



THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



WORLD INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY ORGANIZATION

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, THE INTERNET,  
ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

organized  
under the auspices of  
His Excellency Mr. Petar Stoyanov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

by  
the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)  
in cooperation with  
the National Intellectual Property Association of Bulgaria

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*Message to the Conference  
from  
Dr. Kamal Idris, Director General, WIPO*

Your Excellency Mr. Petar Stoyanov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Distinguished participants, Dear friends, Ladies and gentlemen,

I feel deeply honoured and privileged to address this august gathering of distinguished and eminent representatives of both government administrations and the private sector and I would like in particular to express my profound gratitude to you Mr. President for gracing this event with your invaluable support and presence. This international event is your initiative. We share your vision of making intellectual property an important tool for economic growth, economic development and wealth creation for the Bulgarian people; we appreciate your leadership in defending the interests of the region in promoting creativity and innovation; and we applaud your participation at the international level in further crafting an international intellectual property development strategy. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the role you are playing at the domestic, regional and international level in support of intellectual property.

The subjects under discussion are of great importance for the future of the intellectual property system and therefore ultimately for the economic, social and cultural benefit of all. The discussion that will take place during the next three days will make a valuable contribution to the on-going debate on the dynamic development of the intellectual property system as it adapts to the rapid changes taking place in our increasingly wired and integrated society.

The infinite variety and scope of human creativity fuelled by the recent, rapid increase in the store of human knowledge has resulted in the current innovation "big bang". The intellectual property universe is expanding, propelling us into new areas of exploration – such as biotechnology and digital and communication technology and their most important and famous offspring, the Internet – as well as giving us a new advantage point from which to view existing information structures and forms of creativity such as traditional knowledge and folklore.

Already, the Internet has changed forever the way we interact and do business – increasing opportunities for sharing the riches of our various cultures and for generating and distributing material wealth. It has triggered not only an explosion in global communications but also a huge upsurge in research and development, by facilitating knowledge sharing and allowing easy access to an electronic treasure house of information to which an estimated 7 million new pages are added every day.

The Internet has also provided the matrix for the mushrooming of electronic commerce. Businesses all over the world are using this new medium either for the delivery of their virtual products – such as software, music, film – or for the marketing of their physical products – which can be anything from books to clothing and airline tickets. From its first embryonic existence in the mid-1990s, e-commerce has developed into a worldwide phenomenon expected to be worth an estimated 3 trillion US dollars by 2005.

Other new areas of knowledge which are being assimilated into the evolving intellectual property system include biotechnology, a relatively new –comer to the scientific scene, which is

changing our lives, or rather extending and improving them, by providing new drugs and medical techniques to beat disease and the physical degeneration of old age.

The boundaries of the intellectual property system are being stretched and reexamined not only by the need to integrate new knowledge and discoveries but also by the need to consider existing and traditional knowledge from a new perspective. Traditional knowledge, innovations and creativity, including folklore, have received increasing attention in numerous policy areas, ranging from food and agriculture, the environment, health and culture to trade and economic development. The role of intellectual property in traditional knowledge and folklore is being considered in several of these policy contexts.

These new developments pose many challenges to the intellectual property community and to the World Intellectual Property Organization.

One of the major challenges is the need to awaken global consciousness of the real value of intellectual property, in a world where increasingly sophisticated digital technology and rapidly increasing communications are moving us away from traditional factors of wealth creation such as land, capital and labor and towards an economy based on knowledge, information and creativity.

The Internet provides countries with the opportunity to access that information and knowledge – which is the raw material of innovation – as well as providing them with new ways of marketing the fruits of their creativity. In this way, it is helping to “level the playing field” for developing countries and countries in transition to a market economy. Now, economic, social and cultural growth increasingly depend on an asset available to every country (regardless of differences in cultures and degrees of development) – the limitless creativity of its people.

By creating an IP -minded community and encouraging an IP culture we can help ensure the recognition that a strong, well -functioning IP system is a major element of economic policy that can have a positive and significant impact on GNP as well as creating a market -oriented and business -friendly environment that encourages both foreign direct investment and local investment in R&D. The potential of the IP system as a means of empowerment for nations, individuals and business is one of WIPO’s central messages for the 21st century.

Our Organization, WIPO, has crafted several responses to these challenges posed by the expanding intellectual property universe. Among them are the so -called WIPO “Internet Treaties” dealing with copyright and performances and phonograms in a digital environment. The two treaties will enter into force after accession by 30 countries. Currently, 24 countries are party to the WIPO Copyright Treaty and 22 countries are party to the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty.

The domain name issue has also received considerable attention from the Organization. A First Internet Domain Name Process focusing on problems caused by the conflict between trademarks and domain names, resulted in the implementation of a very successful system for resolving such disputes. The WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center is internationally recognized as the leading institution in this area, with a few thousand cases having been filed since it launched its on -line dispute resolution procedure in December 1999.

A Second WIPO Internet Domain Name Process is currently underway to address similar problems dealing with conflicts between domain names and international non-proprietary names (INNs) for pharmaceutical substances, names of international intergovernmental organizations, personal names, geographical indications, indications of source and geographical terms and trade names.

Progress has also been made in increasing the ability of the intellectual property system to respond to changing needs through the adoption last June of the new WIPO Patent Law Treaty – designed to simplify and streamline procedures for obtaining and maintaining a patent. This has been complemented by renewed efforts in the WIPO Standing Committee on the Law of Patents, to achieve greater international harmonization of the substantive aspects of patent laws.

The Organization is committed to using information technology to both streamline its own procedures and to help bridge the digital divide. A key project is the establishment of WIPO NET – a global IP information network between and among all WIPO member States that will facilitate access to, and exchange of, information across the globe and enhance the use of the IP system to foster economic and cultural development in all those countries.

In another recent development WIPO held the first meeting of the new Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore. Member States supported further work to advance an understanding of how intellectual property can be used in this area.

Mr. President, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished participants,

WIPO considers it vital to work closely with its partners and stakeholders to ensure that the IP system remains supple and adaptable to the changing needs of our rapidly evolving societies. An efficient, energetic IP infrastructure creates and fosters economic, social and cultural growth, stimulates investment in the creation and dissemination of new products and services and helps generate the new knowledge necessary to drive the innovative process forward.

I wish you all every success in your deliberations in this historic event.

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