

**Director General's Speech to IPA InSPIRe Symposium
17 February 2022
Daren Tang**

President Bodour Al Qasimi of the International Publishers Association,

Secretary General, José Borghino,

Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to address you today.

I would like to thank the IPA for inviting me to participate in this Symposium.

And I would like to pay tribute to your tireless advocacy on behalf of global publishing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Storytelling is a characteristic shared by every culture ever known.

It is a central facet of the human experience and a trait hard-wired into our very being.

Stories provide us with patterns and these patterns provide us with meaning, especially when times are tough.

It should come as little surprise, therefore, that the past two years have reinforced the importance of publishing to society.

For millions of people around the world books and published materials have proven essential, particularly during lockdown.

They have acted as an antidote to isolation.

They have enabled education to continue even when schools and universities were forced to close their doors.

And they have provided a little bit of escapism at a time when we have all had to live vicariously.

But this has been a unique crisis.

On the one hand, consumption of creative content has held steady or, in some cases, increased.

On the other, traditional revenue sources have been badly disrupted by the pandemic.

Book fairs and in-person events, part of the lifeblood of the publishing sector, have ground to a halt in many countries.

And the pace of the digital transformation has quickened at a time when many industry players – including independent booksellers, small and medium sized publishing houses, and those in developing and the least developed countries – lack the means to respond to it.

As the publishing industry continues to work through these challenges, WIPO can provide support in three distinct ways.

First, we will continue to uphold a strong and effective international copyright system.

Copyright, and building a culture that supports it and that values it, is essential to ensuring the economic sustainability of the publishing industry, especially as the digital transformation continues to gather pace.

It is by protecting the rights of authors, by building respect for IP and by encouraging and supporting Member States to implement the WIPO Internet Treaties, that we enable writers, illustrators, and others who create, to take their talents to the world and to earn a living from them.

For many years, the IPA has played an active role within WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights, in addition to working with us in many other ways.

We look forward to this engagement continuing and to exploring wider opportunities for the IPA to participate in our work.

Second, WIPO will step up our efforts to make IP relevant to everyone, everywhere.

This means bringing IP to the grassroots and connecting with a broader and more diverse range of stakeholders including authors, artists, musicians, small business owners, entrepreneurs, researchers and indigenous communities to name a few.

For example, our growing *WIPO for Creators* program raises awareness of IP rights by approaching the issue from a creators' perspective and in a way that resonates with writers, artists and musicians.

We are pleased that the IPA has joined *WIPO for Creators* as a partner and we look forward to continuing our collaboration on this important initiative.

Third, WIPO will continue to champion the Marrakesh Treaty and the work of our *Accessible Books Consortium*, or ABC.

The Marrakesh Treaty is growing fast with 110 countries committed to its principles.

Likewise, the ABC has expanded rapidly in recent years.

It currently provides people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled with access to over 730,000 books in more than 80 languages.

From supporting young people in their education, to boosting and furthering careers, to delivering new leisure possibilities, the Marrakesh Treaty is a powerful example of how IP and publishing are advancing social progress around the world.

And, yet, it is far from the only thing that we are doing.

For example, as part of our pandemic response package, we are working with publishers and other stakeholders on practical initiatives to support youth in developing countries to access knowledge resources in digital formats.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The publishing industry represents something precious and unique: it is both a driver of jobs and growth and a source of social and cultural nourishment.

In an uncertain world, this matters.

Indeed, if we truly aspire to build back better – to construct a global recovery that is inclusive, resilient and sustainable – then we must support the publishing industry to begin its next chapter from a position of strength.

That is why the work of the IPA is so important.

Why this Symposium is so welcome.

And it is why WIPO is committed to working with our partners around the world to support the publishing industry to recover, to rebuild and to flourish.

Thank you very much.