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STATE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



WORLD INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY ORGANIZATION

**SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
CREATIVITY AND INVENTION – A BETTER FUTURE FOR
HUMANITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

organized by
the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

in cooperation with
the State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) of
the People's Republic of China

Beijing, May 23 to 25, 2002

OPENING SPEECH

*Presented by Mrs. Rita Hayes, Deputy Director General, Office of Global Communications
and Public Diplomacy, Geneva*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, WIPO organized in cooperation with the Finnish authorities the First International Forum on Creativity and Invention – A Better Future for Humanity in the 21st century. During the discussions in Helsinki many participants suggested that the Forum become a regular event, to provide an opportunity for various groups of professionals and users of the intellectual property (IP) system to discuss issues of topical interest.

Many participants also suggested that the venue should change from year to year, so that users in different countries and regions of the world could feel more involved with matters related to intellectual property, creativity, invention and innovation.

It is only logical that this second edition of the forum is being held in one of the most innovative and creative regions of the world – Asia. In China we found enthusiastic partners among the various authorities and organizations involved, in particular the State Intellectual Property Office. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those organizations and individuals who helped make this Second International Forum happen.

China has for centuries been a center of creativity and invention – the driving forces for development of civilization. Today, intellectual property – the fruit of such creativity and invention – is becoming an increasingly dominant force for economic, social and cultural development. Knowledge and ideas are now prime sources of wealth creation.

Digital technology has increased the speed and reach of this change, allowing easy access, through the Internet, to an immense amount of information – the raw material of innovation. This has, in turn, contributed to a qualitative and quantitative increase in inventive activity.

Knowledge-based, technology-driven industries – software, for example – have enjoyed spectacular growth in recent years. Electronic commerce – an almost unknown phenomenon some five or six years ago – now spans all continents, and has redefined the way we do business. E-commerce has opened up markets and opportunities for both buyers and sellers worldwide.

In the next couple of days we will address issues of great importance to the future of the intellectual property system; issues that are ultimately important for the economic, social and cultural benefit of all. I hope that we can make a valuable contribution to the debate on the development of the intellectual property system, as it adapts to the rapid changes taking place in our increasingly interconnected world.

The intellectual property universe is expanding, propelling us into new areas of exploration – such as biotechnology, genetic resources, traditional knowledge and digital technology. At the same time, the Internet provides us with the opportunity to access this information and knowledge – the raw material of innovation – as well as a means to market the fruits of creativity.

A strong intellectual property system and the Internet are both invaluable tools for economic, social, and cultural development. And these are tools that are increasingly available to developing countries and countries in transition to a market economy.

This potential of the IP system as a means of empowerment for nations, individuals and business is one of WIPO's key messages for the 21st century. By promoting awareness of intellectual property – by creating an “IP-minded culture” – we can help ensure the recognition that a strong, well-functioning IP system is a crucial element of economic policy. Such systems help create business-friendly environments that encourage both foreign direct investment and local investment in research and development.

The effectiveness of the intellectual property protection system hinges on a broad-based understanding of the system and its advantages. One of WIPO's top priorities in the coming years is to demystify the intellectual property system. We are working to cultivate an intellectual property-minded global community in which leaders, policy-makers, the public and innovators themselves are in a position to reap the benefits of intellectual property protection. In such an environment, creativity and innovation flourish.

Our vision for the future is an intellectual property system accessible to all sectors of society in all parts of the world. Our aim is to establish long-lasting and durable systems of intellectual property protection, by focusing on the development of human resource capacities, institution-building, and intellectual property public awareness campaigns.

WIPO considers it vital to work closely with its partners and stakeholders to ensure that the IP system remains supple and adaptable to the changing needs of our evolving societies. An efficient, energetic IP infrastructure creates and fosters economic, social and cultural growth and stimulates investment in the creation and dissemination of new products and services. Most important, it helps generate the new knowledge necessary to drive the innovative process forward.

The premium placed on knowledge, innovation and creativity today is greater than ever before. We know that these are resources common to all peoples of the world. It is WIPO's ambition to ensure that the benefits of these inexhaustible resources are widely shared and enjoyed by all.

In closing, I would like to once again welcome all of you who are participating in this Second International Forum, and to thank you for devoting your time to the discussion of these important issues.

Our special thanks go to Commissioner Wang and all of his colleagues at the State Intellectual Property Office for their hospitality and the excellent preparations they have done in making the Second International Forum a success.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues from WIPO who have been instrumental in the organization of this forum.

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