

Celebrating 2019 World IP Day

Open Letter to WIPO Director General Francis Gurry

Today, April 26, 2019, we the undersigned think tanks are delighted to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day with you. Intellectual property rights (IPRs), without a doubt, are essential to the continued flourishing of human life and economic growth around the world.

Whether it is a new life-saving medicine, a catchy tune, or distinguishing mark, all intellectual properties are products of ingenuity and human labor. In this regard, intellectual property rights are fundamental human rights that ensure innovators have control over the fruits of their labor. We applaud all of your efforts as Director General of WIPO to fulfill the organization's primary purpose "to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world."

This year's theme, *Reach for Gold: IP and Sports*, is emblematic for World IP Day. Competition, just as it is for sports, is a core principle behind intellectual property rights. When IPRs are protected, markets are formed that encourage innovators to compete to make the next breakthrough product consumers demand-- be it training equipment, a smart sensor, or a new media platform. In this way, athletes and innovative markets are sure to always **go faster, stronger, higher!** Neither innovation nor sport can exist without enforceable property rights.

IP Rights Boost Trade

It is now the norm for international trade agreements to bolster intellectual property rights. These standard setting arrangements allow the competition that sparks "the fire of genius" to spread across borders. When countries implement strong IP protections included in trade agreements they see greater imports of R&D intensive products, as well as renewed competition from inventors, artists, and entrepreneurs from the global marketplace. It is increasingly imperative that, as firms spend a greater share of revenues on researching and discovering new innovations, that more countries enforce IP protections in order for their economies to avoid being left behind.

IP Rights Grow the Economy

Strong IP protections are vital to creating and maintaining high paying jobs, which are essential to dynamic economic growth. IP-intensive industries are responsible for generating nearly 40 percent of the combined U.S. & EU GDP and employ about 40 percent of the workforce in the U.S. and nearly 28 percent in the EU. That accounts for more than 105 million jobs. Workers in these industries are paid 46 percent more than those employed in comparable jobs in non-IP-intensive industries. In fact, per capita income in countries with robust property rights is 20 times greater than per-capita income in countries with weak protections.

By far the largest employer in both regions is the trademark-intensive sector which includes sports, retail, real estate, as well as pharmaceuticals, and computer programming industries. This underscores that the global IP-economy is not confined to a few tech hubs, but accessible to all

countries that choose to enforce IP rights and allow firms to develop and defend reputational marks.

IP Rights Spur Innovation

For the last eight straight years, world patent applications have continued to break records. An amazing 3.17 million applications were filed in 2017, each one promising to relegate a problem once thought of as impossible to the pages of history. Recent patents include a medicine to treat multiple sclerosis, a method to make batteries more efficient, and even an A.I. based patent that can simulate human debates.

IP rights make it possible for firms to invest billions into frontier technologies like A.I. and space transportation, allowing careers paths and industries to develop before consumer products are available. Such technological progress ensures the next generation will enjoy longer, healthier lives.

IP Rights Fight Fakes

Counterfeiting and piracy continue to plague the world economy. The most recent estimates find global share of counterfeit goods rose from 2.5 percent of global trade to 3.3 percent, or \$509 billion. While the cost of online piracy is on its way to reaching \$52 billion. These poisoned products not only fund criminal enterprises and damage brand reputations but cause physical harm to consumers. Counterfeit medicines, for instance, have been linked to disease progression and drug resistance.

The UN Can Help Protect IP

The United Nations plays an important role in guarding the global innovation ecosystem that propels humanity forward. IP rights are discussed across many UN agencies that deal with matters of human rights, global health, and development. Regrettably, IP rights are sometimes attacked in UN bodies, where we have seen short-sighted proposals to undermine IP rights in order to achieve other goals. We regret that there is not a broader understanding in UN agencies of the well-documented role of intellectual property in driving health, invention, and prosperity around the world.

We, therefore, urge WIPO to do more to help inform international debates and ensure that the voices of innovation are heard at every level. We call on WIPO to take action, namely to: 1) step up efforts to educate policymakers about the ways that IP enhances economic growth and development; 2) assist countries in strengthening their IP regimes and protections; and 3) ensure that other multilateral organizations – such as the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, and the UN Development Program – promote policies that recognize the value of IP rights for enhancing human welfare and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Cc:

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)

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