



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva at the 61st Series of Meetings of the WIPO Assemblies

Geneva, 21 September 2020

Mr. President,

1. The Delegation of the Holy See expresses its congratulations for your continued leadership of this Session as Chair of the General Assembly and thanks the WIPO Secretariat for the efforts to make these General Assemblies possible. This Session represents our last opportunity to renew our deep appreciation to Dr. Francis Gurry for his commitment and his leadership to the World Intellectual Property Organization and to intellectual property in general over the last 12 years.

The Delegation of the Holy See congratulates the Director General-elect Mr. Daren Tang and looks forward to working closely with him to advance a balanced and effective international IP system that aims to promote the common good. Over the last months, we have witnessed, through the example of those working on the front lines against Covid-19 who are still providing an arduous and at times heroic service, “visible signs of humanity that warm the heart”. (Pope Francis *Addresses to doctors, nurses, healthcare workers from the Lombardy region, 20 June 2020*).

2. During this pandemic, the human family is experiencing its common weakness and shared fragility. Countries, through the mobilization of unprecedented investments in collaborative, not-for-profit research and development have shown what we can do when we come together to face a shared global health threat. That is the kind of collaboration that can save lives and transform the health of billions of people globally, thus

demonstrating that the magnitude of the response must match the scale of the crisis and it must be multilateral.

3. WIPO, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, has shown its readiness to face the innovation challenge through the provision of a database, PATENTSCOPE, with over 80 million technology disclosures and a specially developed COVID-19 search and retrieval facility dedicated to enhancing access to technological information disclosed in published patents concerning inventions relating to the detection, prevention and treatment of COVID-19. Moreover, the establishment of some 900 Technology and Innovation Support Centers worldwide to provide access to patent and scientific data and publications and ancillary facilities for researchers in the least developed, developing and transition economies, represent some of the immediate actions put in place by this Organization.
4. The Holy See, recognizing the role of the protection system of intellectual property and the inventive activity for the sake of the common good, would like to renew its call to put in place legislation and plans to ensure that patents and trade measures do not become barriers for access to those essential treatments, diagnostics, medicines, medical supplies and devices As stressed by Pope Francis *“it would be sad if, for the vaccine for Covid-19, priority were be given to the richest! It would be sad if this vaccine were to become the property of this nation or another, rather than universal and for all”* (General Audience, 18 August 2020).
5. In the fight against the pandemic, we should not forget another persistent crisis that the international community is facing: the ecological one. Innovation has a central role to play in tackling climate change, as affirmed in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (Article 10), which states, “[a]ccelerating, encouraging and enabling innovation is critical for an effective, long-term global response to climate change and promoting economic growth and sustainable development.”
6. The IP system fosters innovation, as well as the transfer and dissemination of technology – including climate-friendly technology. While IP rights provide economic incentives to develop new solutions, they can also help in diffusing innovation to the places of greatest need, through for

example, licensing agreements or joint ventures. Five years ago, the international community agreed on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, where more than half of them require green technology solutions if they are to be achieved. There is an urgency of developing and using environmentally friendly solutions. *“We need the genuine will to tackle the root causes of the climate upheavals that are happening. Generic commitments are not enough [...] We need to work today for everyone’s future. Young people and the poor will hold us to account”* (Audience, 12 September 2020).

In conclusion, Mr. President,

Allow me to renew my Delegation’s congratulations to the Director-General for his election and to express again our willingness to collaborate with him and the Secretariat.

Thank you, Mr. President.