

ASSEMBLIES OF THE MEMBER STATES OF WIPO  
Sixty-First Series of Meetings  
Geneva, September 21 to 25, 2020  
Agenda item 5: GENERAL STATEMENTS

GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

The Delegation of Croatia would like to express its appreciation for the efforts of the Secretariat undertaken since the last Assemblies meeting in order to maintain high level quality work and to ensure as smooth as possible continuation of the Organization's activities in the development of the intellectual property policy during the ongoing pandemic.

We would also like to express our best wishes for the successful leadership to the Director General-elect Mr. Daren Tang in these challenging times and to convey our commitment to the cooperation and the constructive work within the WIPO bodies. We would like to express our highest appreciation to the outgoing Director General, Mr. Francis Gurry, for his long-time outstanding leadership and commitment to the mission of the WIPO that contributed to the successful development of the intellectual property system in spite of the many challenges brought about by the technological and societal developments that have been taking place at the unprecedented pace.

These technological changes and the transition to the digital economy that affect every aspect of our life and society put to the test boundaries and applicability of the existing concepts of the intellectual property system. Therefore, Croatia acknowledges important and timely work of the WIPO regarding particularly the artificial intelligence and its implication on intellectual property policy.

We are also pleased to note further development of the WIPO activities aimed at small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs with regard to their effective use of intellectual property, as their contribution to economic growth and social stability is substantial. Such a support to SMEs has been one of the key priorities of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first half of 2020, which was held under unprecedented circumstances that significantly affected foreseen activities. These unfortunate circumstances, have shown, *inter alia*, that SMEs should remain in our focus and that intellectual property system, although generally well placed, should be such as to allow entrepreneurs to be agile and flexible, especially in such extraordinary circumstances as we have been experiencing in the most part of 2020.

The pandemic has also emphasised the importance of digital transformation. The WIPO has adapted its work in a commendable manner, which is a result not only of the *ad hoc* measures but also of wise steps undertaken in the recent years, like webcasting of certain committees. The pandemic has evidently demonstrated that modern communication technology advancement enable us to work and communicate surpassing physical limits and borders, so we consider it would be a right time to revisit the long-standing issue of the external offices and resolve it using modern technology so we can redirect our work to the emerging pressing challenges.

Members of the Delegation of Croatia use this opportunity to thank the WIPO Secretariat for a valuable cooperation and assistance delivered since the last Assemblies regarding the support to the intellectual property system in Croatia, especially in supporting the conference “*Intellectual Property for the European Union in a World of Challenges*” held in February this year in Zagreb as a flagship intellectual property related event of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Conclusions from this conference, which covered variety of current and emerging topics (such as better tailor-made support to SMEs, data economy, green policies) are publicly available and may be of interest to the Member States beyond the European Union since they are related also to the global intellectual property matters.

In conclusion, we would like to express our readiness to contribute to further development of the intellectual property system in the framework of the WIPO system under the anticipated new program agenda of the incoming Director General Tang.

The Delegation of Croatia would like to convey its appreciation to all the Member States for their cooperation, wishing fruitful deliberations to all the Members States and a successful 61<sup>st</sup> series of meetings of the Assemblies of the WIPO Member States.

(Zagreb, September 2020)