

WIPO Director General's Video Message on International Women's Day

March 8, 2016

“It is a pleasure and privilege for me as the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization to join the rest of the international community in celebrating, in 2016, International Women's Day. International Women's Day is, first of all, an occasion to celebrate how women have enriched human society and, in particular, the enormous contributions by women in the fields of science, technology, design and the creative industries and creative works: film, music, publication, authors, literature.

It is, however, secondly, an occasion to lament that these enormous contributions, which have so enriched our society, have had to be made against extraordinary and often systemic obstacles to the equal participation of women in all facets of society, and particularly in the area of science and technology. And that is doubly regrettable in the age of the knowledge economy where science and technology play such a critical role in the economy and, indeed, in the society as a whole. The statistics consistently show a gender gap that exists in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and education - a gender gap that exists in innovation. In the United States of America, for example, which is far from the worst performer as far as gender equality is concerned, only 12% of innovators are women and only 26% of the computer workforce are women. Right across the innovation ecosystem, we see that there is parity neither in the opportunity that is given to women nor in consequence in the performance by women in innovation and in science and technology.

So what are we doing about this at WIPO? First of all, we must start with our own house. And let me assure you that we are monitoring very closely the achievement of gender equality at all hierarchical levels within the organization and in all sectors of the organization, with the legal, economic, information technology or the other technology-based sectors of the organization. We are a very active participant as an organization and as the secretariat in the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality. I am very proud to be part of the Geneva Gender Champions network, which is an initiative that brings together committed leaders to promote gender equality inside our organizations and across the international community in Geneva. We pay very close attention to the issue of gender equality increasingly in the delivery of our programs and in our capacity building activities that are conducted by the organization. And we cooperate very closely with Member States in respect of particular initiatives, for example, with the government of Poland with respect to an international conference and it is held on women in science, technology or other aspects of intellectual property each year.

The theme of International Women's Day this year is “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality”.

Let me assure you that, at WIPO, this is a fundamental priority for the organization and we remain committed to and will actively pursue this goal of gender equality by 2030 at the very latest. Thank you very much.”