

**STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADEMARK ASSOCIATION
AT THE
ASSEMBLIES OF THE MEMBER STATES
OF THE
WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**

**57TH SERIES OF MEETINGS
GENEVA, OCTOBER 2017**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the International Trademark Association or “INTA”, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your Chairmanship of this Assembly, and Ambassador Duong on his election for the next term.

It is a great honor for INTA to be a part of these extremely important meetings of the Assemblies in which the work program of WIPO and its funding will be discussed. WIPO’s work has a tremendous impact on the lives of the citizens of all nations as they increasingly rely on intellectual property to fuel the development and advancement of their economies, which, in turn, improves their overall well-being. Accordingly, INTA believes that all policy, legislative and regulatory bodies – be they local, national, regional or intergovernmental -- must give consideration to intellectual property in all branches of public policy, including education, social welfare, health and trade. Without a doubt, WIPO has and should continue to take the leadership in this process as reflected in its mission to promote innovation and creativity for the economic, social and cultural development of all countries, through a balanced and effective international intellectual property system.

To this point, in an article of the September issue of the WIPO Magazine discussing the future of intellectual property with a particular focus on technology, Director General Gurry states:

Multi-stakeholder engagement is essential, both to clarify the role of the existing IP system, and to identify the economic incentives required to encourage and sustain these technological developments.

INTA believes that this also applies to innovation and economic growth spurred by trademarks. Inspired by the studies produced by the European Commission and the U.S. Department of Commerce on the contribution of trademark-intensive industries to national economies, INTA

produced similar studies for a variety of countries in Latin America and South-east Asia. These studies, which are available at www.inta.org, highlight the need for governments to perform what might be called “intellectual property impact statements” of policy actions across the board.

Yet public policies narrowly focused on their primary objectives such as public health, are imposing restrictions on brands which not only impinge on well-established intellectual property rights, but also are taken without the overall consideration of the need to balance diverse policy objectives. This is in large part due to the “silo” nature of policy making and a lack of overarching mechanisms to encourage a “holistic” approach to addressing critical economic and societal issues.

Thankfully, there are efforts being launched to try to bridge the gap between policy objectives. INTA applauds WIPO’s leadership at the international level in what it calls “Trilateral Cooperation on Public Health, IP and Trade.” This is an attempt to begin a more dynamic conversation between WIPO, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization not only among their Secretariats, but also among their member countries who are represented by relevant experts in their field and within their governments. INTA whole heartedly agrees with Director General Gurry’s suggestion that we need to “create a space for risk-free joint reflection, where countries can engage liberally in non-binding discussions.” We also agree with the Director General that:

Such an approach offers huge scope to improve the existing architecture of the international system, strengthen global cooperation and support more effective policymaking.

In closing, INTA encourages these Assemblies to embrace the Director General’s initiative. We also hope that such conversations permeate not only throughout the various delegations within each of the subject areas of the Assemblies of WIPO, but that such initiatives are developed within their national policymaking structures. INTA would welcome the opportunity to be engaged in the broader conversation to ensure that the role of intellectual property to advance economic growth and the overall well-being of individuals continues within a balanced and effective policymaking process.

Thank you.