09/25/2020 Events

The Assemblies meetings of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) wrapped up with a standing ovation for Director General Francis Gurry, whose second and final term at the helm of the Organization ends on September 30, 2020.

Delegates from the 193 Member States present in the Assembly Hall rose to applaud Francis Gurry during his last closing address as Director General, with other delegations connecting remotely to present to the senior official the special appreciation for his contribution to the development of the Organization.

“It’s a privilege to be able to serve in an international organization, in any capacity, and certainly to serve as Director General. It's a great privilege because it's an opportunity for opening to the diversity of this world and to see - and this is particularly true as we all experience the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic - that we have a shared destiny,” said Francis Gurry.

“And one of the roles of an international organization is to bring us around that shared destiny and see how we can confront it together in the best possible manner. My final word is my deepest gratitude to you all for the privilege of this opportunity that you have given me,” remarked the Director General.

Francis Gurry will be succeeded at the head of the Organization by the Singaporean Daren Tang, who, on September 21, in a speech to Member States’ representatives at the opening of the WIPO Assemblies, congratulated the Acting Director General Gurry on his achievements and pledged to use them as a foundation for further development of the Organization.

It will be recalled that the current series of Meetings of the Assemblies of WIPO has been convened, for the first time in a hybrid format, Member States’ delegations having the opportunity to participate in its work both physically and online.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agenda of the Assemblies has been narrow; Member States focusing on the Organization’s pressing issues, in particular those concerning the operation of WIPO and the systems for international registration of intellectual property objects in pandemic conditions, including regulatory, personnel and security aspects.

Thus, the Madrid and Hague Union Assemblies adopted amendments to the Common Regulations of the Agreement and the Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks and to the Regulations of the Hague Agreement Concerning the International Deposit of Industrial Designs, respectively. The adopted amendments are part of the response to Covid-19 and facilitate access to international registration systems and simplify communication between the International Bureau and applicants through the use of electronic mail.

The Paris Union Assembly adopted a set of recommendations on the implementation of the provisions of the Paris Convention on the right of priority during an emergency, like the current COVID-19 pandemic. While the guidance is non-binding, it provides a coherent and practical response to the challenges faced by the Paris Union members during the pandemic and includes models of mechanisms and provisions that might be considered for priority period extension, restoration of rights, etc.

Additional funding was approved from the WIPO Reserves amounting to 1.792 million Swiss francs for IT Investment Projects, a priority to ensure the functioning of the institution in pandemic conditions.

The Management of WIPO’s Funds-in-Trust, including the key principles, which will be reflected in WIPO’s revised internal Policy on Funds-in-Trust, was analyzed.

WIPO's accession to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), including financial and administrative implications, was discussed.

Delegates noted the work of the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center over its 20 years of activity and the continuing growth in the number of Center-managed disputes, as well as the growing popularity of the WIPO-initiated UDRP procedure.

The Marrakesh Treaty Assembly was briefed on the latest developments and results of the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC), whose book catalog currently has 640,000 accessible titles in 80 languages, with 585,000 titles available for cross-border exchange free from clearance formalities. It should be noted that the Marrakesh Treaty continued to be the fastest growing treaty in WIPO history, which currently comprises 72 contracting parties covering 99 countries.

The Beijing Treaty Assembly met for the first time since the entry into force of the Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances on April 28, 2020, when the 30th contracting party joined the Treaty. The Assembly adopted its rules of procedure and celebrated the entry into force of this historic agreement.

The Beijing Treaty Assembly was also the first assembly in WIPO history to be chaired remotely, with Chair Yan Xiaohong, China's representative, who contributed to the successful completion of the Beijing Diplomatic Conference that led to the adoption of the Treaty in 2012.

Finally, Member States commended the work of the Secretariat and the entire WIPO staff, noting the increase in productivity and efficiency, as well as the stability of workforce within the organization. Moreover, member states appreciated the progress in geographic diversity and gender parity as well as WIPO's exemplary response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, the Assemblies took note of WIPO's positive financial results and the audit report for 2019 and recommended that the International Bureau continue to ensure the same level of efficiency and competence.

Member States have requested that an extraordinary session of the Assemblies of WIPO be convened during the first half of 2021, to consider, among others, matters related to WIPO Committees and international regulatory framework, as well as the situation regarding the provision of global intellectual property services.

The Delegation of the Republic of Moldova participated in the work of the Assemblies of WIPO, providing the promotion of national interests in the meetings both physically, by attending the Meeting of Representatives of the Republic of Moldova's Mission to the UN office in Geneva, and remotely by attending meetings of the representatives of the State Agency on Intellectual Property (AGEPI).



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