

58th Session of the WIPO General Assemblies

24 September – 02 October 2018

Agenda Item 5 – General Statement by H.E. A.L.A. Azeez

Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

Mr. Chairman,

Please accept warmest congratulations and best wishes of the delegation of Sri Lanka on your assumption of the chairmanship of the 58th Session of the WIPO Assemblies.

Director General Francis Gurry, we thank you for your very informative Annual Report and for the significant steps taken by your team in advancing the mandate of the Organization in all its aspects during the reporting year.

We take this opportunity to thank DG and his team for the initiative taken in June 2018, to honour Late Lakshman Kadirgamar, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former senior official of WIPO, with the unveiling of a painting of a renowned Sri Lanka artist, Stanley Kirinde.

IP is an important tool for economic development, and its potential to uplift the lives of millions through its impact on health, education and other necessary conditions has been widely acknowledged. WIPO plays an important role in providing the essential technical cooperation and assistance to developing countries to help unlock this potential and make progress in sustainable development. In many developing countries, national efforts at achieving the SDGs are complemented to a great extent by technical cooperation and assistance from international organizations.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the technical cooperation and assistance thus extended complemented the Government's efforts to ensure availability of IP coverage in all regions, thereby helping to unleash the potential for innovation among youth and women at the periphery. The end of the armed conflict in 2009, and the initiatives taken to advance reconciliation, peacebuilding and economic development as well as the continuation of targeted empowerment efforts, particularly since 2015, including access

to all forms of education, vocational training, development of entrepreneurial skills, among others, have resulted in more and more innovations enjoying IP protection.

Harnessing IP to contribute effectively to sustainable development is a salient objective we all share. In addition to technical cooperation and assistance, there are a number of areas in which WIPO enables member states to derive benefits from developments in the IP Sector. Youth entrepreneurship, innovation and peer learning are among important tools that it provides.

While the advantages abound, challenges too, yet remain. The requirement for a more balanced representation of regions such as the Asia and Pacific, particularly in the composition of the WIPO Governing Bodies namely the Coordination Committee and the Programme and Budget Committee, is more pronounced today. We encourage engagement among the member states to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes.

In the same vein, Mr. Chairman, we wish to stress that the opening of the new External Offices for the current biennium needs to be taken forward in an inclusive, transparent and consensual manner in line with the accepted principles for External Offices, adopted by the WIPO General Assemblies.

The norm setting mandate of WIPO is critical for its continued relevance and success. In this context, we appreciate the work of the Intergovernmental Committee of Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC), which is particularly important to developing countries.

We also welcome the recent developments in the IGC including progress made in Genetic Resources following the extension of the IGC mandate for the 2018-2019 biennium with a programme of work, as well as the recommendations made by the Committee to this Assembly for adoption. It is imperative that the Committee reach conclusion on the ongoing consultation and negotiation process resulting in a legally binding international instrument based on the draft articles on TK, GR and TCE.

On the draft Design Law Treaty, it is important that we finalise the Treaty, taking into account the proposed technical assistance and disclosure requirement. The different levels of development of the member states require augmented capacity by states to

carry out its obligations and in this context, we reiterate the need for increased technical assistance for developing countries.

The continued importance of the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP) to implement the 45 Recommendations under WIPO Development Agenda cannot be over-emphasized. A fair and balanced Intellectual Property system for economic development is all the more important, and sustained efforts in mainstreaming the UN Development Agenda into the work of WIPO are vital for the long term relevance and success of the Organization.

We also welcome the WIPO's contribution to the implementation of the SDGs and its Associated Targets since the adoption of the UN Development Agenda (2030). While appreciating the decision of the CDIP to continue discussions on SDGs under 'IP and Development Agenda' item, we would encourage WIPO to consider a holistic approach to SDGs.

As for Sri Lanka, we express our sincere appreciation for the valuable assistance extended by WIPO in implementing the 10 Point Action Plan between Sri Lanka and WIPO for cooperation in the field of IP. The implementation of the Action Plan has brought tangible benefits to Sri Lanka including capacity building, expertise and guidance of WIPO. Significant progress has been achieved in the following key areas of cooperation under the Action Plan:

- Accession to Madrid Protocol is being progressed with the preparation of draft legislation with WIPO providing technical assistance and assessment of progress
- Following the accession to Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired or otherwise Print Disabled, in 2016, draft legislation will soon be presented to the Parliament for approval
- Draft enabling legislation and regulations to facilitate registration of Geographical Indications (GI)

- Sri Lanka is progressing with the draft national IP policy and a Sri Lankan delegation of experts and officials involved in the drafting process undertook a Study Visit to the Republic of Korea in early this month and their feedback will be greatly useful in finalizing the draft. A draft TK and TCE policy is being finalized following successful consultation with all relevant stakeholders
- The Enabling IP Environment Project launched in collaboration with WIPO, for technology development, management and commercialization with the objective of developing institutional and human resources capacities in universities, research institutes is being successfully implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

WIPO is pivotal to a rule-based global order built on sustainable peace and shared progress and prosperity. We should continue to strive together to make this vision a reality. Sri Lanka looks forward to proactively contributing to the effective realization of that vision, ensuring rich dividends of IP for its people