

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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**SINGAPOREAN DAREN TANG OFFICIALLY APPOINTED
AS THE NEXT WIPO DIRECTOR GENERAL**

Singapore, 8 May 2020 – Mr Daren Tang, Chief Executive of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) has been officially appointed as the next Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). WIPO is a specialised United Nations (UN) agency based in Geneva, Switzerland, with 193 member states and an annual revenue in excess of S\$600 million. Mr Tang will take over the helm of WIPO on 1 October 2020 for a term of six years. This marks the first time a Singaporean will lead a UN agency, and WIPO's first Director General from Asia.

2. In his acceptance speech (<https://youtu.be/HQsU9Wmnro>), Mr Tang thanked all member states for their support and paid tribute, in particular, to the WIPO staff and out-going Director General Dr Francis Gurry. He also outlined the global challenges faced by the world today, including the “deeper forces of unilateralism and parochialism” threatening to undermine multilateral institutions, and urged member states to respond by working “even more closely together” through a common, global effort. Mr Tang shared that WIPO has grown stronger and more relevant since its inception 50 years ago due to the “proven willingness of all member states to share joint responsibility, confront challenges, and transform together.” Laying out his plans for WIPO, Mr Tang prioritised the need to build an inclusive, balanced, vibrant, and forward-looking global intellectual property (IP) ecosystem. (Please see Annex A for summary of Mr Tang's plans for WIPO and acceptance speech)

3. Senior Minister of State (Law and Health), Mr Edwin Tong, said: “Congratulations to Daren for being the first Singaporean to lead a UN Agency and to be appointed as Director General of WIPO. This is a momentous occasion for Singapore. Under Daren's leadership as Chief Executive of IPOS we have seen Singapore's IP ecosystem flourish. During his term, Singapore has risen in ranks to become second globally and top in Asia for the best IP protection in the World Economic Forum's Global

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Competitiveness Report. As he takes on the new role as Director General of the WIPO, I wish Daren all the best in leading the organisation towards building a more vibrant IP community internationally. I believe that Daren will continue his great work at WIPO and contribute towards moulding the future of the global IP ecosystem.”

4. Chairman of the IPOS Board, Dr Stanley Lai, said: “On behalf of the IPOS Board of Directors, we extend our heartiest congratulations to IPOS Chief Executive Daren Tang for being officially appointed as the next Director General of the WIPO. We are confident that he will bring the same vision orientation, energy, outcomes, and capabilities that have come to define him during his time at IPOS into the auspices of WIPO. Having worked with him for several years, the Board is certain that the global IP community will be served by a Director General who is exceptionally attuned to the interests of countries, economies, and also equipped with a deep understanding of IP and its forceful impact on innovation and global development, especially during these challenging times. These qualities will serve WIPO, her member states and the larger IP community well.”

5. Dr Lai added, “IPOS remains committed as an active member of the international IP community, and we will continue to partner and support the important work of WIPO. We wish Daren every success and look forward to working with him and WIPO to build the future of the global IP ecosystem.”

6. Mr Tang will relinquish his role as the Chief Executive of IPOS, a statutory board under the Ministry of Law, where he drove the strategic transformation of IPOS from an IP registry and regulator into an innovation agency that helps to build Singapore’s future economy. His term saw major updates to Singapore’s IP Hub Masterplan, legislative and policy reforms to the IP regime and a scaling up of international engagement. IPOS today has cooperation agreements with over 70 regional and international partners. Under his leadership, Singapore ranked second globally and top in Asia for the best IP protection in the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report and IPOS was recognised as the world’s most innovative IP office by the World Trademark Review in 2020.¹

MINISTRY OF LAW AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE OF SINGAPORE
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¹ [World Trademark Review](#), 6 Apr 2020.

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Annex

Annex A: Acceptance Speech by Mr Daren Tang to the WIPO General Assembly on 8 May 2020

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Executive Summary

In his acceptance speech, Mr Tang prioritised the need to build an inclusive, balanced, vibrant, and forward-looking global intellectual property (IP) ecosystem that included:

- Providing more support to developing and least developed countries;
- Working with IP offices to support stakeholders including artists, creators, start-ups, and SMEs amongst others;
- Improving and optimising the current WIPO international registration systems for IP protection;
- Leveraging on WIPO's IP data to deliver insights that can help members make better operational and policy decisions;
- Re-energising WIPO's normative agenda;
- Broadening the perspective of IP beyond its legal and technical aspects to its role in connecting innovators and artists to markets and communities;
- Partnering various international organisations on solutions to global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, public health, access to information and knowledge; and
- Building a culture of strong governance, diversity, mutual respect, passion, effectiveness, and financial prudence within the organisation.

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**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY MR DAREN TANG
TO THE WIPO GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON 8 MAY 2020
FOR THE OFFICIAL APPOINTMENT AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF WIPO**

Your Excellency Ambassador Omar Zniber, Chairperson of the WIPO General Assembly,
Dr Francis Gurry, Director General, WIPO
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

I am humbled and honoured by the trust and support that the members of the General Assembly have given me in appointing me as Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

At the outset, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Chairperson of our Assembly, Ambassador Omar Zniber. Thank you, Ambassador, for your calm, wise and impartial leadership in guiding all members and directing the proceedings of our Assembly under these unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the Chairperson of the Coordination Committee, Ambassador François Rivasseau. Thank you for your unfailing patience and skilful diplomacy in guiding us through the many months leading up to my nomination as Director General by the Committee, and for always ensuring that respect for due process was upheld.

Above all, I wish to express my most sincere thanks to all Member States for your support and confidence in entrusting me with this immense responsibility. I promise to discharge it to the utmost of my ability, with humility and sincerity, and to always be guided by the interests and needs of all the Member States. Our common aspirations and goals can only be achieved through support from and mutual co-operation with all of you, and my work and that of the Secretariat will be conducted on the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability.

My profound gratitude also goes to the Singapore Government, whose support for me as its nominee was critical to the successful outcome of the campaign. I am proud to be a son of Singapore, and my hope is to bring the values of professionalism, integrity, inclusiveness and multilateralism, all of which are very much part of the Singapore ethos, in the service of global IP community.

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Mr. Chairman, at this juncture I also wish to pay the highest tribute to the WIPO staff and leadership, and in particular to the outgoing Director-General, Dr. Francis Gurry. Dr. Gurry first joined WIPO in 1985. He has served this organization untiringly for 35 years in various capacities, and as its Director-General for the last 12 years. His acuity of mind, his intellect and vision, his leadership, as well as his magisterial command of IP are known to us all. Without exception, we all owe you an immense debt of gratitude, Dr. Gurry. For me, it was personally a privilege to have worked with you, and to now have the opportunity to build on your sterling accomplishments and those of your predecessors. I thank you warmly for a lifetime of committed service to WIPO and wish you the very best in your many future endeavours.

Distinguished Delegates,

This year marks 50 years since the WIPO Convention came into force, and we find ourselves meeting under extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances on this occasion. Many of us are wondering when life can go back to normal and what the new normal would look like. In these uncertain times, we need to return to fundamentals. We have to ask ourselves what is truly important, to be our ballast in this storm and serve as our compass as we emerge from it.

I believe that there are two fundamentals underpinning the work of WIPO. First, as human beings we have an innate drive to innovate and create. Indeed, it is one of the defining characteristics of the human race and will continue to be so. Second, as a UN agency, our mission is to help channel this drive to better the lives of our people, our communities, our countries and our world. This is why the WIPO Convention continues to be relevant even 50 years later, in its exhortation to all of us that “in order to encourage creative activity” we should “promote the protection of IP throughout the world”.

To achieve this mission, we have to overcome not just the urgent and extraordinary challenge that confronts all of us at present, but also the deeper forces of unilateralism and parochialism that threaten to undermine the very basic tenets of our institution. Our response to all these challenges must be to work even more closely together, not just because of the international character of our agency, but because the most important challenges we face simply cannot be tackled or solved without a common, global effort.

Distinguished Delegates,

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Turning to the work ahead, I first want to thank the many members and individuals who have taken the time to share their views with me about how we can advance the Mission of WIPO and take it to the next stage. Your views have been invaluable in allowing me to outline what lies ahead of us. Our conversation and engagement on the work and future of WIPO must be continuous, so that WIPO can be fully energized by a common vision across all its members, stakeholders and the WIPO staff.

It is my conviction that while the fundamentals of WIPO remain unchanged, the demands and expectations placed on us by our peoples and the world require us to go beyond continuing to do what we do well. We must also explore innovative ways of doing what we now do, as well as trying some things which are entirely new but will bring meaningful and positive impact to our communities. Our work can be channelled along three themes.

First, we must prioritize work towards building an **inclusive** global IP ecosystem that serves the interests of all countries and their stakeholders. Special attention must be paid to those that need more help, especially the developing countries and the least developed amongst them. Such support must be done in a manner that respects and understands the relevant political, economic and cultural context in which it is being rendered.

After 50 years, there are still many Member States who continue to feel that it is not clear how IP has brought concrete benefits to their communities or their economies. This must be addressed. Inclusiveness therefore also means that our support is rendered not just to IP offices, but also work with them to support the stakeholders within a country – the artists, the creators, the start-ups and SMEs, and others – to have access to the right training and receive the support they need. Success must be measured not just by activity but by impact. Ultimately, we need the people of each country to see a direct connection between IP as a legal right and their lives as innovators, creators, business owners, workers and consumers.

Second, we must work towards a **balanced** global IP ecosystem, ensuring that the institutions, companies, policy makers, users and all stakeholders in our global innovation community can participate in, and benefit from, this global IP ecosystem.

WIPO's IP registries will remain a cornerstone of our work – through it, we provide a platform for the inventions of our people and enterprises to reach out to the world. Indeed, this aspect of our work makes WIPO unique – no other UN agency interacts with inventors and innovative enterprises from around

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the world on a daily basis as we do, through the hundreds of thousands of IP filings that flow through our registration systems each year. These systems are core and critical to WIPO's mission success and must be constantly improved to deliver optimal services for all users.

As for the valuable data that is generated by these systems or which is otherwise held by WIPO, we must use technology and analytics to transform them into insights that can be shared with Member States and the international community, to allow us to make even better operational and policy choices, whether nationally or globally.

Our work on the normative agenda must be re-energized. Let us come together and find the political will to commit to overcoming the current impasse. In some areas, we are not far from reaching consensus. To give this area a push, I will undertake intensive consultations in the coming months. As we embark on this new decade, we owe it to our peoples to bring this work to fruition, to regain momentum in a core area of our work, and to ensure that we continue to remain relevant.

Third, WIPO must work towards a **vibrant** and **forward-looking** global IP ecosystem.

It must help the world broaden its perspective of IP beyond its legal and technical aspects to its powerful role as a supporter of entrepreneurs and enterprises, catalyst for investments, driver of economic growth and a promoter of social vibrancy.

It must support our innovators in our start-ups and SMEs, and our artists in the various creative fields, both of whom represent the future of our world, to connect more closely to our markets and communities.

WIPO should also leverage on its role as global, neutral and professional platform for IP offices to come together to discuss common challenges, share best practices, incubate projects and bring the global community of IP offices even closer together. It should engage and work closely with other UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs to find solutions to global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, public health and access to information and knowledge, especially since such challenges increasingly touch on aspects of IP.

Even as we look to the advancement of our Mission, it is important that we build the strongest organizational foundations for our work. As the Chief Executive of WIPO, a key part of my duties will be

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to work closely with WIPO colleagues to lead and manage the organization well, so as to execute our Mission professionally and effectively.

First, as an agency that supports innovators and creators around the world, WIPO itself must be a dynamic, open, and transparent Organization, with a diverse staff membership that better reflects a fair gender and geographical balance. We will strive to recruit the best amongst the well-qualified as staff members, and to build a culture where there is mutual respect, free from fear or favour, and focused on action and impact. But it will not be enough to recruit the best people into WIPO. To retain and grow them, we must also invest in training our people, which in turn will make us an even more effective Organization, whose staff who are not just passionate about making a difference but are effective at doing so.

Second, WIPO needs to continue emphasizing high standards of governance, across the breadth and hierarchy of the agency. This will help it to continue earning the trust, goodwill and credibility of members and other stakeholders, and enable it to successful carry out its work.

Third, WIPO needs to continue being financially healthy. At present, we are in a position of financial strength. This is a testament to the skill and efforts of the WIPO leadership as well as result of the increased interest in innovation globally. However, the current situation has amply demonstrated that this must never be taken for granted and we must continue to be prudent in the way we manage our assets and resourceful in the way we execute our work. With this approach, we will have sufficient resources to sustain our agency and continue strongly supporting each and every one of you.

Distinguished Delegates,

Even if the world around us right now is in a state of flux, the fundamental tenets of WIPO remain unchanged. WIPO is still the custodian of the global IP ecosystem, ensuring its robust health and advancing its future development. Since the creation of the Paris and Berne Conventions in the late 19th century, to the entry into force of the WIPO Convention 50 years ago, the world has suffered the ravages of history and profoundly transformed time and again. Yet each time we and our predecessor institutions did not merely survive but emerged from it stronger and more relevant. This is because of the wisdom, courage and leadership of those who came before us, who brought the WIPO Member States together each time we faced moments of upheaval, to set aside our differences and work collectively for the common good.

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It is this proven willingness to share joint responsibility, confront challenges and transform together that have allowed WIPO to continue to be relevant and vital to the world. As your new DG, I ask you, in the midst of these extraordinary times, to join me in living up to this spirit, to overcome the challenges we face and together to renew, reinforce and re-energize WIPO as it sets on a new path.

I thank you all.

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