

About the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

The World Intellectual Property Organisation is a self- funding agency of the United Nations, established by the WIPO Convention signed at Stockholm on 14 July 1967 and amended 28 September 1979. WIPO has been in existence for 53 years (1967 – 2020). WIPO as the global forum for Intellectual Property (IP) services, policy, information and corporation has 193 Member States, Nigeria and Ghana inclusive.¹ WIPO has published its mission thus “our mission is to lead the development of a balanced and effective international IP system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all”.²

Decision making process is carried out by the General Assembly and other WIPO designated committees.³ The General Assembly is made up of representatives of States party to the WIPO Convention and members of any of the Unions (the Berne Union, Paris Union). In accordance with Article 10 of the WIPO Convention, its headquarters is presently established in Geneva, Switzerland but may be transferred upon a decision of the General Assembly, by a two- thirds majority of votes cast. The Director- General (DG) of WIPO is Francis Gurry;⁴ however, he shall be succeeded by the recently elected Daren Tang of Singapore on 1 October 2020. The WIPO DG, assisted by Deputy DGs and other WIPO staff, leads various WIPO committees in the attainment of WIPO’s objective, strategic goals and mission.

Objective and Functions

The objective of the World Intellectual Property Organisation is twofold:⁵

1. To promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world through cooperation among States and, where appropriate, in collaboration with any other international organisation;
2. To ensure administrative cooperation among the Unions.

In order to attain its objectives, WIPO shall:⁶

¹ World Intellectual Property Organisation, ‘About WIPO’ (2020) <<https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/>> accessed 10 June 2020.

² *ibid.*

³ World Intellectual Property Organisation, ‘Policy’ (2020) <<https://www.wipo.int/policy/en/index.html#bodies>> accessed 10 June 2020; certain permanent committees include Program and Budget Committee (PBC), Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP) and Advisory Committee on Enforcement (ACE).

⁴ Francis Gurry has led WIPO as its Director General since 1 October 2008.

⁵ Article 3, WIPO Convention 1967 <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/text.jsp?file_id=283854#P68_3059> accessed 10 June 2020.

⁶ *ibid.*, Article 4.

1. promote the development of measures designed to facilitate the efficient protection of intellectual property throughout the world and to harmonize national legislation in this field;
2. perform the administrative tasks of the Paris Union, the Special Unions established in relation with that Union, and the Berne Union;
3. may agree to assume, or participate in, the administration of any other international agreement designed to promote the protection of intellectual property;
4. encourage the conclusion of international agreements designed to promote the protection of intellectual property;
5. offer its cooperation to States requesting legal-technical assistance in the field of intellectual property;
6. assemble and disseminate information concerning the protection of intellectual property, carry out and promote studies in this field, and publish the results of such studies;
7. maintain services facilitating the international protection of intellectual property and, where appropriate, provide for registration in this field and the publication of the data concerning the registrations;
8. take all other appropriate action.

WIPO Strategic Goals

WIPO has strategically worked towards the achievement of its objective(s) and has carried out its functions quite diligently over the years. In 2008, WIPO adopted its *nine strategic goals*; balanced evolution of the International Normative Framework for IP, provision of Premier Global IP Services, facilitating the use of IP for development, coordination and development of global IP infrastructure, world reference source for IP information and analysis, international cooperation on building respect for IP, addressing IP in relation to global policy issues, a responsive communications interface between WIPO, its Member States and all Stakeholders,⁷ an efficient administrative and financial support structure to enable WIPO deliver its programs.⁸ These provide the

⁷ WIPO recognises stakeholder organizations; some 250 non- governmental (NGOs) and inter- governmental organizations (IGOs) have observer status at WIPO meetings.

⁸ World Intellectual Property Organisation, 'WIPO's Strategic Goals' (2020) <<https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/goals.html>> accessed 10 June 2020.

framework for WIPO's six year medium term strategic plan (2016- 2021). According to WIPO, these goals reflect the evolving challenges for WIPO and IP in the rapidly changing environment.

WIPO's activities, in the past few years, are tailored towards the achievement of these goals. For our purpose, some of the many WIPO activities are the call for submissions on Artificial Intelligence and IP policy decisions organised by WIPO (of which MIPLG took active part in), the enhancement of its IP services on the various international registration platforms for the various intellectual property rights discussed below, the launch of WIPO's latest online service for innovators and creators (WIPO Proof), and the establishment of the WIPO Nigeria Office, as part of WIPO's network of external offices, in January 2020.

WIPO IP Services

WIPO is charged with the administration of the following IP services:

1. The PCT system- International Patent System;
2. The Madrid system- International Trademark System;
3. The Hague system- International Design System;
4. The Lisbon system- International System of Geographical Indications;
5. WIPO Proof- International Trusted Digital Evidence;
6. WIPO Mediation and Arbitration Center;
7. Other WIPO Services include WIPO Academy amongst others.

These are generally cost effective and efficient routes for the protection of the various intellectual property rights across borders. Therefore, WIPO may be described as a one-stop shop for international protection of intellectual properties. WIPO is burdened with a wide range of responsibilities. However, this provides employment opportunities for a large number of IP practitioners or personnel.

Working with WIPO

WIPO employs individuals from around the globe under permanent employment⁹ or paid internships.¹⁰ WIPO also engages experts and accredited service providers as individual contractors to help cover certain business requirements.¹¹ Under procurement, WIPO procures goods and services from a wide range of suppliers

⁹ World Intellectual Property Organisation, 'Current Vacancies' (2020)

<https://wipo.taleo.net/careersection/wp_2/jobsearch.ftl?lang=en> accessed 10 June 2020.

¹⁰ World Intellectual Property Organisation, 'WIPO Careers' (2020) < <https://www.wipo.int/jobs/en/internships/> > accessed 10 June 2020.

¹¹ World Intellectual Property Organisation, 'Current Vacancies for Individual Contractors' (2020) <https://wipo.taleo.net/careersection/wp_03/jobsearch.ftl?lang=en> accessed 10 June 2020.

worldwide. This is regulated by the WIPO Procurement Process and Procedures.¹² Finally, WIPO works in close partnership with IP offices, NGOs, IPOs, public and other private stakeholders in delivering its programs across the globe. It is worthy of note that WIPO does not charge a fee at any stage of a recruitment process.

There are a number of self- development opportunities offered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation, ranging from subsidised to free courses on the WIPO Academy distance learning programs and university partnerships for joint master's degree program, WIPO summer school, paid internship programs and possible employment opportunities amongst others.

These WIPO IP protection features and/ or platforms mentioned above, such as the WIPO Green platform, WIPO Proof and WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Centre, remain under- utilised by legal practitioners in developing countries.

We are, therefore, encouraged as IP lawyers to undertake courses and WIPO trainings which introduce these platforms and their usages. It is necessary to familiarise oneself with the international IP filing systems and other WIPO databases for efficiency in IP practice in developing countries.

Visit www.wipo.int for more information.

V.C. Onyeagbako, ACI Arb.



¹² WIPO Procurement Process and Procedure (2020)

<<https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/shared/images/icon/new/pdf.svg>> accessed 10 June 2020.