

Opening Statement
Hon. Hema Ralalage Mithrapala
Minister of Consumer Services
Sri Lanka

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Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Sri Lanka joins other delegations in congratulating you on your election as the Chair of the WIPO General Assembly. I assure you of our fullest cooperation in the successful conclusion of the meeting.

While extending the warmest congratulations of the Government of Sri Lanka to Dr. Francis Gurry on his appointment to the office of the Director General of WIPO, I take this opportunity to wish him success in all his endeavours. I also sincerely thank the Director-General and the International Bureau for all the arrangements made for the efficient conduct of the meetings of the assemblies of the member states. This is a historic year for WIPO as we participate in the first ever High Level Segment of the Assemblies of Member States. The Director-General deserves a special word of thanks for extending me an invitation to participate in this High Level Segment.

We believe that the organizing a High Level Segment will further enhance the importance of the subject of intellectual property among the Member States and will place intellectual property in development policy sphere at higher level.

Mr. Chairman

One of our major concerns is the creation of an environment where our people can lead a more content and decent life. We all in this meeting agree that the ultimate goal of the IP system, irrespective of the level of development of the member States, is the active and sustainable contribution to the economic and social development. We have been making all possible efforts, may be at different levels and different pace, to realize this core expectation of the IP system. Our efforts as the member States of WIPO are not unsuccessful. They have produced far reaching results. However, our journey is never ending. Nor is it without challenges. Thus, it may perhaps be appropriate to re-visit our successes and failures and re-design the strategies and activities that should be employed to reach the desired goals.

As the Director-General has correctly observed, the international IP system faces new challenges of different and diverse nature in many critical areas, including climate change, desertification and other environmental hazards, epidemic and access to health, food security, preservation of bio-diversity and protection of genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

I appreciate and welcome the Director-General's innovative thinking in dealing with these challenges. The proposed program and budget reflects his novel and revitalized approach. It is our belief that the common goals can be reached only through hard work, transparent negotiations, consensus-building and collective and coordinated efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

We in Sri Lanka are, with the dawn of peace and the improving investor-friendly policies, experiencing a surge in the economic activities in the country. Our development-oriented works are being further expanded and strengthened. Against this backdrop, we are interested in a more proactive and user-friendly IP system in the country.

Despite many challenges, we are carrying out various programs in order to achieve the desired objectives. Those programs cover multi-faceted areas, including modernization of IP administration, enhancement of public awareness on IP, strengthening the enforcement of IP rights, IP for industries and enterprises, activating the geographical indications such as 'Ceylon Cinnamon' and 'Ceylon Tea', integration of IP in National Science and Technology policy, building IP related partnerships between public sector R & D institutions and

industries, promotion of inventions and human resource development by training various target groups both in public sector and private sector and by teaching IP in higher learning institutes.

The enforcement of copyright and related rights are in particular strengthened in the recent past. Subsequent to a cabinet decision, the Government has launched an ambitious campaign to educate the artists, authors and others on the importance of the better enforcement rights.

It is my pleasure to place on record with sincere thanks the cooperation received from WIPO in all these efforts. I hope that this cooperation will continue in furthering our activities.

The development efforts of my country can be further improved by promoting innovations and enhancing the transfer of technology. The projects proposed in WIPO Committee on Development Agenda would play a key role in this regard. For the implementation of the Development Agenda Recommendations through those projects, the requirement of adequate finances is crucial. My delegation recognizes that allocating more resources in a time of a financial crisis could be challenging for WIPO. However, Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka believes that adequate funding and proper implementation of

the Development Agenda projects would be an investment for WIPO in reaching its objectives with regard to development, thereby facilitating member States to achieve their Millennium Development Goals.

One of the other key components aimed at development is protecting and preserving traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and generic resources (GRTKF). Sri Lanka has made a wide progress in preserving and protecting its cultural heritages and generic resources of its rich bio diversity, within existing national legal regime. However, development of an international mechanism for the protection GRTKF including proper benefit sharing is timely. Sri Lanka recognizes the substantive work that has already been carried out and commends the Director-General for his commitment in this regard. Sri Lanka will follow closely with great interests the upcoming debate in this area and hopes for a consensual outcome with a new approach to address the concerns of developing countries in the upcoming meetings during the Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka notes with satisfaction the new approach of “Building Respect for IP” in the strategic re-alignment proposed by the Director General. It is also worthy to note the organization of the first IP and Global Challenges which was organized in July this year, as mandated by the Standing Committee on Patents. Against this backdrop, Sri Lanka proposes the WIPO to organize an international conference against the misappropriation of GRTKF in collaboration with WTO, FAO UNEP, CBD and other interested partners. Conferences of this nature will enhance the credibility of WIPO, while also educating all those concerned including the private sector partners of possible future cooperation with member States in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, permit me to re-iterate our interest in further developing the IP system in Sri Lanka to meet the expectations of our people, while promoting regional and international cooperation for mutual benefit.

Thank you very much.