

General Statement of Japan at the 56th Series of Meetings of the Assemblies of the Member States of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2016

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of Japan, I would like to offer my hearty congratulations to Ambassador Janis Karklins for your important role as a chairperson of the Meeting. I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Francis Gurry, Director General of WIPO, and all the staff of the International Bureau for their tremendous efforts in holding this Meeting of the Assemblies.

Also, we have received words of condolence from a large number of countries for the loss and damage caused by the earthquakes that occurred in Kumamoto in the Kyushu region of Japan in April this year. They also kindly provided relief measures for affected applicants in Japan. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone for their kindness, concern and support.

Japan is committed to supporting the activities of WIPO, particularly for the purpose of bringing common benefits to all stakeholders that includes the actual users of the intellectual property system. Japan is looking forward to making contributions that enhance the presence of WIPO. Based on this, at this General Assembly, I would like to introduce some recent initiatives that Japan has been working on, in cooperation with WIPO.

As we know, the primary purpose of establishing WIPO is: “to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.” Therefore, the most important activities at WIPO should be ones that enhance global intellectual property (IP) services, such as the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), the Madrid Protocol, and the Hague Agreement. Japan believes that, in order to enhance these global IP services, it is essential for WIPO to listen to user opinions. As shown in the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) that was concluded in June this year between WIPO and the Japan Intellectual Property Association (JIPA), i.e. Japan’s largest private association on intellectual property, Japan sincerely hopes that WIPO’s efforts in further strengthening the cooperative relationship with user organizations and industry will have positive effects for improving WIPO’s services.

Since it was established in Tokyo ten years ago, the WIPO Japan Office (WJO) has been actively working and achieved outstanding outcomes in terms of conducting promotional activities to raise public awareness on WIPO’s various services as well as assist users. In addition, from this year 2016, the WJO has been closely involved in assistance activities for countries in the Asian region, which were organized through the Japan Funds-in-Trust at WIPO, a trust fund set up through voluntary contributions made by the government of Japan.

Going forward, Japan, as a host country of the WJO, intends to continue supporting the WJO, so that the WJO can further enhance its activities to further contribute to the development of WIPO.

In addition to the Japan Funds-in-Trust at WIPO stated above, Japan believes that one of the important roles of WIPO is providing assistance to developing countries based on improving the international intellectual property system, appropriately providing protection of intellectual property, and providing support for digitizing filing procedures to establish more efficient intellectual property administration. To achieve this, I am proud to say that the Government of Japan has made the largest contributions, of around 5,400,000 Swiss francs, at WIPO. In terms of the initiatives conducted under the Japan Funds, Japan has implemented a variety of assistance activities mainly for the Asia and Pacific regions, including welcoming trainees, sending its experts, and holding various forums and workshops. When looking at the past three years, Japan, by making use of the Funds, has contributed to developing human resources by welcoming about 2,500 trainees. In addition to these assistant activities, Japan has implemented its project to provide support for digitizing filing procedures without using paper documents, in order to further develop the global intellectual property system. The Japan Funds boasts a long history with many outstanding achievements and will mark its 30th anniversary next year 2017. Japan sincerely looks forward to WIPO's efforts in collaborating with the WJO, in responding to company needs as well as the needs for support in various areas, so that more effective assistant activities can be achieved in the future.

Japan believes that it is also essential to improve the operability and user-friendliness of the IT infrastructure for users around the world, with a focus on enhancing the global databases and the WIPO-CASE network. Last year, Japan formally started participating in WIPO-CASE. In addition, from July this year 2016, by using Japan's service platform called the Japan Platform for Patent Information or the "J-PlatPat," any WIPO-CASE participants can access and refer to dossier information of both the IP5 Offices and the WIPO-CASE participants. As a result, we have received very positive feedback from users. Going forward, Japan looks forward to WIPO's efforts in further enhancing the usability of its intellectual property infrastructure.

I feel that making improvements in the IT infrastructure is one area in which we can enhance user-friendliness more flexibly and easily compared to formulating treaties or regulations. Japan hopes that WIPO will continue focusing more on investments in IT infrastructure, making it a priority.

With regard to formulating treaties, under the aim of convening diplomatic conferences as early as possible on agendas, such as the Treaty on the Protection of Broadcasting

Organizations, Japan would like to make active contributions to advancing discussions on such agendas. Also, Japan will seek early adoption of the Design Law Treaty (DLT).

Finally, I would like to close my speech by introducing recent initiatives on intellectual property issues, which are being implemented in Japan.

Japan, as one of its initiatives to ensure the prompt granting of intellectual property rights, has been working to expand the network of the Patent Prosecution Highway or PPH program that provides benefits to both applicants and examiners. Japan also has been taking the lead in advancing discussions toward greater harmonization of intellectual property systems among developed countries as well as in speeding up the examination process. In addition, Japan has been conducting cooperative activities, so as to contribute to the sound development of intellectual property systems in developing countries. Also, a part of the process after intellectual property rights are granted, Japan has been promoting cooperation with these countries to strengthen enforcement activities involving intellectual property rights, with a focus on establishing intellectual property courts.

Also, the fourth industrial revolution is now underway worldwide, with the rapidly advancing development of emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI). As a result, with new industrial frameworks evolving, the importance of intellectual property has been steadily growing. Based on this, Japan also has started discussions on the connection between and among emerging technologies such as IoT and AI, and intellectual property.

At the IP5 Heads of Offices Meeting held in Tokyo in June 2016, which Japan hosted, Dr. Francis Gurry, Director General of WIPO, kindly attended the Meeting as an observer, and the Meeting was a great success with very significant achievements in a number of areas. At this Meeting, the Heads agreed on the “IP5 Joint Statement in Tokyo 2016,” in which three major initiatives were established as future directions that the IP5 cooperation is to take: (1) “enhance the relationship with users; (2) provide high-quality and reliable examination results; and (3) “explore the IP Offices’ readiness to respond to emerging technologies including AI and IoT.” In addition to these initiatives, the Heads agreed to launch a pilot framework in which the IP5 Offices work together to prepare international search reports (ISRs) for international applications filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) in order to understand this framework’s user needs and effects.

With greater globalization of business activities by companies around the world, including Japanese companies, trade goods such as commercial products are being distributed worldwide and across borders. Nonetheless, since intellectual property rights tend to be restricted by the sovereignty of each country, a gap has arisen. From the perspective of

improving the intellectual property system to deal with the globalized economy, Japan believes that the importance of the role that WIPO plays as an international organization will only continue to grow. Under such circumstances, Japan, based on its experiences and achievements that have been accumulated and refined through the years, intends to continue contributing to the activities of WIPO. Also, Japan greatly looks forward to further development of WIPO, so that the global intellectual property system can further encourage innovations.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

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