CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

WIPO Director General Daren Tang
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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a genuine privilege to be here in London at INTA's Annual Meeting 2026.

Thank you for inviting me back to this event, to be back among so many old friends and fellow professionals, as part of the world's largest gathering of the IP community.

Now, many of you know WIPO primarily as users of our services: the Madrid, PCT and Hague systems, domain name disputes resolution, Arbitration and Mediation, our global IP databases, perhaps the WIPO Global Innovation Index. Over two million IPs flowed through WIPO's services in the past 6 years. We are grateful your trust and your support.

But as someone who has just been re-appointed as the WIPO DG, I want to take this chance to talk about IP bit more broadly and deeply, going beyond what we do as IP professionals helping businesses secure IP protection, to what IP means to the world fundamentally.

Innovation and Creativity Are Fundamental Human Instincts

To begin, long before there were patent offices or trademark registries, human beings were already inventing, innovating, designing and creating. Just think about stone tools, arrows, cave paintings, bone sculptures and shell necklaces – our curiosity, inventiveness and creativity allowed us to fundamentally reshape our world, eventually leading to agriculture, cities and civilization.

We are a species of innovators and creators, something baked into our DNA and with us since time immemorial – **but** over 500 years ago, a revolution in how we innovate started in Venice and then spread to Europe, before becoming global. That revolution was IP.

IP turbocharged innovation, allowing the inventor or creator to connect directly with economy and society, instead of having to seek permission or patronage from lords and kings to spread an idea. It gave economic value to an invention by endowing it with proprietary rights that could be enforced. And it supported the spread of knowledge by creating public registers open for others to inspect and learn about the latest inventions. IP helped create our modern world of technology, innovation, science, culture and the arts.

This is why I see our joint mission as not just administering to the registration of IP rights but also as building a global IP ecosystem to support the innovators and creators of the world.

Winning together through IP

The other conviction that energizes our work rests on the very nature of IP, which unlike tangible and fixed property is an intangible asset that allows for the potentially limitless scaling up and sharing of value – just think about how a brand can be franchised across

countries, a technology can be licensed to cover the world, or how content can streamed to millions at the same time. IP's unique qualities make this possible.

Because of this ability, we must avoid looking at IP through a zero-sum lens and recognize that collaboration and cooperation is fundamental to the IP world. This is why WIPO believes that we can be a place where Member States win together, even in a world of increasing geopolitical tension and division.

Our data already shows a convergence in how the world is embracing IP. Investments in intangible assets grew close to four times faster than those in tangible investment between 2008–2024, reaching USD 4.7 trillion in 2024.

And this is not for developed countries, but increasingly for developing countries. For example, India is leading the world at nearly 7 percent annual growth in intangible investment, with Brazil close behind.

More broadly, trade in IP crossed USD 1.2 trillion last year for the first time, more than doubling since 2010, with the United States, China and Japan leading but also with India, Brazil and Thailand among the biggest IP traders. And Egypt as well as South Korea have elevated their IP offices to full ministries.

All over the world, IP is moving from the periphery to the center, and in doing so, giving opportunities for IP to be used as a way to scale, grow and win together.

What WIPO will be doing for you as IP professionals

This remarkable shift - from periphery to center - requires robust IP infrastructure, modern tools and reliable services that can keep pace. It also demands that IP institutions evolve to support IP professionals as you navigate an increasingly complex global landscape.

That is why I wish to focus my remaining time on the concrete things that WIPO will be doing to help you help your clients and businesses use IP for success and your countries to use IP for growth and prosperity.

The Madrid System: Infrastructure for Global Brands

Let me begin where brand owners and trademark professionals feel WIPO most directly: the Madrid System.

The Madrid System today covers 132 countries, 82% of the global population, and approximately 90% of global GDP. If you are building a global brand, this system remains the most efficient single point of entry into the majority of the world's markets.

In 2024, trademark filings through the Madrid System totaled 65,115 applications. In 2025, filings held steady at 64,150, despite challenging economic times. But filing volume is only part of the story. The deeper story is transformation.

WIPO is fundamentally reimagining its global IP services through a genuinely customer - centric approach, putting user experience at the heart of our services. Close to 40% of WIPO's total budget is now reinvested in modernizing these services, ensuring they remain fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world.

Last year, at the INTA meeting in San Diego, we launched eMadrid. The usage has exceeded our expectations. We are close to 19,000 users and more than 70% of active international registrations are now managed through eMadrid workbenches. Nearly 295,000

registrations are shared across teams, reflecting actual trademark practice, where portfolios are not managed by individuals working in isolation, but by teams working across time zones and jurisdictions.

This was only possible because we built eMadrid not by asking ourselves what latest gee whiz technology could we shove into the system, but what our customers wanted, co-creating it with over 1000 users in designing and executing it.

At the same time, AI is beginning to mature into a powerful tool for efficiency, when married with business process review. One of the most time consuming steps in trademark examination and prosecutions revolves around goods and services classification. Inconsistencies in examiner decisions also add to this mix, resulting in ping pong between IP practitioners and IP offices.

To help address this, we have piloted an AI-powered Classification Assistant that provides Madrid Registry examiners with real-time guidance based on the complete history of our classification data. The initial results are beyond expectations, cutting what could sometimes take one week to less than an hour, while boosting consistency without compromising quality.

Customer service is also being transformed, from essentially being a helpline for experienced users into a proper account management system.

Allow me to share a story, with permission from the brand owner.

Procter & Gamble – one of the world's most sophisticated brand owners – was not using the Madrid system at the levels we expected. Not from reluctance, but because the touchpoints between WIPO and P&G were sporadic and ad hoc. So we changed that. Our teams visited them directly. We reviewed their portfolio together. We understood their filing patterns, their priority markets, their operational challenges. We introduced eMadrid and demonstrated what real-time portfolio visibility could mean at their scale.

The result: P&G's filings through the Madrid System grew by 233% in 2025.

We are applying this model with many major users across the world, and in direct partnership with INTA. My team will be at the WIPO booth and we welcome you to approach us should you be interested.

So, by investing in operational efficiency, business process review, technology, and most important of all – customer centeredness, we will ensure that we continue to serve you well.

The Hague System: Design as Strategy

While the Madrid System protects your brand by name and logo. The Hague System protects your brand by form.

Last year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Hague System, which covers 99 countries today.

In 2025, application numbers hit an all-time high of 28,628 designs, a 5.3% increase, marking the fifth consecutive year of solid growth. More than 2 million design registrations have now been filed through the system since its inception.

But designs are being transformed by digital technologies, so the system needs to take into account 3D models, graphical user interfaces and motion designs. Increasingly, virtual

aesthetics will dominate our lives in the same way as physical beauty, and the international design system will need to adapt to be relevant.

And with the first ratifications of the 2024 Riyadh Design Law Treaty coming in, the international framework for design protection, including elements like 12 months grace period and other procedural harmonizations, will be strengthened in the years to come.

Resolving Disputes: ADR and Domain Names

Many of you are also big users of the ADR services offered by WIPO's Arbitration and Mediation Center.

In 2025, the AMC administered almost 1,500 IP and technology disputes, a 70% increase over the previous year. Growing numbers arose from disputes linked to AI platforms, video games and e-sports, precisely the sectors where traditional jurisdictional frameworks are least equipped to provide timely resolution. Critically, 75% of these cases are cross-border in nature, demonstrating the advantages of ADR in this context.

Domain names dispute resolution continues to grow from strength to strength, with 2025 being our busiest year ever, at 6,200 cases. We have introduced expedited case handling and privacy-forward services for cases involving unknown infringers. And we are actively exploring how WIPO can serve as a globally recognized anchor of identity trust for IP rights, well beyond the domain name context alone.

Enforcement: Where Protection Becomes Real

Of course, a registered IP is just piece of paper if there is no proper IP enforcement.

One welcome development has been the growing interest of developing and emerging economies in strengthening IP enforcement as governments and local communities become more confident in innovating and creating, and see that piracy is a scourge that not just affects foreign brands but also local entrepreneurs and businesses.

WIPO is stepping up our work in this area, across five interconnected pillars: legislative assistance, capacity building, international cooperation, strategic systems and public awareness.

Our strategic systems - WIPO ALERT and WIPO ALERT PAY - are practical examples of public-private collaboration, using technology to combat counterfeiting and piracy at scale. WIPO ALERT maintains a database of websites that have been found by courts and authorities to be dedicated to IP infringement, enabling advertisers to avoid inadvertently funding the counterfeit economy. WIPO ALERT PAY extends this to payment processors.

Our new Customs Recordation and Information System is helping to establish modern customs recordation systems in IP offices, which will help rights holders and authorities address customs enforcement.

And this year, we are convening the first-ever structured dialogue on IP protection in e-commerce, bringing online marketplaces to the table to tackle shared enforcement challenges. Alongside this, we will also launch the inaugural Global Forum for IP Prosecutors, to allow IP prosecutors from across the world to share best practices, build professional networks and strengthen cross-border cooperation.

WIPO's Modernization Agenda: Looking Forward

As the only UN agency providing services directly to the private sector, WIPO will keep putting our clients at the center, enhancing user-friendliness and delivering responsive registries, which are our “engine room.”

However, modernization is not only about operations but also about architecture. I believe that the time has come for us to work with you and our Member States to modernize the architecture of our foundational treaties like the PCT, Madrid and Hague, in a world where AI is changing the way we innovate and create, and where business cycles are totally different from what it was even 5 years ago. Let’s embrace meaningful and purposeful change in order for our IP systems to remain relevant for our children and their children.

And the last is perhaps the most difficult – the modernization of our mindsets.

Is IP just for us tens of thousands of INTA attendees and IP insiders, or can we imagine that IP is also relevant and helpful to billions out there who need protection for their innovations, their ideas, their brands? Do we see IP only as a set of rights and regulations, or do we see it as a catalyst for jobs, investments, growth and prosperity, and a way for us to collaborate and cooperate among Member States? I think you know where I stand on these questions.

Closing: A Common Purpose

Let me close by taking us beyond our planet for a while.

The astronauts of Artemis 2 gave us many images of joy and hope, but the hearts of us IP people skipped a beat when a jar Nutella was seen floating nonchalantly past those astronauts in a photo. That brand (IRN 281788) – instantly recognizable – acted as a signal of origin and quality, even millions of miles away in space.

We saw the same dynamic closer to home, sometimes in humorously unexpected ways. When a truckload of KitKat was stolen, the brand – International Registration Number 569801 – was the headline.

So let us remember what we are working for – the power of brands to connect enterprises and the public, and the power of IP to touch and shape every aspect of our modern world.

And therefore let us see our collective mission as broadly and deeply as possible – that we are here to build a global IP ecosystem where IP is a powerful driver of what is fundamental to us as human beings – our desire and ability to innovate and create.

Thank you.