

Diplomatic Conference to Conclude and Adopt a Design Law Treaty
Closing Remarks
WIPO Director General Daren Tang
November 22, 2024

As Delivered

President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues, Friends,

After 20 years, and two long weeks – we made history earlier today, and we welcome the 28th WIPO Treaty – the Riyadh Design Law Treaty.

For the second time this year, we came together successfully as the WIPO community to set new international IP standards, this time to give designers and creators around the world a more predictable, more streamlined and more cost-effective way to protect their designs and move their designs across borders.

We did this despite challenges and difficulties – some foreseen, others quite unanticipated. I must admit there was a point in the negotiations where I wondered if delegates were enjoying the food, this amazing Conference Center and the incredible Saudi hospitality so much that they did not want to leave! But here we are today with this success.

And looking back, the process of negotiations, sometimes easy, sometimes difficult allowed us to really engage as one WIPO community on a topic which has not often been at the center of WIPO's work – that of designs, designers and the gift they have in using color, form, shape, beauty and aesthetics to delight our senses, to enrich our lives, to promote our heritage and to transform our culture. Together, today we have delivered for them.

But we did this not just for designers, but as a victory for multilateralism. In May, WIPO Member States came together to deliver the WIPO Treaty on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge by consensus. Six months later, WIPO Member States came together again to deliver the Riyadh Design Law Treaty. WIPO has proved that multilateralism is still the most powerful platform for us to come together as a global community to change the world for the better.

Our celebration today has been the result of partnership, collaboration, determination and hard work over two decades.

Let me start by thanking all delegations including those who have been involved in discussions and negotiations from the start, 20 years ago, many of whom are not in this hall today with us. I must also mention and thank Peru for hosting the inter-sessional at Paracas earlier this year, which was an important milestone in helping us better understand positions.

But the final mile is the most difficult mile, so I thank the Presidents of Main Committees I and II - Sergio and Christian – for their incredible work. What we have before us would not be possible

without your sincerity, skill, patience, stamina and energy – it was inspiring to watch the both of you in action. I think they deserve a huge round of applause from all of us.

I also wish to thank the members of the Steering Committee, the Drafting Committee, the Credentials Committee and all Vice Presidents for your tireless efforts over these past two weeks.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Group Coordinators, who had the extremely difficult task of not just shepherding their groups, but also bore very heavy burdens in the intensity of the negotiations. I know all of you will not want to hear an alarm clock for a long time, but I thank all of you for your efforts over the many months leading to this success.

Let me also take some time to thank my colleagues.

I have to start with the team that has patiently looked after these negotiations not just for two weeks, but almost two decades, Deputy Director General, Wang Binying and Senior Director, Marcus Hoeffler. Binying was an oasis of calm and serenity in the hustle and bustle of negotiations, and Marcus was not only our key WIPO expert on the substantive issues, but my reliable barometer – whenever I looked at his face – of how well the negotiations were going. Binying and Marcus – you and your teams have journeyed the longest and hardest, and to you our victory today is the sweetest.

In every Diplomatic Conference, the legal and procedural aspects take on a significance of their own, and just as in May, our Legal Counsel Anna Morawiec Mansfield was right at the center of this work, with her trademark meticulousness, thoroughness, professionalism and scarily high levels of caffeine consumption. I also thank the staff of the Office of the Legal Counsel who came here as a team to handle all of the complex legal and documentary requirements that are part of the work, most of it behind the scenes.

I would also like to thank Assistant Director General Andy Staines, who as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee that prepared the Diplomatic Conference, together with Sami Alsodais, Deputy CEO of Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property (SAIP), spent many months leading the team that worked on the preparations.

I must also make special mention of many, many others in my Secretariat, whether on stage, present here in this hall, or working quietly behind the scenes throughout these premises, including those who supported this Conference from WIPO Headquarters in Geneva.

Behind the scenes, colleagues in the Diplomatic Engagement and Assemblies Affairs Division were critical in organizing and ensuring the smooth running of our deliberations. Working hand-in-hand with SAIP, they ensured every arrangement was in place and that all delegates had the best experience possible.

I am also deeply grateful to our news and media team, our amazing audio visual and IT specialists; interpretation and translation colleagues, who excelled under tight deadlines and very long hours; and all security, printshop, catering and cleaning staff who worked tirelessly to support us. Let's give them all a round of applause.

I reserve my last but most important words of appreciation to our President, Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Swailem, the amazing team at the Saudi Authority for IP and, representing the government of the Kingdom, Ambassador Abdul Mohsen.

To our host government and Ambassador Abdul Mohsen - with this Riyadh Design Law Treaty, the first IP Treaty to be named for a capital in the region, the Kingdom has signaled its intention to play a critical role in the development of the international IP ecosystem, and has underscored how the engines of IP are increasingly global.

To our dear President, my dear friend, your leadership, authenticity, calmness and commitment was critical for our success. You demanded much from all of us, your deadlines were impossible, but always delivered with a smile, and in a gentle voice that belied real steel. Chairing any multilateral negotiation is a daunting task, and my team and I were honored to support you and your team in this heavy responsibility.

Lastly, to our colleagues at SAIP – you touched our hearts with your talent, hospitality, generosity, sincerity and friendliness. You always had a smile on your face. We came as strangers and leave as friends. Congratulations to all of you, this is your moment, you fully deserve it. Let's give all "SAIPers" a warm round of applause.

In closing, let this conference inspire us to a world where innovation knows no borders, where creativity flourishes and where IP serves as a powerful force for good.

Together, we made history today. Together, we will continue to do so for the good of innovators, creators everywhere.

Thank you.