

## **The speech to be delivered in Bhutan Conference**

Afghanistan, today, is on the cusp of bringing the benefits of a sound intellectual property system to all sectors of Afghan society: the consumer, the inventor, the scientists, the farmer, the business person, the entrepreneur, the artist.

In fact, Afghanistan's Compact and its newly adopted "Afghan National Development Strategy" both recognize IP reform as part of its overall economic development of the country. This was recognized as early as 2005, when Afghanistan joined the WIPO on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Considering that as recently as 2005, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan had only one IP-related law

on its books, that being on Trademarks, which was adopted in 1960, today the situation is totally different.

Not only have we initiated a legislative and administrative framework for the establishment of a modern and efficient intellectual property system, which includes TRIPs compatible laws on Patents, Copyright and Trademarks, but we have had the good fortune of receiving generous support from various national and international organizations. Based on WTO/TRIPS requirements we also have drafted new IP laws for instance Geographical Indications and Industrial Designs. We also have planned to draft more relevant laws and regulations to protect IP rights in Afghanistan by support of donor communities.

Afghanistan was able to participate in a variety of seminars and workshops designed to strengthen our capacity to formulate TRIPs compliant policies, laws and regulations --as well as to assist in our efforts to expand the development of Intellectual Property Rights --while concurrently increasing public awareness of the importance of intellectual property as an engine for innovative growth and development for a country like ours.

However, despite our recent accomplishments in the sphere of intellectual property development, we still have a long way to go, including that of WTO accession.

One of our immediate priorities is that of creating a world-standard patent and trademark office that will empower Afghan inventors, creators, and entrepreneurs to move our nation ahead, both in

terms of economics and creativity, the two tiers which a strong intellectual property system contributes.

This requires modernization both in terms of law reform and capital-intensive infrastructure. One key innovation that is being introduced to patent and trademark is that of e-governance and e-commerce. Not only are we planning to bring the patent and trademark application process to the home via the internet, it is our plan to develop a comprehensive patent and trademark database to assist both the trademark and patent examiners.

Of course, in order for our path towards Intellectual Property modernization to march on, we need the continued cooperation and financial assistance from the international donor community.

Our plans call for wide-spread promotion of intellectual property rights.

For example, we would like to develop a series of nation-wide workshops designed to reach all facets of business and industry – including the all-important “small and medium” enterprises.

Moreover, it is our intention to establish, if funds are available, several regional IP information centers, throughout Afghanistan -- so that local businesses can benefit from our intellectual property reforms.

Finally, we are hoping to find the financial resources to conduct IP training courses for Afghan institutions such as the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Ministry of Finance, Custom Officials, Ministry of

Interior and Border forces, the Attorney-General's office, members of our judiciary and other relevant institutions.

In the final analysis, that is why it is important, today, for us to continue our efforts to establish a balanced and comprehensive IPR regime, including that of our schools, universities and research centers as well as boosting and strengthening our institutional capabilities in this vital area.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak.