

Diplomatic Conference to Conclude and Adopt a Design Law Treaty
Opening Ceremony
WIPO Director General Daren Tang
November 11, 2024

As Delivered

Highnesses,
Excellencies, Delegates,
Friends, Colleagues,
Asalaam Alaikum.

Welcome to this Diplomatic Conference to Conclude and Adopt a Design Law Treaty.

This is truly a historic moment for all of us.

It is the first time in more than a decade that WIPO has convened a Diplomatic Conference outside Geneva. It is the first WIPO Diplomatic Conference held in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. And it is the first time in 25 years that the global IP community is gathering together in support of designers around the world.

The journey to this moment has been decades in the making. Along the way, we have seen generations of negotiators and representatives debate, discuss and attempt to find a way forward to today. We owe them our gratitude and we thank them for their invaluable contributions. Their tenacity and resilience paved the way for the General Assembly's landmark decision in 2022, convening this Diplomatic Conference. And here we are – ready to bring this final chapter to a resounding close in Riyadh.

Later today, during my opening remarks, I'll say more about the substantive work ahead of us and the precious opportunity we have to shape the future of the global IP ecosystem for the benefit of designers everywhere.

But at this opening ceremony, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to all who have made this final chapter possible.

First, let me thank our hosts for their warm hospitality, unstinting generosity, unsparing energy and full commitment, over many months, in preparing for this Conference. We gather in this spectacular setting of the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center, which has hosted many international meetings of a diplomatic, economic and cultural nature, and now brings the world's experts on designs and design registrations under its gilded dome.

The scale and grandeur of these facilities is evident to us all, but even the most beautifully marbled halls would feel cold and empty if not filled by the welcome, warmth and energy of our colleagues from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially our colleagues from the Saudi Authority for IP (SAIP).

Those of you who understand designs will also appreciate the many design touches in the way the Conference has been organized, right down to the color and design of your nameplates. Many of these touches have been developed by "SAIPers" – as the colleagues at SAIP call themselves, including the logo of this Diplomatic Conference, which draws inspiration from the palm trees you see everywhere in Riyadh.

This logo, which marries traditional heritage and modern design, captures not only the spirit of this Conference, but also Saudi Arabia's development journey. Under its ambitious Vision 2030, the Kingdom is blending its rich history and heritage with bold plans for innovation-driven development, supported by science, entrepreneurship, and technology.

Having been involved in SAIP's journey in a previous capacity, I have seen this transformation up close. Under SAIP's leadership, strong progress is being made in implementing the country's National IP Strategy, a comprehensive framework for raising IP awareness and building a culture of innovation and creativity throughout the Kingdom. I need only mention that just last year the Prime Minister announced an investment of over 300 million to help the Kingdom implement this strategy.

The result of this consistent focus on IP over the past few years is evident. Since 2021, Saudi Arabia has climbed many places in WIPO's Global Innovation Index (GII), achieving its highest ever GII ranking of 47th this year, placing the Kingdom among the world's top 50 innovation drivers.

But we must remember that this is not an entirely new story. For millennia, Saudi Arabia has been a crucible of ideas and innovation, including in heritage, beauty and design. From intricate weavings and woodcarvings to beautiful jewelry and furniture, this region has been home to innovators and creators since antiquity.

At the same time, it has been a crossroads for centuries. Ancient trading routes traversed the desert, spreading ideas, bridging cultures and linking communities. So it is fitting that over the next two weeks, Saudi Arabia is where, hopefully, we will unite to find the bridges that will bring us together to a new treaty that supports designers from around the world.

However, this moment is not just for designers. A successful outcome will once again show that multilateralism can deliver, and that despite challenges, the global community can still come together as one to shape a better future. This is what happened in May of this year, when 193 Member States agreed by consensus to a new WIPO Treaty on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge. Let us allow that success to inspire us and to energize us again.

In closing, I thank all Member States, delegations and observers for travelling to be with us and for your continued commitment to WIPO's work. I also welcome those representatives who are based here in Riyadh, and who, despite not following the technical negotiations in Geneva, must suddenly make head and tail of this treaty.

A special mention must be made of the Group Coordinators, who once again are taking on the responsibility of organizing their groups. I also congratulate, in advance, all those soon to be elected to office-bearing positions.

It would be remiss of me not to also thank everyone else who played a role in the organization of this Conference, many of whom are my own colleagues from across literally every corner of WIPO. You are far too numerous to mention by name, but please know that your hard work is seen, recognized and deeply appreciated.

Lastly, let me pledge the support of myself and of all WIPO colleagues in facilitating and supporting your work as Member States.

Thank you. I wish all of us a successful Diplomatic Conference ahead.