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THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIAWORLD INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY ORGANIZATION

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, THE INTERNET,
ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

organized
under the auspices of
His Excellency Mr. Petar Stoyanov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

by
the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
in cooperation with
the National Intellectual Property Association of Bulgaria

**Boyana Government Residence
Sofia, May 29 to 31, 2001**

*Message to the Conference
from
the Secretary-General of the United Nations,
delivered by
Dr. Kamal Idris, Director General, WIPO*

Mr. President,
Distinguished guests,

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings to all the participants in this important conference, and I thank President Stoyanov for hosting it. Last year's Millennium Summit at UN Headquarters committed all nations to help make globalization work for all the world's people, and to reduce poverty by half by year 2015. The assembled Heads and Governments also resolved, in their Millennium Declaration, to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, are available to all.

Information and communication technologies are key to integrating developing countries and countries in transition into the global knowledge society; enhancing efficiency and growth in key sectors of the economy; and supporting the social, economic and cultural goals of every society. The applications of information technology cover a wider range of activities, from improved agricultural productivity, health, education, to the prevention and management of disasters.

Lack of access and connectivity contribute to global inequality and marginalization, and can contribute towards a backlash against globalization, with unpredictable consequences. In purely economic and developmental terms, the costs of lack of access and connectivity are enormous. In 1999 the world-wide value of e-commerce is estimated to be worth more than USD 300 billion in the United States alone.

To assist in bridging the digital divide and to help harness the potential of technology for the development of all, a number of initiatives has been taken by the International Community. At the United Nations, I have set up an Information and Technologies Advisory Group. This group brings together experts from the private sector, grants and foundations to support the inter-governmental work in this area.

The world is changing rapidly and digital technologies even more so. A clear and strong framework for intellectual property rights that would protect but also facilitate the acquisition and transfer of technology is more vital than ever before.

The work of the WIPO assumes new and ever growing significance. It faces the challenge of ensuring the smooth and mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge and development of human resources and provide improved access to affordable information and communication technologies.

Effective intellectual property systems are essential to fostering an enabling environment to attract foreign direct investment, stimulating innovation and creativity, and promoting sustainable development.

This Conference is addressing many of these issues. I am confident that your deliberations and the outcome of your efforts will raise public awareness about the role and value of intellectual property as a tool to promote economic, social and cultural development while addressing the complex issue on your agenda.

I wish you every success in the accomplishment of the objectives of this Conference.