

Director General's Speech to INPI Conference on Global Challenges Facing IP During Recovery
3 February 2022

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and greetings from Geneva.

I am grateful to INPI and to Director General Pascal Faure for inviting me to address this conference convened under France's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

In his book, *Science and Method*, Henri Poincaré said that:

"The scientist does not study nature because it is useful.

"He studies it because he takes pleasure in it and he takes pleasure in it because it is beautiful".

I believe that this same idea applies to innovators and to innovation.

We innovate not just because of commercial return or utility, important as these may be.

But, more fundamentally, we innovate because we aspire to a more compelling, dynamic and beautiful world.

Innovation is a choice.

We choose to innovate because of our thirst for new ideas.

We pursue ingenuity because of our curiosity as a species and our desire for progress.

And we elect to push the boundaries of our knowledge forward because of humanity's enduring belief that tomorrow will be better than today.

This is perhaps why IP and innovation have proven to be resilient through this pandemic, with patent, trademark and design filings showing continued growth even as other parts of the global economy have been disrupted.

At the same time, IP and innovation are prospering around the world.

Over the last decade, global trademark applications have risen by 170%, patent applications by 50% and design applications by 30%.

In tandem, countries as diverse as Brazil, Bulgaria, India and the Philippines are climbing WIPO's Global Innovation Index.

This tells us two things: that IP and innovation are becoming more important to more economies around the world.

And that despite – or maybe even because of the challenges posed by the pandemic, humanity's desire to innovate and create remains undimmed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Covid tunnel has proven to be long and dark, but perhaps we are now beginning to see some rays of light.

As we move towards this light, I believe that, more than ever, our world will be centered around innovation and the translation of new ideas into the next generation of products and services.

President Macron has spoken about this eloquently in the European context, but I daresay it applies equally to Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania too.

Because if the world is moving fast, then ideas are travelling even faster.

Just consider that there are now more than 900 unicorn start-ups around the world, compared to fewer than 50 eight years ago.

Or that global venture capital funding exceeded \$620 billion last year, a new record.

As one of the founding members of the modern IP system, France has long had a flair for innovation-led growth.

This spirit remains strong today.

France is the leading European destination for foreign direct investment.

Venture capital funding is running at an all-time high.

French businesses feature amongst the top corporate R&D investors in the world.

And France recently achieved its highest ranking in WIPO's Global Innovation Index.

This mix was on full display during my recent visit to Europe's biggest start-up hub, Station F in Paris.

Initially, it was the different nationalities, the vibrancy, and the range of expertise that caught my eye.

But when I sat down with some of the entrepreneurs there I was struck by something else: their global ambition.

As innovators, their objective is not just to make waves in the domestic market – or to establish a presence across Europe and Europe alone – their goal is to take their ideas to the world.

This outlook aligns with our strategy here at WIPO.

Our vision is of a world where innovation and creativity from anywhere is supported by IP for the good of everyone.

And our mission is to develop a balanced and effective IP ecosystem – one which sees intellectual property act as a powerful catalyst for jobs, investments, business growth, economic development and social vibrancy in every region of the world.

With this in mind, what are the challenges that the IP community must grapple with as the global recovery gathers pace?

First, we need to step up our efforts to make IP relevant to everyone, everywhere.

This demands that we reach out and connect with a much broader range of stakeholders—beyond IP specialists and IP experts – to include small business owners, entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, researchers and indigenous communities.

This is how we make the global IP ecosystem more inclusive.

And it is how we demonstrate the positive impact that IP is having on the ground.

To take just one example, we know that there is a positive relationship between IP ownership and revenue generated per employee.

We also know that this link is particularly strong amongst small and medium enterprises.

IP owning SMEs generate almost 70% more revenue per employee than those who do not.

And yet only 11% of French SMEs own any IP rights, a figure that is higher than the EU average.

To help address this imbalance, WIPO is developing a range of practical measures to support SMEs to harness their IP more effectively.

For example, our new IP Diagnostics tool allows business owners to understand IP in a way that is simple, down to earth and that speaks the language of business.

The WIPO Academy remains the global leader in providing IP education and training worldwide, welcoming over 150,000 participants to its courses each year, including programs that are tailored to the needs of businesses.

And, beyond Europe, we are pursuing new initiatives such as our project on women entrepreneurs and IP in the least developed countries.

Through a combination of mentoring and intensive on the ground assistance, this project has already supported a group of female entrepreneurs in Uganda to further develop their ideas and take them to market.

WIPO will also seek to bring renewed momentum to important issues such as IP finance and IP valuation.

Currently, the complexities involved in valuing intangible assets means that many firms, including SMEs and high-growth start-ups, find it difficult to use their IP to access the financing they need to grow.

To help move this conversation forward, WIPO is developing a series of country reports as well as planning high-level dialogues designed to catalyze improvements across the ecosystem.

Second, we need to demonstrate the link between intangible assets and tangible benefits.

Take Geographical Indications.

GIs do not just protect and valorize the unique qualities of much loved heritage products, they are important drivers of growth and development around the world.

GIs support local jobs, uphold traditional craftsmanship, preserve cultures and traditions and promote the sustainable management of natural resources.

French and European farmers, artisans, consumers and communities have benefited from a mature GI ecosystem for decades.

But now the advantages of GIs are becoming a reality for many more developing countries as well.

Cambodia, Ghana, Lao DPR, Oman and Samoa have all recently acceded to WIPO's Lisbon System – with all the benefits that this entails not just for agricultural and food products but for skilled artisans too.

For all these reasons, WIPO warmly welcomes the attention GIs are receiving during the French Presidency of the Council.

And we look forward to deepening our fruitful collaboration on GIs with France, the European Union and other Member States.

And yet GIs are just one example of how IP is helping to progress the Sustainable Development Goals.

From our Covid services and support, to WIPO GREEN's role advancing green tech and innovation, to our more bespoke, impact-driven Development Agenda – IP is making – and it must continue to make – a real difference to communities on the ground.

Third, in a rapidly transforming world we must remain open to new partnerships and forms of collaboration.

During the pandemic, we have strengthened our tripartite cooperation with the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization.

This has enabled us to pool our expertise and to develop a series of practical measures and tools in support of economies and societies around the globe.

The lesson here is that in an increasingly complex world, we must explore new ways of working together.

Therefore, in addition to acting as the neutral forum for the discussion of IP issues, WIPO is committed to exploring new ways of working with our fellow international organizations, NGOs and industry bodies as we hope to exit this crisis and build back better.

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Macron said recently that this is the time to mobilize "a human Europe".

I believe that the same can be said for intellectual property as well.

That, together, we must strive to make IP more human.

That we must broaden its role in lifting up people and communities around the world.

And that we must reinforce the link that connects IP to innovation and innovation to economic and social progress.

If we get this right, not only can IP help us to recover from the pandemic, but it can also accelerate our progress towards a better, more resilient, more beautiful world.

Thank you very much and best wishes for a fruitful and enjoyable conference.