

## **DG Speech – Opening Ceremony – Boao Forum 2024 – As Delivered**

Your Excellency, Mr. Zhao Leji, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China,

Your Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia

Mr Li Baodong, Secretary-General of the Boao Forum for Asia,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

It is an honor to be here at the Boao Forum for the first time.

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In 2022, over 20 million IP applications were filed by innovators and creators around the world – that's almost 40 each minute. This is not entirely surprising. As the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, I am seeing more and more countries, especially emerging economies and developing countries, turn to innovation, creativity, technology and digitalization to drive growth and development.

But what may be surprising to many of you is that Asia has become the world's most powerful IP engine, with 70 percent of all the world's IP filings coming from Asia, up from 50 percent 20 years ago.

Why is this happening?

First, confidence in home grown innovation and creativity in Asia has increased tremendously. Not only is Asia home to over 300 unicorns and a quarter of the world's technology scale-ups, but Asia files more patents in semiconductors, digital technology and computer technology than the rest of the world combined.

Asian culture and content is also booming. Increasingly, people around the world dance to K-pop, relax with Asian-language film and TV, and connect through games like Genshin Impact.

Second, Asia has emerged as a center of vibrant business entrepreneurship. Not only is Asia home to the world's fastest growing middle class, its peoples are also adapting to digital services faster than anywhere else. Asian entrepreneurs drive 70 percent of all trademark applications in the world and Asian brands have become household names everywhere, with the region home to 14 of the world's 25 strongest brands.

Third, government and popular support for innovation has become stronger. WIPO's Global Innovation Index, or GII, ranks the performance of over 130 economies around the world each

year. Six Asian economies are now in the top 20, with China the only middle-income economy near the top 10. The fastest improving countries are also predominantly from Asia.

Last year WIPO surveyed 25 000 lay persons from around the world about their attitudes towards IP. Interestingly, it showed that 75 percent of people from Asia agree that IP benefits the economy, higher than in any other part of the world.

These developments show that Asia has emerged as a major driver of ideas and innovation, and that the global IP landscape has become much more diversified, with game-changing ideas emerging from all parts of the world.

WIPO welcomes these developments, but also means that the work of WIPO cannot be “business as usual”.

IP can no longer just be for experts and specialists, but also those innovating and creating on the ground and at the grassroots level. IP can no longer be only for the biggest companies, but also for start-ups and SMEs, women and youth. And IP must now become a powerful catalyst for all countries to create jobs, attract investments, support businesses, and for economic, social and cultural development.

As a UN agency, WIPO is pleased to be a forum where important IP issues are discussed by our 193 Members and where global IP standards are set. But discussion must lead to action and that’s why we are focused on using our networks, expertise and resources to create impact on the ground. Let me share with you a couple of examples.

The WIPO Academy has trained over 1.2 million people in the past 10 years. And in just the past 2 years we have trained 220,000 people, 45 percent of whom are from Asia, and over 80 percent from developing countries. What we are doing is not just training people in technical IP knowledge, but increasingly in practical IP skills so that people in Asia and everywhere in the world can use IP to grow their business and meet their aspirations.

We have also launched over 80 impact-driven projects around the world. These are not one-day seminars or workshops, but months-long programs that focus on mentoring and imparting skills to underserved groups like women, youth and SMEs, as well as local communities and indigenous peoples.

In Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan we’re helping women entrepreneurs brand, package and market their traditional products like handicrafts and textiles. In Bali, we have launched a project on IP for sustainable tourism. In Oman, we’re helping frankincense producers add value and enter new markets. We are doing the same in Kazakhstan for the Almaty Apport Apple. And with ASEAN, we are supporting initiatives for the region’s creative and digital economies, recently holding a joint Youth Digital Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

But innovation should not just serve a country or region, it has to serve the whole world as well. Let’s take climate change, a challenge we all face.

Addressing the threat of climate change requires the power of innovation and technology. While green innovations exist, the problem is how to deploy these on the ground to make a difference. Often those who are offering the technologies are not connected to those who need them.

This is why we created WIPO Green, a free, online platform to match-make those who are offering technologies with those who need the technologies. WIPO Green has grown to cover nearly 130,000 technologies from over 140 countries. It's now the largest green tech platform that the UN offers today, and with over a 1,000 matches it is starting to make a difference.

But much more needs to be done, and here is where we welcome more Asian green innovators to join us and make a difference to the world with your ideas.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In these difficult and challenging times, my belief is that IP can be a bridge, not just between an idea and the world, but also between different peoples, regions and countries.

WIPO will work hard to support each country to use IP to grow and develop, and to work with Asia and the global family of countries to harness the power of innovation to address our common global challenges.

Thank you.