

2017 WIPO General Assemblies

General / Opening Statement

(Item 5)

Chairman,

I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, as Estonia is presiding the Council of the European Union until the end of this year.

1. The EU and its Member States would like to thank you, Ambassador Kārklīņš, for all the work you have done in the run-up to this General Assembly. We are confident that your leadership abilities and constructive approach to difficult topics will help to ensure that this General Assembly is a success. We would also like to thank the WIPO Secretariat for preparing the broad range of documents that will be discussed in the following days. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States offer our sincere congratulations to the Ambassador of Vietnam on his election as the next Chair of the WIPO General Assemblies.
2. The protection and promotion of intellectual property rights remains a key priority for the European Union and its Member States. In our increasingly knowledge-based economies, the protection of intellectual property is important for promoting innovation and creativity, developing employment, and improving competitiveness and growth. To illustrate this, I would like to share a few figures with you: 39% of the EU's total economic activity is generated by IPR-intensive industries and approximately 35% of all employment in the EU is provided either directly or indirectly by these industries. IPR-intensive industries also pay significantly higher wages than other industries, with a wage premium of more than 40%.¹

¹ IPR intensive industries: Contribution to economic performance and employment in the European Union Industry-Level Analysis Report, September 2013, EPO and EUIPO.

3. The digital revolution is clearly a key factor exposing the current IP enforcement system to new challenges. Goods and services that do not respect the intellectual property created by others concern us all as citizens, consumers, businesses and taxpayers. The EU intends to take action later this year by launching a package to complement our existing directive on the enforcement of IP rights, complemented by other initiatives related to IP enforcement, and looks forward to a future discussion on a common approach towards IP enforcement at WIPO. The WIPO Advisory Committee on Enforcement is an important committee and would be an appropriate forum for this discussion.
4. The World Intellectual Property Organisation is the central hub for global IP infrastructure. We recall that WIPO's core mission remains the servicing of PCT, Madrid, Hague and Lisbon systems and that further resources should be allocated to promoting and strengthening these core rights systems on an equal basis. In this regard, we highlight the importance of developing an internationally balanced system of protection of **all categories of intellectual property rights**. WIPO is also a unique forum for global intellectual property policy and norm-setting. We note the increased level of WIPO's normative work over the years and emphasise that this work should not only ensure the proper functioning of the global IP system, but should make concrete improvements thereto.
5. To enable us to call this General Assembly a success from the perspective of WIPO's normative work, a clear matter of priority should be the convening of a diplomatic conference for the adoption of the Design Law Treaty. We expect this General Assembly to break the political deadlock and take the long-awaited decision. The Treaty would greatly benefit designers world-wide by simplifying and harmonising design registration formalities, while a successful conclusion of this long-standing issue would enhance the credibility of WIPO's normative agenda. As regards the proposal to include a mandatory disclosure requirement in the DLT, the EU and its Member States consider the WIPO IGC to be the appropriate forum to discuss the underlying issues in relation to a disclosure requirement.

6. Another area where we would like to see progress at this General Assembly is the Treaty on the Protection of Broadcasting Organisations, which continues to be discussed in the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR). The EU and its Member States place great importance to these discussions and we believe that they should ultimately result in a treaty which would be meaningful and efficiently respond to the needs of broadcasting organisations in the 21st century.
7. As to the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC), the EU and its Member States take note of the recommendation of the Committee to the General Assembly that the work of the Committee should continue in the next biennium, provided the General Assembly can agree to a mandate. Despite very limited progress on the three topics under discussion in the IGC during the current mandate, it became apparent that the IGC cannot engage in meaningful negotiations when there is no common understanding of the objectives of the Committee and the core issues, several of which are cross-cutting between the three topics. Thus, if the General Assembly decides to renew the IGC mandate, reaching a common ground on these core issues should be the main objective of the Committee's work during the next biennium. The EU and its Member States stand ready to participate actively in discussions on a possible new mandate and work programme for the IGC.
8. Regarding the work of other WIPO Committees, we would like to highlight the success of the recent 26th session of the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents (SCP). After long discussions, the Committee managed to agree on a balanced and reasonable work programme, to which the EU and its Member States look forward to contributing. As regards the on-going work in relation to WIPO's Development Agenda, the EU and its Member States would like to reaffirm their support and commitment to the appropriate implementation of the recommendations of the Development Agenda.

9. Over the last 12 months the EU has been working to ensure compliance of its legislation with its commitments undertaken in the WIPO framework. In particular, the EU and its Member States are pleased to announce that on 13 September this year the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have adopted two legislative proposals aiming at ensuring compliance of EU legislation with the obligations in the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

10. The EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to being a constructive party in the discussions which will take place during this General Assembly. We hope to experience a positive working atmosphere and cooperative spirit in solving the complex issues before us this year, in order for the organisation to make progress and maintain its global relevance.

Thank you.