

Review of the WIPO Singapore Office

Internal Oversight Reports



IOD Ref: IA 2023-03
December 15, 2023
Internal Audit Section

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIMS	Administrative Integrated Management System
AIPRAP	ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights Action Plan
AMC	Arbitration and Mediation Center
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCC	Business Continuity Coordinator
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DAP	Division for Asia and the Pacific
DDG	Deputy Director General
EPM	Enterprise Performance Management
ER	Expected Results
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
HQ	Headquarters
ICS	Individual Contractor Services
IOD	Internal Oversight Division
IP	Intellectual Property
IPOBSD	IP Office Business Solution Division
IPOS	Intellectual Property Office of Singapore
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTSP	Medium-Term Strategic Plan
OI	Office Instruction
PI	Performance Indicator
RBM	Results Based Management
RNDS	Regional and National Development Sector
SIAD	Security and Information Assurance Division
SME	Small and Medium-size Enterprise
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSCS	Safety and Security Coordination Service
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WSO	WIPO Singapore Office

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) established the WIPO Singapore Office (WSO) in January 2005, following the signing of a Host Country Agreement with the Government of Singapore, with the mandate of contributing to WIPO's work in the Asia-Pacific region, by among others, working with Governments, private sector, and civil society to promote cooperation, provide technical assistance and advisory, with the overall goal of supporting the strengthening and promotion of an IP culture in the region. The WSO reports to the Deputy Director General (DDG) of the Regional and National Development Sector (RNDS) of WIPO.
2. The Internal Oversight Division (IOD) did not find any critical issues during the review of the WSO. However, IOD highlighted opportunities to further enhance roles and responsibilities, and communication, branding and visibility.
3. While the mandate of the WSO covered the Asia-Pacific Region, in practice, over the years, this mandate has evolved with the strategies of the Organization, to concentrate its efforts on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which is made up of 10 nations¹. However, the Division for Asia and the Pacific (DAP) in the RNDS also holds a mandate that covers the 38 countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, including the ASEAN. IOD highlighted the need to ensure clarity in the roles and responsibilities of both units, to avoid any overlap, duplicates, misunderstanding, and inefficient and ineffective flow of information between WIPO and relevant stakeholders. Acknowledging that a number of measures have been taken by RNDS, IOD recommends that these measures be further strengthened along with coordination and communication among all parties, in particular when implementing activities under the new MoU signed with ASEAN in August 2023, which designates both the WSO and the DAP as focal points.
4. The WIPO Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) places importance on the use of External Offices to raise awareness of Intellectual Property² (IP) through multiple means of communication. Further, the WIPO Program of Work and Budget 2024/25 highlights the priority of "delivering a harmonized brand experience yet a personalized WIPO customer journey"³. While acknowledging that the WSO has undertaken various activities to promote the WIPO brand in the Region, including cross collaborations with other stakeholders, IOD however, found that more can be done regarding the look and feel of the WSO Office as an extension of the Organization in the region through measures to visually promote WIPO by taking advantage of existing promotional items that contribute to increasing the brand awareness of the Organization .
5. IOD acknowledges the efforts made by the WSO to increase its digital presence, through increased networking, diversity of activities, use of videos, newsletters, and other online publications. This is corroborated with the 33 per cent increase in the number of unique visitors⁴ to the website between 2021 and 2023. However, when compared to other External Offices, and given the regional scope of the WSO, it is expected that the number of unique visitors to the Webpage of the WSO be at the higher end of the spectrum. This is currently not the case, and the RNDS and WSO would need to reflect on the root causes and develop appropriate remediation. A plan that outlines actions to enhance branding, promotion and outreach, digital presence, and visibility, would benefit the WSO. Further, leveraging the maturing digital economy as a common denominator in the region would enable WIPO to develop innovative strategies, while considering the need to strengthen and build networks, to reach the diverse target groups and communities of the ASEAN region.

¹ ASEAN Member States - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

² WO/PBC/32/3 - MTSP 2022-2026, page 18, paragraph 93.

³ WIPO Program of Work and Budget 2024/2025, page 11, paragraph 14.

⁴ Source: WIPO Web Analytics: 2021 - 3390 unique visitors; 2023 - 4513 unique visitors

6. Finally, the recruitment for two posts currently vacant in the WSO should be expedited, and the resource needs for 2024 should consider the potential impact of the status of these recruitments on planned activities for 2024, as well as potential spillovers of activities from 2023 as a result of the vacancies.

7. The report makes two recommendations that management has agreed to implement during 2024.