

DG Opening Speech - Industrial Property Lusophone Conference 23 June 2022

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Zacarias da Costa, Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries,

Jorge Costa, Deputy Minister of Justice of Portugal,

António Campinos, President of the European Patent Office,

Ana Bandeira, President of INPI Portugal,

Dr Cláudio Furtado, President of INPI Brazil,

Excellences,

Heads of IP Office,

Distinguished Delegates,

Bom dia.

It is a great pleasure to be here in Lisbon and to join many colleagues and old friends at the first Industrial Property Lusophone Conference.

The poet Fernando Pessoa once wrote, “my homeland is the Portuguese language”.

This line has personal resonance for me. The Portuguese have been influencing and shaping the South-East Asian region for more than 500 years and for me, as someone who has Portuguese blood through my father’s side, this means that Pessoa’s line doesn’t just have a regional resonance, but also a personal connection as well.

Yet, while this is first and foremost a Lusophone community, for more than 25 years you have used a common linguistic heritage not as an end in itself, but as a powerful tool for the development of meaningful cooperation across various fields.

From tourism to food security, mobility to agriculture, education to e-governance – language is the seed from which a vibrant organization has taken root and blossomed.

Today, you are a growing community of 300 million people, characterized by friendship, fraternity, shared culture and a deep and longstanding sense of solidarity.

And this conference marks a new and exciting phase in your cooperation.

Why?

Because for the first time, your work together is extending to IP, innovation and creativity. And this is significant because more than ever, countries from all regions, including developing and emerging economies, see IP as a key asset, with new engines of innovation emerging around the world.

Today, 7 out of 10 IP filings come from outside Europe and the United States, something unimaginable when the CPLP was first founded 25 years ago. Venture capital funding is at record levels in Africa and Latin America. And high growth companies are spreading around the world. A decade ago only five countries were home to a unicorn startup, today that number is close to 50.

But while the fundamentals behind IP and innovation remain strong, at WIPO we believe that there is more that we can do to ensure that they work for everyone, everywhere.

In a world where innovation is becoming more open, more global and moving faster, IP can no longer remain just a technical vertical of interest only to IP specialists. It must become a horizontal catalyst for jobs, investments, business growth and, ultimately, economic and social development.

That is why we believe in a new vision of IP and, indeed, a new WIPO. Our ambition is to build a more inclusive IP ecosystem that connects not just with IP specialists and IP experts, but with creators, innovators, entrepreneurs, startups, small and medium enterprises, researchers and communities around the world.

This new chapter in WIPO's work aligns very closely with the CPLP's IP ambitions and so I would like to suggest three areas where we can step-up our work together.

First, IP for our recovery and business growth.

From developing new materials and tools that brings IP closer to SMEs.

To exploring how we can work with institutions such as SEBRAE, ProEmpresa, Beta-i and others that support startups and small businesses on the ground.

To progressing the conversation around intangible asset financing so that businesses can use the strength of their IP and intangible assets to unlock the funds they need to grow – WIPO is committed to working across all these areas to supporting businesses of all sizes to leverage their IP rights effectively.

CPLP members are rich in innovative talent. We saw this in the opening video – it is part of our common heritage to innovate and create.

From Mozambique's digital transport platform 'Appload';

To Cabo Verde's online payments system 'Faxi';

To Portugal's AR sports-collectables startup 'MyLADS' and many others;

A critical mass of innovative, digitally-focused businesses are emerging across this community.

Our work must be to connect these businesses and other entrepreneurs to the IP system, so that they see it as a core part of their business strategy.

At the same time, and as economies seek to build back from the pandemic, we also need to raise IP awareness across the creative industries.

Prior to 2019, the creative and cultural industries were one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy. While COVID-19 disrupted this momentum, CPLP countries remain rich in creative and cultural heritage. From Brazilian Bossa Nova, to Mozambican Marrabenta, and beyond, we must continue to support musicians, writers, artists and performers – including in areas of software and others that are connected to industrial property – to bring their talents and ideas to the world and to earn a living from them.

Second, let us harness geographical indications to help communities bring their heritage to the world.

In recent years, WIPO has provided technical assistance to countries like Cabo Verde and Mozambique as the GI's for 'Vinho de Fogo' and 'Cabrito de Tete' were developed. These are just two in a long list of unique products from across the CPLP, including "Cacao de Sao Tome",

“Porto” and “Alta Mogiana Coffee” that are much sought after around the world as artisanal products.

As more governments look to GI registration not just as a vehicle for protecting traditional heritage but also to take these products to the world, WIPO is ready to deepen our cooperation across the CPLP in these efforts.

One idea we would like to share with everyone is perhaps we can think about launching a GI network across Lusophone countries that would act as a platform for the sharing of ideas and best practices amongst the community.

Third, supporting the next generation of innovators and creators to thrive.

Many CPLP countries boast young and dynamic populations. In Angola 45 percent of the population is under 15, nearly 60 percent of people in Equatorial Guinea are aged 25 and under and almost two-thirds of Brazilians are yet to celebrate their 30th birthday.

It is vital that we connect our youth to IP and raise awareness of how IP rights can be their ally and partner in making their ideas a reality.

In Cabo Verde, which I visited in March this year, WIPO is helping the government to develop a new project aimed at training 200 young entrepreneurs to unlock the value of IP through bespoke training and mentorship activities. Once established, this is a model that perhaps can be adapted and applied to other national contexts and we are very happy open to discussions with CPLP members on how we can scale this across the region.

But we also need your help – not only when it comes to designing new projects, but also in signposting young people towards WIPO’s existing support and services.

The WIPO Academy, for example, is the world's largest provider of IP education and training, reaching over a quarter of million participants last year.

We recently reviewed the Academy's courses and have shifted our focus from technical capacity building to the development of skills and knowledge. We would welcome further participation in the Academy from across your Member States, particularly around our courses on IP and Exports, IP and Tourism and IP4Teachers and Educators, which are not just focusing on technical IP knowledge, but are giving and imparting practical IP skills to a broader range of stakeholders.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

Around the world, geography is the glue that binds most intergovernmental agencies together. The CPLP, however, has always represented something different. Indeed, you are one of the most geographically diverse intergovernmental organizations in the world – spanning four continents, across nine Member States.

This diversity is a source of strength. Not only do you connect the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the EU to ECOWAS and MERCOSUR; but you span one of the greenest nations in Europe, some of the most creative societies in Africa and Latin America's largest startup ecosystem.

In other words, the potential across the CPLP region is vast.

IP, innovation and creativity can help unlock this. But to do so they need to come alive.

Trademarks must become brands; patents, technologies that change people's lives; and copyright, engaging content that captures audiences around the world.

This conference is an important step in that direction and WIPO looks forward to working with our partners across the CPLP to deepen our cooperation and harness IP as a powerful catalyst for growth and development.

Thank you to Executive Secretary, Ambassador da Costa and your team for bringing this conference together and to our Portuguese colleagues for being such welcoming hosts.

Whether you are here in Lisbon, or joining remotely from around the world, you have my warm wishes for a successful and engaging program ahead.

Thank you very much.

Obrigado.