

**Third Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy
International Conference Center, Geneva
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**Opening Address by Dr. Kamil Idris
Director General
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome you to the Third Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy hosted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). This important event is an excellent occasion for representatives from government and business circles to join forces and harness the growing political will to tackle the mounting problem of counterfeiting and piracy across the globe. It is an ideal opportunity to raise public awareness about the scope and magnitude of these activities which undermine the economic and social fabric of our societies, incurring immense economic and human costs.

We all share a common goal: to effectively combat counterfeiting and piracy. This considerable task is a key part of the broader challenge of ensuring effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights throughout the world.

I also wish to extend a very warm welcome to all Ministers, speakers, panelists and participants and to the many representatives from both the government and private sectors – both important constituencies of this

Organization. Your presence and your collective experience and expertise will certainly help to enrich our deliberations over the next two days. The diversity of regions, sectors and interests that you represent are evidence of the global reach of counterfeiting and piracy and of the growing political will to address them at the national level.

The damage caused by counterfeiting and piracy is extensive. While the illegal nature of these activities preclude an exact calculation of their economic cost, some current – conservative - statistics estimate the annual economic losses associated with cross-border counterfeiting and piracy at more than 150 billion US dollars. These losses are not confined to wealthier economies, but are increasingly undercutting the economic performance of local entrepreneurs in developing economies who struggle to compete with the large number of cheap counterfeit goods in local markets.

The central message of WIPO to all of our stakeholders, in both government and the private sector, is elegantly simple: human creativity and invention, developed and exploited through an efficient and accessible intellectual property system, is a key tool for promoting economic, technological and cultural development. We believe that this is especially true for developing countries and emerging markets that are seeking to become more competitive in the global marketplace. Governments in many developing countries are increasingly acknowledging the fact that it is in their own national interest to introduce legislation that protects intellectual property rights, and to develop efficient mechanisms for enforcement.

The good news for all countries is that there are effective ways and means to reduce counterfeiting and piracy and secure a more stable economic future for

their people, in particular, by building strong, equitable and accessible systems of intellectual property protection. The benefits of an effective intellectual property system area strong incentive for enforcement.

Counterfeiting and piracy are not merely domestic problems, to be dealt with unilaterally at the national level, nor are they problems that predominantly affect the economies and people of industrialized countries. Counterfeiting and piracy are problems without borders; global problems that require global cooperation, global coordination, and global solutions.

WIPO is at the heart of national, regional and international efforts to set standards for the protection of intellectual property rights and to raise awareness of the far-reaching impact of counterfeiting and piracy. Through the Advisory Committee on Enforcement, WIPO offers a forum for examining current intellectual property enforcement issues. We also respond to requests from countries for legal advice on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, and we organize a wide range of training programs for law enforcement agencies and administrative authorities.

There is much to be said on counterfeiting and piracy and this Congress is an opportunity for us to focus on identifying practical strategies which will have a real and lasting impact. While the challenges are considerable, the signs of changing public perceptions and increased political determination suggest that the time is ripe for concerted action.

I wish you all constructive and fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.