

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

WIPO DIRECTOR GENERAL DAREN TANG

Statement to 67TH Series of Meetings of the Assemblies of the Member States

Dear Chair
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence you have placed in me for a second mandate as Director General of WIPO.

Let me start by thanking the Chair of the Coordination Committee, Ambassador James Baxter, for your skillful, calm and professional oversight of the election proceedings. We have had to keep our distance for many months, but today is my chance to thank you in person for your able chairmanship.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Chair of the General Assembly, Ambassador Carlos Sorreta, for all of your commitment and dedication to the work needed in the lead up to this Extraordinary General Assembly. My colleagues and I look forward to working with you in the many months to come.

My deep appreciation also goes to all Member States for your support, not just on this important occasion, but each day since I took office in October 2020. The Director-General is really the *Directed* General, a title which I happily take on as your collective guidance, direction and decisions have served as the compass for me and my colleagues for the past six years and will continue to do so.

My heartfelt thanks also go to the Government of Singapore for its unstinting support throughout my first term and during this election. In particular, the personal involvement of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry Mr. Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Law Mr. Edwin Tong and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan were critical to the campaign, and Ambassador Tan Hung Seng as well as the team in the Singapore Mission to WIPO and WTO worked tirelessly here in Geneva to rally for support. The values of Singapore in being a bridge and consensus builder, in focusing on performance, results and impact, and in building for the future have been core to how I have served as Director-General.

To my colleagues at WIPO: this moment would not be possible without you. Over the past six years, we have worked together through extraordinary global political, economic, cultural and technological changes to transform WIPO, serve our Member States and demonstrate the value of multilateralism.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my wife Claire. Without their support, it simply would not have been possible to start this job, and without their patience, it simply would not have been possible for me to continue this job.

Dear colleagues and friends,

As I cast my gaze forward to the second term, I can't help but glance a bit at the rear mirror to the time when I first took office.

As I took office as DG WIPO on 1st October 2020, it was in a world that had been turned upside down. The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted not just economies, but the way

we lived and worked. It froze human interactions, putting us behind masks and computer screens, and tested trust in institutions. Innovation and intellectual property were thrust into the center of difficult debates.

I had campaigned on two platforms. First, that WIPO and IP had strong foundations but needed to transform. And second, that I would be a bridge between East and West, North and South.

But in the crisis that had overtaken the entire world, the transformation needed to scale even bigger and move even faster, and in the alienation of the pandemic, the world needed bridges more than ever.

This is why, with your support, our organization transformed IP from a technical and legal matter into a business, economic and financial asset, playing a role in supporting the innovation and creative ecosystem, as well as acting as a powerful catalyst for jobs, investments, growth and development, while helping to ensure that WIPO served as a place where Member States could find common ground and win together.

I am proud that in the past 6 years, we have worked hard each day to make this vision reality.

Together, we strengthened our engine room – our Global IP services like the PCT, Madrid and Hague systems so that they better serve those who need cross-border protection of their IP; helped step up the fight against piracy and counterfeiting, demystified IP and brought its value to those on the ground; made WIPO a forum for cutting edge discussions on IP issues, especially on AI; concluded two new treaties in one year by consensus; provided data and insights to help policy makers build innovation ecosystems; helped IP address common global challenges; pioneered groundbreaking projects to support researchers, creators, SMEs, women, youth and those in the rural areas, and made IP integral to growth, development, competitiveness and prosperity, for all countries, developed, developing, emerging and least developed.

We focused not just on words but on concrete impact and tangible results, as demonstrated by the fact that in the past 6 years 1.9 million IP filings were received by our Registries international IP protection, trained over 800,000 persons in IP knowledge and skills, and supported 200,000 SMEs, 300,000 women and 400,000 youth use IP in their life or business journey.

And underlying all of these we maintained the efficiency and financial health of the Organization, strengthened our governance and evolved our culture, so that we continue to have the internal foundations to serve you better.

Dear friends and colleagues,

Six years ago, the world was in a crisis, but this gave us the impetus to pursue reform and transformation.

Six years on, we have emerged from the pandemic but new uncertainties have emerged – political, economic and increasingly, technological. But it would be a mistake to see these only as challenges and obstacles because IP, innovation and creativity, by their very nature, are dynamic and thrive on change.

We have built strong foundations as we entered a new chapter of WIPO these past years. Our programs, initiatives and work have helped millions protect their IP and are helping more and more use it as part of their daily lives.

We need to continue upgrading and strengthening our engine room – the Global IP Services, harnessing the best of AI and tech without losing the human touch, so that good ideas get protected by becoming a registered IP, while helping build strong innovation ecosystems so that these registered IP journey to the market where their legal potential becomes economic value.

We will need to overcome differences and divergences and find areas where consensus and convergence moves the IP agenda forward, in a spirit of pragmatism and constructive engagement.

We need be future ready, so that IP remains not just relevant, but vibrant, during the AI age and in a period of great change where the innovation landscape is increasingly driven by the merger of the industrial innovation of machines, the digital innovation of software, and the cultural innovation of content.

We will need to support policy makers to see IP not just as legal scaffolding but integral to the future of their countries through data and insights and the building of innovation and creative ecosystems, scale up our on the ground growth and development programs which have brought IP into the lives of hundreds of thousands in all countries of the world and to harness the power of IP to address the global challenges that we face. To achieve this, we will need to step up our partnerships with Member States, within Member States, with regional platforms and fellow UN agencies.

And we will need to aspire for IP to become mainstream, not just as policy priorities for governments and leaders but as something recognized and valued by people everywhere, that when someone talks about technology, brands, designs, art, culture, sports, agriculture, trade, economy, finance and our world, they are aware that IP plays an important role in all of these.

And of course underpinning all of this will be our continued efforts to reform and streamline our internal systems and processes, not just as part of our efforts to be an example within the UN80 process, but also to ensure that WIPO remains as efficient, high performing and well run as possible, in order to serve you and your stakeholders well, and demonstrate that multilateralism delivers impact and results and continues to be relevant.

These tasks will be challenging, but to paraphrase President Kennedy – we do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard, and in these endeavors we can be inspired by the innovators and creators that we serve, as well as draw strength from the ability of the global IP ecosystem to evolve and remain relevant for the past 130 years, a period of tremendous change.

Let me close with a simple image.

Around the world today, a research team may be filing their first patent application, hopeful that it can make a difference to a rare disease.

A successful restaurant owner may be planning to franchise its brand in another country.

A designer may be about to release a new product that becomes the next household icon

And a musician may be writing the next song that becomes a viral hit.

They may never think about Geneva, or assemblies like this one. But the system we steward here shapes the possibilities available to them.

That is a responsibility we all share, so let us work hard to discharge this privilege and honor of serving the world's innovators and creators together as the WIPO family.

Thank you.