

WIPO

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME RUNALDO RONALD VENETIAAN AT THE OPENING SESSION OF WIPO MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETING ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FOR CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES PARAMARIBO, 5 JUNE 2002

Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ministers,
Deputy - Director General of the
World Intellectual Property Organization,
Delegates,
Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to address this WIPO ministerial meeting on intellectual property for Caribbean countries. This is an interesting and dynamic period in the history of the Caribbean Community. The challenge of development is great for our countries, given their involvement in several initiatives at the national, regional, hemispheric and global level. At the regional level we are working actively on the Caricom Single Market and Economy. At the hemispheric level, we are preparing for negotiating new trade arrangements including the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Despite limited institutional capacity, our countries are committed to meet their obligations with respect to the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

We have introduced radical policy reforms and structural changes, as well as legislative and administrative reforms that should lead to a more attractive investment climate in order to promote trade and foster economic growth and development in the Caribbean Community. These we hope, will reap beneficial rewards for the peoples of our region.

Mr. Chairman,
The importance of intellectual property to national development is indisputable. Intellectual property plays a crucial role in the well being of individuals and in the commercial viability of national economies. In the Caribbean, it is important for our economic growth and development that we provide a commercial environment in which intellectual property is rewarded. The issue of intellectual property rights is inextricably linked to the issue of investments. The promotion and protection of intellectual property and the administration of the various multilateral treaties dealing with the legal and administrative aspects are of critical importance to the Caribbean Community. However, our countries share the concerns of many developing countries about the purported benefits to be derived from enacting and respecting intellectual property rights legislation. These benefits are said to encourage foreign companies to enter into joint ventures, sub-contracting and other collaborative arrangements to undertake research and development activities in the host country. The agreement on trade related aspects of intellectual property rights (trips agreement) which came into effect on 1 January 1995, is to date, the most comprehensive agreement on intellectual property. It deals with each of the main categories of intellectual property rights; establishes standards of protection as well as rules of enforcement; and provides for the application of the WTO rules for the settlement of disputes between member states. As a result of the trips agreement, the protection of intellectual property rights has become an integral part of the multilateral trading system, embodied in the world trade organization in the same manner as the regimes for trade in goods and services. In other words, the protection of intellectual property now is one of the central principles of international economic and trade relations.

This trips agreement incorporates the products of the new revolution in circuits, new cd's, other phonogram sound recordings and encrypted programs carrying satellite signals; geographical indications as to the origins of products: and more issues of trademarks, industrial designs, patents, pharmaceuticals and undisclosed information including trade secrets. Our countries should continue to benefit WIPO's advice and expertise to implement the trips agreement.

The region should also continue to require assistance in the compilation of information on the existing laws and administrative provisions, and bilateral and multilateral agreements relating to intellectual property rights.

Another area in which work is required is an assessment of the special intellectual property rights protection needs of our small economies.

While we acknowledge that the Caribbean might not be a major generator and supplier of technology, there are certain aspects of the emerging global intellectual property rights system which in our interest should be well protected, such as our biodiversity, including our unique species of plant varieties, genetic resources and traditional knowledge and folklore.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some one hundred and thirty years ago the need for protection of intellectual property became evident at the international exhibition of inventors in Vienna (1873). From then on a series of conventions, treaties and agreements paved the way toward a worldwide system to protect intellectual property and so stimulate human creativity in fields as science and technology, literature and arts.

Today the issue of intellectual property has developed into a mayor factor in international trade. So far our countries enjoyed only a small share of the benefits in this field.

Let us move together as Caribbean Countries, in close cooperation with the world intellectual property organization. To protect and enjoy the fruits of the intellectual property of the peoples in the Caribbean Community.

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