



Celebrating 2018 World IP Day

Open Letter to
WIPO Director General Dr. Francis Gurry

Today, April 26, 2018, we celebrate World IP Day. This is an annual opportunity to celebrate intellectual property (IP) rights for their role in expanding economies, bolstering innovation, and saving lives. We, the undersigned organizations, join the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in recognizing the crucial role that IP rights play in incentivizing innovators to create new goods and services, encouraging creators to produce original content, and inspiring entrepreneurs to enter – and thrive-- in the market.

This year's theme, *Powering change: Women in innovation and creativity*, is particularly relevant to our organizations. Intellectual property has played an important role throughout history in advancing the rights and liberties of women worldwide. We remain committed to supporting women in innovation—as all of humanity benefits from the incredible discoveries that flow from strong IP rights.

The Impact of IP Rights on the Economy

Implementing strong IP protections is vital to spurring well-paid jobs and essential to economic development. IP-intensive industries fuel modern economies and they are particularly important in the developing world as well. A simple look at the data makes this point abundantly clear. IP-intensive industries employ about 40 percent of the workforces in the U.S. and nearly 28 percent in the EU. That accounts for more than 105 million jobs. These industries are responsible for generating nearly 40 percent of the combined U.S. & EU gross domestic product, and workers in these industries are paid 46 percent more than those employed in comparable jobs in non-IP-intensive industries. In fact, per capita income in countries with robust property rights tends to be roughly 21 times more than per-capita income in countries with weak protections, which underscores the impact of IP rights on the economy.

The Impact of IP Rights on Innovation

Society relies on continued innovation to advance humanity, but without incentives for innovation we would lack many of the technologies that we consider commonplace today. In 2016, a record 3.1 million new patents were filed worldwide. These patents protected groundbreaking technological processes, helped cure devastating diseases, and modernized everyday conveniences. This would not have been possible without protections for innovation. Copying is not the same as inventing, and enforcement of IP rights helps prevent counterfeits that not only undermine economic growth, but finance criminal organizations as well. This shadow economy that thrives on counterfeit goods is responsible for nearly 2.5 percent of global imports, amounting to nearly \$461 billion. This not only threatens the bottom line of iconic retail brands, but it puts next-generation medicines – and the patients who depend upon them – at risk.

The Impact of IP on Human Lives

Newly filed patents propose a solution to a problem. In many cases, these solutions are not just convenient, but critical. Around the world, 780 million people have no access to clean water, and 1.8 million people die each year from diseases associated with water contamination. Combating this problem are innovations in purification and conservation that provide clean water—and more of it. Each invention reflects the patience and persistence of thousands of scientists and engineers from across the world.

Despite this, the intellectual property rights that impart these benefits are under constant threat. Even within the United Nations system, the very protections that are so necessary to solve today's complex global challenges are undermined by initiatives such as the 2016 UN High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines. This UN High-Level Panel report and other ill-informed UN initiatives have gone so far as to portray patents and intellectual property as harmful to global development and human rights. This is a backwards notion considering the well-documented role of intellectual property in making countries more prosperous and healthy. We therefore urge WIPO to play a more active role in informing international debates, particularly in the field of public health, and ensuring that the voices of innovation are heard at every level.

We call on WIPO to take action. We ask that WIPO, **1)** review the ways that IP enhances economic growth and development; **2)** work with countries to enhance their IP regimes and protections; and **3)** support IP as a property right that is necessary for enhancing human welfare and achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

World IP Day celebrates the curiosity and innovation at the core of humanity. This year in particular, it recognizes the innumerable contributions of women inventors, creators, and scientists. IP rights expand the economy, bolster innovation, and save lives. We look forward to working with WIPO to advance awareness of the incalculable value of IP rights.

Cc:

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)

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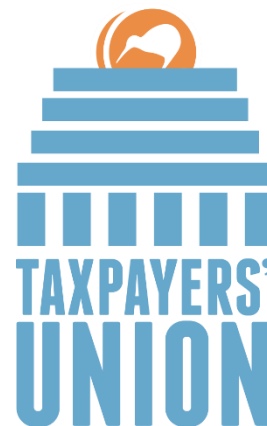
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