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PRESS COMMUNIQUE-TO ALL SL & INTERNTIONAL MEDIA

FROM: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY & COMMERCE, SRI LANKA-29 APRIL, 2017

National Task Force called for Sri Lanka's TK in wake of groundbreaking Colombo deliberations

- Crucial first two-day Colombo stakeholder meet a success
- 30 leading SL professionals & experts rally to secure TK& TCE
- Task Force & policy doc next!
- 'Let's move with speed, together'-Rishad
- TK & TCE vital topic in current global IP discussions
- 'WIPO unveiled many opportunities for SL' - HE Amb. Aryasinghe



PHOTO FILE> 29APRIL1.jpg

Director of Traditional Knowledge (TK) Division of WIPO Wend Wendland (far left), Secretary to Ministry of Industry and Commerce Chinthana Lokuhetti (second from left, foreground), Head of G15 in Geneva Gihan Indraguptha (second from left, background), Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva HE Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha (second from right) Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen (far right), at the launch event of Sri Lanka Sessions on WIPO backed TK&TCE Practices at BMICH, Colombo on the morning of 27 April.

With a cross section of native professionals, Sri Lanka commenced work on its first ever IP of Traditional Knowledge national policy on 27 April in Colombo.

The undertaking was immediately infused with a declared will to move ahead speedily and wrap it without delay by the Cabinet Minister who is in charge of country's IP sphere.

"I call for a speedier and a collaborative finalisation of the draft IP of Traditional Knowledge national policy. This undertaking involves many government departments, Ministries and other stakeholders. I want all stakeholders to understand that this is an urgent task and more importantly, call them to move together in this" stressed Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen on 27 April at the launch of the two day National Workshop at BMICH, Colombo to discuss a draft Sri Lanka National Policy of IP of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TK&TCE), organised by his Ministry in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Minister Bathiudeen, who observed that the Unity Government has clearly comprehended the relevance of intellectual property rights as it works towards transforming Sri Lanka into a knowledge economy, added: "Once we have a clear vision through the National Policy we can then look at other measures to protect and foster our Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs). These I hope would include laws that can be formulated and passed by parliament in the near future."

The nascent two day event merged over thirty national stakeholders in TK & TCE together for the first time. These stakeholders were taking part having already benefitted from the expertise of WIPO's TK&TCE international experts who conducted an international level seminar backed by Group of Fifteen (G-15) countries on 24-25 April in Colombo themed 'National Policy drafting on Traditional Knowledge'.

The stakeholders who participated in the April 27-28 National Workshop noted that the absence of a national policy in Sri Lanka has been a long felt lacunae and resolved to produce a draft policy document in the near future. They called on the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to constitute a Task Force on TK&TCE to see the process through. It is expected that once the national policy is endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers it would pave the way for many measures, including legislation, which would protect the IP rights associated with Sri Lanka's TK&TCE.

Addressing the meeting, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Ravintha Aryasinha noted that as part of the GOSL-WIPO 10 Point Action Plan launched in 2013, Sri Lanka Mission in Geneva secured WIPO support for the country to work on a national policy on TK & TCEs in 2016. "I join Minister Bathiudeen to stress on a collaborative and a speedy approach to finalise this national effort" said HE Ambassador Aryasinha, and added: "Besides sending foreign experts to support the G15 and National Seminars on the subject, WIPO had provided opportunities for five Sri Lankan officials from diverse backgrounds - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Mahaweli Development, Dept. of Ayurveda, Attorney General's Department and Ministry of Industry and Commerce, to develop their respective expertise in this area through participation at international meetings in Geneva and at a G-15 workshop in Algeria. TK and TCEs are a vital subject under global discussion. Developing countries have the most to gain

through a regime that recognizes intellectual property rights and values to the knowledge passed down from generation to generation in their respective countries, but they also stand to lose the most if they fail to do so.”

The WIPO team to Sri Lanka was led by Assistant Director General of WIPO Ambassador Minelik Alemu Getahun, the highest ranking WIPO official to visit Sri Lanka since the official visit of WIPO Director General Dr. Francis Gurry in November 2013. WIPO Ambassador Getahun also called on the Minister Bathiudeen at his Ministry and met with Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Esala Weerakoon, where they mutually assessed the progress made under the 10 point action plan, identified priority areas and renewed commitment to the speedy implementation of the plan. Secretary Ministry of Industry and Commerce Chinthana Lokuhetti and Additional Secretary of the Ministry M. A. Thajudeen joined WIPO officials’ call on Minister Bathiudeen. Both Sri Lanka’s Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva HE Ambassador Aryasinha and the Head of the G15 Secretariat Gihan Indraguptha, who facilitated the crucial G15 and WIPO missions to Colombo from Geneva, too joined the intensive discussions held at the Ministry offices in Colombo.

PHOTO 2



PHOTO FILE> 29APRIL2.jpg

From Left: Additional Secretary of Ministry of Industry and Commerce MA Thajudeen, Director of Traditional Knowledge (TK) Division of WIPO Wend Wendland, Sri Lanka’s Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva HE Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen, Secretary to Ministry of Industry and Commerce Chinthana Lokuhetti and Dr. Avanti Perera (Attorney General’s Department) at the launch event of Sri Lanka Sessions on WIPO backed TK&TCE Practices at BMICH, Colombo on the morning of 27 April.

CONCLUDED

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