

WIPO General Assemblies: UK Statement on Ukraine's Intellectual Property System

Chair,

The UK fully supports the statement delivered by Ukraine on behalf of 53 co-sponsors, introducing Item 19, Assistance and Support for Ukraine's Innovation and Creativity Sector and Intellectual Property System, circulated as A/63/8. The intent of this proposal is to respond to an unfolding disaster and ensure that Ukraine's innovation community receives the support that it so urgently needs as soon as possible. The proposal is specific to the needs of Ukraine, at this critical time.

WIPO is mandated to enable innovation and creativity for the benefit of all, including by supporting the effective protection of intellectual property around the world. WIPO exists to develop a balanced and accessible international intellectual property system, which rewards creativity, stimulates innovation and contributes to economic development.

Chair, the invasion of Ukraine is having a profound impact on the ability of Ukrainian citizens and businesses to benefit from the global IP system. Attacks on the systems and infrastructure which enable creativity and economic development are incompatible with the spirit of WIPO.

Before the invasion, Ukraine was a regional Science & Technology powerhouse. The technology sector accounted for 4% of the country's GDP and Ukraine was home to around 5,000 IT companies and 285,000 IT specialists. Science and Technology has already played a role in boosting Ukraine's defensive effort. From international crypto donations, to companies like Uber and AirBnB using their platforms to help to those forced to flee violence.

The sector will also be vital to Ukraine's long-term resilience and recovery. It will be a platform on which, Ukraine can rebound – providing jobs, attracting investment and developing next-generation technology.

The UK recognises the importance of the science and tech sector, supported by on the international IP ecosystem, and the role WIPO and individual Member States can play.

Since March, for Ukrainian customers and rights holders, the UK IP Office has used the maximum flexibility available in law to consider requests for extensions of time, reinstatements and restorations. We have also recognised communications are difficult, and in some cases impossible, at this time in Ukraine. We continue to send all of our communications electronically when possible and for customers where we only hold a postal address we are arranging an alternative method of communication when those customers are able and ready to contact us.

The UK government also announced a further package of measures in late June.

For example, more than 130 Ukrainian academics are supported under the 'Researchers at Risk' programme which launched in March. A total of GBP 12.8 million will allow the programme to expand significantly to meet demand. The Researchers at Risk scheme enables Ukrainian academics to continue their research, helping Ukraine to preserve its research and innovation ecosystem. We believe that this will enable the country to rebuild and prosper.

The UK Government also provides funding to support Ukrainian academic institutions. The project aims to establish more than 100 long-term, sustainable partnerships to support Ukrainian institutions, students and researchers during the current conflict and beyond. 79 UK universities have already signed up to the scheme..

The UK government's support for the 'Re.Build' conference, organised by the Founders Forum, is enabling the UK's most innovative tech companies to contribute to Ukraine's recovery in the most effective way.

While the UK has made these and other efforts on a bilateral basis, we also believe that in the multilateral space, there are positive actions that WIPO can undertake to support the innovation landscape in the Ukraine. Examples of such actions were clearly set out in the statement by Ukraine and in the proposal A/63/8 which we support and co-sponsor.

Chair, the UN General Assembly resolution of 2 March 2022 urges the immediate peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine and calls on member states and international organisations to play their part.

Accordingly, a majority of international organisations, including specialised agencies, have convened discussions on the impacts of the war, and taken decisions in support of the de-escalation of the conflict and rebuilding of key sectors of Ukraine's economy. WIPO too should make its unique contribution to this global effort.

Chair, we regret that procedural attempts, including a calling a vote, were deployed earlier in this session to prevent a discussion on this matter, and we welcome these attempts were overcome. We call on all Member States to commit to supporting IP and innovation systems in vulnerable countries and deliver that commitment through agreeing proposal A/63/8 focusing on targeted technical assistance that is urgently needed in and required by Ukraine.

Thank you, Chair.