean,

[Muy buenos días (good morning). Un gran saludo desde Ginebra (Greetings from Geneva)!]

Please allow me to begin by expressing my solidarity with you, the entire ASIPI membership, and your colleagues and families in these difficult times. Our collective efforts supporting innovation and creativity will ensure that we emerge from this pandemic to an even-brighter post-pandemic era.

WIPO and ASIPI enjoy a long and fruitful friendship that stretches back to ASIPI's founding nearly six decades ago. ASIPI is an official observer at WIPO and we benefit greatly from your expertise in our program activities as well as in our negotiating committees.

Together, we have been working on a variety of initiatives to expand competencies and capabilities in a number of areas. These include patent drafting, licensing, and the strategic use of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). I hope this fruitful cooperation will continue. I also want to congratulate ASIPI for the recent launch of your Academy. This new initiative will benefit IP practitioners, inventors, businesses and industry.

ASIPI has also been a key partner for the WIPO Inventor Assistance Program (IAP). This program facilitates access to patent protection for inventors and small businesses with limited financial resources. ASIPI's support with pro bono hours of its associates is extremely valuable to its success. Peru recently became the sixth country to participate in the IAP, joining Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, the Philippines, and South Africa.

The first inventor to receive a patent with the IAP's help was Iván Rizo of Colombia. Mr. Rizo invented a device that shields cars against the elements and deters theft at the same time. He was assisted by Ms. Luz Helena Adarve, a Partner at Cardenas & Cardenas - Dentons, who guided him throughout the patent application process.

WIPO has been supporting ASIPI's initiative to promote the protection of green technologies through the ASIPI Green Patent Award. This Award complements a WIPO program called WIPO GREEN, which is a platform connecting providers and seekers of environmentally friendly technologies, creating a

global marketplace for green technology. This is how we should be working – complementing each other for the greater good.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As this is the first time I am addressing the ASIPI community as WIPO Director General, I would like to spend some time outlining the work ahead for WIPO.

IP has traditionally been seen as a technical vertical. This is not wrong but it is not enough.

What needs to happen in the future is to connect IP to the world, to see it as a horizontal catalyst for jobs, enterprise growth, economic development and cultural/social vibrancy.

With the pandemic, innovation has become even more important, not less important, and IP continues to be a powerful tool to help innovation change lives for the better.

WIPO's is the world's innovation agency. We are here to use our expertise to make tools that allow great ideas to become reality.

How do we do this?

We will continue improving our services, such as the international registries. We will be more customer centred and use technology to make our services better for users.

We will continue supporting Members in the development of the normative agenda. When practices and laws are harmonized, it helps our people and enterprises take their technology, brands and designs across borders more easily.

We will continue providing valuable information, tools and platforms to support IP offices, researchers, innovators and creators.

At the same time, we need to connect the IP ecosystem more closely to the enterprise and economic ecosystems. We now need to go beyond IP registration to helping that IP go to the market. This is especially important for start-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs. This is why its timely that just last week, we received support from Member States to create a new Sector called IP and Innovation Ecosystems to focus on this.

We also want to reach out to new stakeholders and build stronger partnerships. Global problems require that we work closely with stakeholders, whether it is UN agencies, civil society or industry. But

we also need to go beyond even these stakeholders to address new and emerging stakeholders like our youths, who are the future of innovation and creativity.

Lastly, IP must now be seen as relevant and exciting to our political and industry leaders, and even to the person in the street and our communities.

In all of these areas, ASIPI can and should be a partner for WIPO. Let me explain how.

First, with regards to services, ASIPI members are prolific users of WIPO's global IP services, in particular the international patent system. We have been pleased by the growing number of countries in the region who are joining the Madrid System for the International Registration of Trademarks. We are of course ready to provide support to other countries considering membership.

WIPO will also continue to invest in its suite of services to support innovators, including its growing "family" of global databases (PATENTSCOPE, Global Brands and Design databases). WIPO intends to offer to the IP and innovation community state-of-the-art tools, which allow for a better and more effective use of the system. In this regard, ASIPI's feedback on how we can improve established services would be very valuable.

To ensure the global IP system remains fit for purpose, we need to take advantage of emerging technologies in our work, such as AI and blockchain.

WIPO has been investing in the use of AI to improve IP administration. Our tools include an AI-driven machine translation service that we are licensing to third parties, solutions for automatic patent classification, image search facilities for trademarks, and an automated speech-to-text resource. And earlier this year, we launched a blockchain based service for date and time stamping, called WIPO PROOF.

In time to come, we intend to see if our data and information can be shared with service providers more openly through the use of an architecture that promotes APIs.

In the area of norm-setting, WIPO will continue supporting efforts by Member States to move the normative agenda, even though the pandemic has made it challenging for us to discuss substantive issues. I sense an increasing appetite from Member States to look at these issues, for example in the area of the Design Law Treaty, the issues of TK/TCE/GR in the IGC, the Broadcasting Treaty, and others, and this can be seen in the approval at the last General Assembly for an Extraordinary General Assembly to be held in the first half of next year. Your interest in this, as movers and shakers of your regional and national IP ecosystems, will be important in giving momentum to these discussions.

MSMEs are at the heart of economies in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 95% of businesses in region are MSMEs, of which more than 88% are micro enterprises. This sector employs 60% of the working population in the region. However, Latin American MSMEs contribute only 25% of the regional gross domestic product (GDP) and only 10% of its exports.¹ This is a gap but also an opportunity.

IP can offer young entrepreneurs and innovation driven SMEs great opportunities to capture value for growth and expand in local, regional and global markets. Unfortunately, limited knowledge of IP management and strategy can make it difficult for these entrepreneurs and enterprises to scale-up and take full advantage of IP. Many of you are already providing these types of expertise but at the larger, systemic level, there is still insufficient support.

While these challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. In promoting a broader in the region, we can draw upon many successful homegrown IP commercialization stories from the region.

EMBRAER aircraft carry passengers across the globe. Consumers everywhere in the world perk up to high-altitude coffees from Central America. They enjoy quality wines from Chile or Argentina, spirits from Mexico or Peru and gourmet chocolates from the Caribbean. This is because more and more enterprises are using trademarks and designs to move their brands across borders and package their products to attract new consumers.

In the last fifteen years, more than 25 Latin American “unicorns” have emerged in services, food, banking, IT and e-commerce.² This shows that the region is rich in startups and entrepreneurship. But the journey from an idea to market is difficult, and a lot of our future work will be to help Latin American and Caribbean innovators and creators make this journey successfully.

WIPO has a range of activities that support start-ups and innovators. For example, we have built a network of Technology and Innovation Support Centers (TISCs), with over 1,000 of these innovation hubs in 80 countries.

TISCs provide innovators in developing countries with access to locally based, high quality technology information and related services, helping them to exploit their innovative potential and to create, protect, and manage their IP rights.

So far, 13 Latin American and 2 Caribbean countries have established national TISC networks. We welcome more to join these 15.

¹ Dini M. and Stumpo G (coord.), “MPyMEs en América Latina: un frágil desempeño y nuevos desafíos para las Políticas de fomento”, Documentos de proyectos (LC/TS.2018/75), Santiago, Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), 2018

² <https://contxto.com/en/market-map/the-21-latin-american-unicorns-galloping-to-success/> . contxto.com. Latin American website with news and data on VC, start ups and technology based companies

Beyond trademarks, designs and patents, the creative industries are at the heart of the Latin American and the Caribbean spirit, drawing on its rich heritage and vibrant culture.

The LAC region has positioned itself as a strategic node for creativity, led by its Nobel laureates for literature³, award-winning film directors⁴, and audiovisual creations enjoyed worldwide.

In 2019, the Latin American music industry recorded the highest rate of growth globally, increasing by 18.9%, up slightly from 2018 growth of 17.3%. At 24.6%, the Region also reported the highest digital growth rate with every market having double digit growth.⁵

But more data and support are needed. ASIPI has a central role in supporting the growth of creative industries in Latin America through the production of evidence and policy advice. Together, we can support young musicians, writers, or performers to benefit from legacy and digital markets that form the future of global business.

Dear ASIPI colleagues, IP is a means, not an end. It is a powerful tool that we have to help our countries and regions develop. I know this well, coming from Asia, from south-east Asia and from Singapore. The Development Agenda is not just a phrase for me, but something I have lived through and know well, and now it is my job to take my experiences to each part of the world, including yours, and work with organizations like ASIPI to support innovators and creators in bringing their ideas and creations to the market.

But it is crucial that beyond fellow IP experts, technicians and practitioners, we now need to take the IP message to our communities, our youth, our industry and political leadership. Let us ask ourselves whether there is more we can do here. In this regard, I applaud the initiative by the Central American and Caribbean States to organize a Ministerial level forum on IP. This is already done in Africa and I would encourage ASIPI members to find similar opportunities in other sub-regional contexts.

Lastly, as your longstanding and trusted partner, WIPO looks forward to a positive dialogue and fruitful collaboration with all of you. Let us work together to build a balanced, inclusive and forward looking IP ecosystem for the benefit of all.

Thank you.

³ Gabriela Mistral (1945 Chile) Miguel Ángel Asturias (1967 Guatemala), Pablo Neruda (1971 Chile), Gabriel García Márquez (1982 Colombia), Octavio Paz (1990 México), Mario Vargas Llosa (2010 Perú)

⁴ Oscar awards: The secret in her eyes (Argentina 2010) A Fantastic Woman (Chile 2017), ROMA (Mexico 2018)

⁵ IFPI Global Music Report 2019 <https://www.ifpi.org/ifa-issues-annual-global-music-report/#:~:text=2019%20Global%20Results%3A,of%20global%20recorded%20music%20revenue.>