

59th Session of the WIPO Assemblies
30 September – 09 October 2019
Agenda Item 5 – General Statement
Ambassador A.L.A. Azeez, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

Mr. President,

The delegation of Sri Lanka wishes to express its sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, as you very ably preside over the 59th Session of the General Assemblies of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

To begin with, we would like to stress that Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered by Singapore on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) today. We in particular reiterate the importance of ensuring balanced representation of APG in the Coordination Committee and the Programme and Budget Committee, as echoed in the regional group's statement.

We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation of Director General Dr. Francis Gurry for the comprehensive report presented and the important, innovative steps taken by him and his inspiring team of officials to advance the protection of Intellectual Property through the strengthening of international legal frameworks and adoption of policies and programmes that benefit Member States and other stakeholders.

Intellectual Property is undeniably an important tool for developing countries to be fully engaged in the global economy with knowledge and innovation being key to economic and social development. WIPO's evolving role over the years in strengthening the IP systems of the developing countries, with particular attention given to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), remains exemplary.

The Committee on Development and Intellectual Property and the WIPO Secretariat have continued their creative work over the past year including through South-South and triangular cooperation. The CDIP projects have greatly benefitted many developing countries, including Sri Lanka.

WIPO's work on mainstreaming of its Development Agenda and its 45 recommendations contribute a great deal to re-orientation of priorities towards achieving socio-economic growth among developing countries. Technical assistance provided by WIPO in a coherent and sustainable manner has assured benefits for all stakeholders in societies, including women, youth and SMEs.

Addressing the ever increasing demand for IP training and education, WIPO Academy has, over the years taken meaningful steps which have contributed to the development of human resources and capacity building, among Member States.

Further, in taking forward Sustainable Development Agenda that provides a global framework ensuring that no one is left behind, WIPO has played a crucial role, providing the necessary platform for sharing IP protected knowledge through exchange of data. Its programmes known as 'Re: Search to fight neglected tropical diseases; and 'WIPO Green that supports green technology exchange' have been useful to Member States.

Enforcement of IP rights is key to protection of IP thus encouraging innovation. While many developing countries have unique IP protection mechanisms in place enabled by legislation, and institutional arrangements, they nevertheless, face challenges in effective enforcement, including in pursuing legal action against violations of IP rights. The role of the judges in this context cannot be over-emphasized. WIPO's Intellectual Property Judges Forum, held for the second time this year, provided its continuing relevance as it provided a much needed platform for the exchange of knowledge, through direct engagement of judges in substantive discussions on legal and policy approaches and principles concerning Intellectual Property protection.

WIPO's norm setting agenda has also extended to a number of innovative areas including Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore. It is timely that the Inter-Governmental Committee is mandated to expedite its work to finalize the international legal instrument/s extending protection for these vital intellectual assets.

As a developing country, Sri Lanka recognizes the significant benefits accruing from the use of IP for technological advancement as well as socio-economic development. The selection of Sri Lanka for the CDIP project "Intellectual Property, Tourism and Culture" will no doubt harness the potential of IP in this important area of economic activity. While the project study was launched in 2017, consultations with tourism stakeholders have led to increased awareness on the benefits of IP in tourism related business activities. Further, the teaching material has been finalized to be introduced to the curriculum of selected universities.

Sri Lanka has made progress in accession process to the Madrid Protocol for the International Registration of Marks. Enabling legislation has been finalized and the National IP Office is being upgraded, to cater to a Madrid Compatible System. WIPO has made immense contribution, extending expertise and technical assistance, in our national preparations. We look forward to WIPO's continued assistance in the

implementation of the international registration of trademarks once Sri Lanka becomes a State Party to the Madrid Protocol shortly.

'The WIPO Enabling Intellectual Property Environment Project' has benefitted several universities as well as public and private institutions in Sri Lanka. Continued technical assistance and expert missions to Sri Lanka to facilitate smooth implementation of this project is imperative.

There is also considerable progress in the process of review and amendment to the IP legal framework and in the drafting of new Regulations facilitating registration of Geographical Indications (GI) in Sri Lanka. We hope to enhance protection for unique Sri Lankan GIs such as Ceylon Tea, Ceylon Cinnamon, Ceylon cashew, Ceylon pepper etc. through these important measures.

Finally, with regard to the establishment of WIPO's External Offices, we are of the strong view that we should be guided by the Decision of the WIPO General Assemblies in 2015. A consensual outcome in our view, remains yet the best possible way forward since we trust it would give confidence to the countries that have not presented their candidatures, in deference to others' candidatures, that EOs will be representative enough of intra-regional diversity, contributing to a fair and balanced outlook on a wider international plane.

Thank you, Mr. President.