WIPO Conversation on Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence: UK statement

New technologies have always thrown up new questions about Intellectual Property.

Whether that's the printing press revolution, the invention of recorded music, or the advent of the internet.

Artificial Intelligence is no different.

Over the past ten years AI technologies have accelerated.

I've seen for myself the incredible impact they're having across a huge range of sectors – from medicine to manufacturing.

While companies like Cervest [Sir-vest] are helping to solve some of the major challenges we're facing, like climate change.

And AI technologies are increasingly becoming a part of everyday life – from social media, to personal assistants like Siri and Alexa.

The fact that there's been a 400% increase in AI patent applications around the world in the past decade, shows you how fast things are moving.

And this pace of change is throwing up some really thorny questions.

Can a machine be a rights holder under law? For example.

And does it infringe copyright when it learns to paint like Rembrandt or sing like the Beatles?

As policy makers, it's our job to address these questions.

So that law keeps up with advances in technology.

The fact that AI has such amazing potential to transform the way we live, work and create, makes this all the more important.

Because a strong intellectual property system is critical to releasing that potential.

IP is designed to drive innovation and enterprise, culture and creativity.

So, in the UK, for example, in September this year we launched a Call for Views. A consultation to gather information and ideas about AI and IP.

That's because we value our AI industry and want to help it grow.

Because we know a strong AI sector needs a strong IP framework.

And because we realise that depends on understanding its commercial, economic, legal and social implications.

That's what the consultation is looking at, as well as how the IP framework can incentivise people to develop and adopt those technologies.

We're encouraging a wide range of people to reply — from industry to academia, and IP specialists.

And we would love to hear from any of you here today.

But as well as exploring these issues at home. To release the potential of AI technologies, we need to look for answers internationally. Across borders.

As we are doing today.

Because, as we all know, we are living in a global world.

Where Bollywood is as accessible to us Brits as the BBC.

Where I could speak to someone in Dubai just as easily as I can ring my family in Derby.

And so it's absolutely essential that we work together.

To find common ground.

To develop common standards, definitions and approaches.

This will enable our AI industries to collaborate.

It will allow our institutions to share ideas. Applying these technologies to the common challenges we face.

And it will ensure consistency. Which is absolutely key.

Consistency leads to confidence. Which can unlock the huge global investment needed to bring AI technologies to market.

Whereas unclear definitions, and variable standards, create uncertainty.

Making it more difficult for business to operate across different systems. And threatening the ability of these technologies to benefit people across the world.

Businesses, investors and researchers need predictability, not difference, in the international system.

So, our approaches to the legal questions that have emerged need to align.

There's no better forum for these international discussions on IP than WIPO.

The only international organisation focussed solely on intellectual property.

The guardian of international IP.

And home to the energy and expertise we need to help us to find the right answers.

So, I'm really pleased that WIPO's been doing such fantastic work to help move this conversation forward.

And I'm proud of the UK's role in making that happen.

Encouraging those initial discussions in 2018, for instance.

And supporting them to evolve into the policy-related questions we're addressing today.

We want to work with WIPO to find common answers and tangible solutions to these questions.

Ones that take our different perspectives into account.

Because the issues we've been looking at in this and previous sessions are really important to getting to the common understanding we need.

And enabling IP to help AI fulfil its potential.

Getting to a shared definition of AI has to be the starting point.

We'll never find common standards if we don't know that we're talking about the same thing.

We need these definitions to be technologically neutral and future proof.

And to be agreed and used globally, providing businesses with clarity and confidence.

At previous sessions, we've had some fantastic conversations about patents and copyright.

And we've got a couple of remaining important chapters to address at today's third conversation. One of them being trade marks.

Before we move on to the WIPO paper, I want to touch on some work the UK is doing on trade marks and AI.

We're in the final stages of developing an online AI tool to improve the chances of successfully registering a trade mark.

Helping applicants to select the correct trade mark classification.

So making it easier for businesses and entrepreneurs to protect themselves.

Particularly the large number of individuals applying, and all those smaller

businesses that don't have their own legal departments.

We're looking at trade mark more broadly too.

The Call for Views which I've spoken about — the UK's consultation on AI and IP — has touched on some similar trade mark issues to the ones we're discussing today.

How AI might impact established principles such as human perception within trade mark law, for example. And authorship, and ownership of designs in light of AI.

So I'll be really interested to hear the outcome of today's discussion.

Finally, there's capacity building. And accountability for IP Administrative decisions.

Because, as well as the thorny legal questions that AI raises, it also has huge potential to assist with the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

Particularly, protecting businesses and consumers online.

As e-commerce continues to grow, the challenge of enforcing rights is increasing. How can AI help us in this fight against fakes?

We need to address questions like these together.

As I've said, the UK is committed to working internationally on AI and IP.

And that doesn't end with our search for common global standards.

We want to cooperate on capacity building too.

Helping to even out the technological capacity in this area, so that everyone can make the most of AI technology

We also need to establish a shared framework on administrative decisions. So that we have comparable protections across different countries.

This helps to establish that confidence and predictability that I've spoken about.

If AI is to help to identify and prosecute rights infringements. Stakeholders need to know how to challenge decisions, and the role humans will play.

So, I really welcome the discussions we're having today on these important issues.

If they're anything like the conversations that we've had so far, they'll be informative and constructive.

And looking ahead, we want to keep the momentum going.

I hope that WIPO will develop a priority list of the areas we need to focus on in the next couple of months.

Things like inventorship in patents, authorship in copyright, and liability for infringement

I hope too that this prioritisation will be followed by a WIPO White Paper next year. Setting out proposals for a common framework, based on the discussions between us all.

We also want to use the power of the WIPO extraordinary General Assembly in 2021. To enable buy-in by Member States and decide future direction for this work.

Because, as I've said, AI technologies have such amazing potential for the world.

And it's critical that we keep up the momentum on the ground breaking work we've started together.

To develop an IP system that supports AI technologies to thrive. Releasing their potential for us all.

Thank you.