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EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WIPO STANDARDS

NOVEMBER 30 TO DECEMBER 4, 2020

Honorable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to open the eighth session of the Committee on WIPO Standards and to welcome all of you to this meeting.

Like other recent WIPO meetings, this Committee is convening under unique and challenging circumstances. Nevertheless, we are inspired by your commitment to continue the work and thank all of you for your flexibility and willingness to work through different time zones and to this hybrid manner working.

Our appreciation goes especially to those joining from distant time zones.

Distinguished Delegates,

As we meet today, we are in a time of profound change. People everywhere are seeking new ways of working, new ways of communicating, and new ways of collaborating – including for this Committee meeting. These changes offer opportunities for all of us to improve our workflows and services, and to continue interacting each other effectively. To fully meet this challenge a seamless digital environment that supports efficient and productive exchanges is required.

The transformation to digital tools, data, and processes has been underway for a long time. But one thing this pandemic has done, is that it has sharply accelerated this digital transformation, raising the stakes for both the private sector and public authorities. The world relies on us to continue delivering much needed products and services in these extraordinary times.

The IP space is no exception. As professionals tasked with protecting the innovations and creations of others, we should strive for innovative and creative methods in our own work. IP

Offices around the world have been leaders in showing their communities the advantages of digital ways of working.

The Committee on WIPO Standards plays a key role in this effort. The work that you do here helps digitalize IP data, unlocking a wealth of knowledge for inventors and creators. It helps to standardize how data is stored and exchanged, so that for example, entrepreneurs in Argentina can access information from anywhere in the world. And, it helps IP Offices communicate more quickly and efficiently, so they can better serve the vital innovators in time and creators striving to improve the world.

The work you do here is enormously important. Digital transformation relies on accessible, high quality data and seamless exchange. Standards are at the heart of digital operations.

At WIPO, we have invested heavily in transforming our own environment to digital. Many of our services are now available online, providing a wealth of information and resources to everyone with internet access. However, we still have more to improve. WIPO will continue enhancing its own digital transformation to provide sustainable and resilient IP services in an efficient and effective way. IP is an engine of innovation in this digital era.

As you know, applications for IP rights have seen almost continuous growth over the past decades. In 2018, global patent filings grew to 3.3 million, trademark filings to 14.3 million, and industrial design filings to 1.3 million. This represents 5% growth in patents and designs, and 15% growth in trademarks year over year. And, this reflects the rising importance of the innovation economy.

We have also observed recently, that data is an increasingly critical asset for the digital economy. As emerging technologies continue to fuel the 4th industrial revolution, demand for high quality, machine readable IP data will only grow.

WIPO Standards are at the front of this wave, as the IP community confronts challenges and explores solutions where IP data impacts all actors in the IP community.

On the technical side, some of the current main challenges include:

- Data in machine readable formats;
- Machine-to-machine data communications using web services;
- Data connectivity between various parties and data traceability;

- Data consistency through entire IP life cycle;
- Data quality and timeliness for freedom to operate;
- Secure and trusted data exchange among parties; and
- Handling new data formats submitted by applicants, for example, 3D, multimedia and GUIs or graphical user interfaces.

There are also fundamental questions such as:

- How to identify digital objects across different systems;
- How to manage and verify digital identifiers for people or entities; and
- Data governance with regard to the collection, storage and use of data

The issues go beyond the needs of just Offices and reach throughout enterprises and the private sector. WIPO Standards do not operate alone and increasingly require close collaboration with IP professionals in a variety of roles. Input is often needed from IP practitioners, owners, licensors and licensees, as well as technical experts in related fields. Issues such as data formats for multimedia and 3D digital objects, or more efficient data transactions using XML and web APIs, involve consideration and consensus building with industry and others stakeholders.

How to effectively gather such input and expand our group of stakeholders is one of the great opportunities for this Committee to pursue. At the Committee's request, the Secretariat has begun exploring platforms where experts from IP authorities and IP industry can work together, in particular for XML, API and blockchain based applications.

To face these challenges and find solutions, the Committee on WIPO Standards must continue working with the IP community to develop new standards and recommendations, and implement them globally. We should invite relevant subject matter experts from industry to participate in discussions for these standardization activities. And we should develop a strategic roadmap of standardization and digitalization for the IP ecosystem.

Distinguished Delegates,

The changing nature of the economy is also reshaping IP. The so-called 4th industrial revolution, driven by emerging technologies such as big data, AI and blockchain, has been impacting IP administration and policy. Among others, how can we use digital technologies

to improve the operational efficiency of IP offices and other stakeholders in the IP ecosystem? And do existing IP systems continually and appropriately promote innovation in the digital age?

Technologies such as AI and blockchain are being designed to minimize human input required, towards a vision of an autonomous and programmable economy. The potential impact of such technologies on the IP system is an important area of strategy and policy exploration at WIPO, and has been for several years now.

To facilitate discussions on the impact of blockchain technology in the IP space in relation to Standardization, the International Bureau is preparing a whitepaper on potential blockchain uses for the IP ecosystem. The paper reflects information from IP authorities and IP industry for consideration by policy makers. The whitepaper will be published on WIPO website once it is completed.

These are some of the larger considerations around our work. They will require much consideration and effort to finally resolve.

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to turn to the concrete items, which we are here today to discuss. I first want to congratulate the Committee for the significant work it has achieved over the past years and in particular, the CWS Task Forces in drafting new Standards, revising existing Standards, and making progress on other work items. I would like to thank all the CWS Task Force members, from IP Offices and IP industry groups, who have contributed to the work that will be presented this week. In the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, your efforts are evidence of the substantial ongoing cooperation among member states and interested parties.

Among the 22 working documents, the Committee will discuss four new standards, which are proposed for consideration and adoption. These important proposals reflect new demands of the digital era. They contain and cover topics such as Web APIs for automated processing and exchange of IP data; management of motion and multimedia marks; trademark legal status data; and management of visual representations of industrial designs.

There are also proposed revisions to three existing WIPO Standards for sequence listings, patent authority files, and patent legal status data. I would like to especially highlight the importance of the revisions to Standard ST.26, which will impact filings in the PCT System and elsewhere. As Members States have agreed, Standard ST.26 will take effect globally by all authorities on the same date, on January 1, 2022 – the so-called "big bang" date.

With just months remaining before the big bang, it is essential for all Offices to coordinate on a smooth transition along with patent applicants. Many preparations are needed. In support of this implementation, the International Bureau has developed a software application, called WIPO Sequence, in close collaboration with IP Offices and end users. As you know, WIPO Sequence is free tool for applicants and IP Offices around the world to edit and verify ST.26-compliant sequences. The first version of this tool was released in November this year, just a few weeks ago. Work continues to improve the tool with new features and the revisions to ST.26 proposed at this meeting.

This important transition to ST.26 requires tremendous coordination and effort by the global IP community. I have no doubt that you all work to I make it a resounding success.

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me conclude by saying that, during this CWS session, all of you will engage in discussions on standardization, IP data, and related issues that will impact the IP community around the world.

I encourage all of you to make the most of this session in these special circumstances by engaging in constructive discussions about the materials. Let us all remember to consider the needs of users from all regions of the world and to identify further roles for WIPO Standards and Recommendations to provide harmonious new services in support of digital transformation.

I am confident that this Committee will continue to excel as the collaborative international forum for developing and implementing WIPO Standards and Recommendations, and can respond to the demands of the digital era that arises in the IP ecosystem.

On our part, the Secretariat is ready to support your work on all these topics under the guidance of Member States and Members of this Committee.

Lastly, I wish the members of this Committee, the Chair and Vice Chairs the very best for this week's discussions.