



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Representative of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 59th Series of Meetings of the WIPO Assemblies
1st October 2019

Mr. President,

At the outset, the Delegation of the Holy See would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Duong, for your continued efforts and dedication throughout the year in organizing the present meeting. Our congratulations and recognition also go to the Vice-Chairs. We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat for their hard work throughout this year, including the preparations for this Series of Meetings of the WIPO Assemblies.

Mr. President, global economic growth appears to be losing momentum compared to last year. Productivity growth is at a record low. Economic uncertainty is high. Despite this gloomy perspective, innovation is taking place at an accelerated rate, becoming a central element in the economic and industrial strategies of numerous countries. The economic and social importance of intellectual property (IP) continues to grow around the world. This increased prominence is being driven by rapid, profound and pervasive technological change, which is shaping the future of the economy and placing greater worth on knowledge in its economic and commercial expression as intangible assets. Such an evolution has been witnessed by WIPO's registration systems, which continue to see a steady growth in terms of numbers of applications. In developed and developing economies alike, formal innovation—as measured by research and development (R&D) and patents—and less formal modes of innovation are thriving. Today, economies of all types promote innovation to achieve economic and social development.

The international community is living in an age of benefits from two centuries of enormous “waves of change”, the outcome of which has triggered a new digital era which has countless benefits for humanity (*Laudato Si'*, 102). However, the power of technology is often associated with financial and economic supremacy. Those who hold this increasing and overwhelming power over humanity and nature are not necessarily “trained to use power well” (*Laudato Si'*, 105).

In general, the “immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility [and] values”, nor by the development of human conscience on anthropological freedom and limits (*Laudato Si'*, 105). Moreover, “humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm” (*Laudato Si'*, 106): one that exalts the individual and its freedom disconnected from the social and natural relations that constitute the subject, and one that responds to the myth of unlimited progress. This “technological paradigm has become so dominant” that it tends to “absorb everything into it”, conditioning and shaping our lifestyles (*Laudato Si'*, 108).

If technological advancement is a cause of increasingly evident inequalities, then it should not be considered real progress. As recalled by Pope Francis “if mankind’s so-called technological progress were to become an enemy of the common good, this would lead to an unfortunate regression to a form of barbarism dictated by the law of the strongest”¹. The effort to develop “intelligent machines” must be continuously directed to the greater good, reducing the poverty gap and facing general needs for health, education, happiness and sustainability.

WIPO is contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals in various ways and, in particular, by promoting a balanced and effective IP system that encourages innovation and creativity and supports the flow of knowledge and technical expertise within and among countries. Only through human responsibility and innovation will it be possible to develop new solutions that: eradicate poverty, boost agricultural productivity, ensure food security and good nutrition, increase access to energy and improve energy efficiency, fight disease, improve education, protect the environment; accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy; increase productivity, and enhance business competitiveness.

The different programs and the variety of technical assistance activities provided by WIPO in supporting developing and least developed countries represents a tangible effort of the Organization in this sense. Sustainable development and community building is a long-term investment in peacebuilding, and in strengthening our world's resistance to crises, disasters, conflicts and wars, on the path to a world that upholds fundamental human rights, advances solidarity through development, as well as knowledge sharing, capacity building and technical assistance.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

A better world is possible thanks to technological progress, but this must be accompanied by value inspired by a vision of the common good, an ethic of freedom, responsibility and fraternity, capable of fostering the full development of people in relation to others and to the

¹ Message of Pope Francis to the participants in the seminar “The common good in the digital age”, Rome, 27th September 2019

whole of creation. Given the increased importance of intellectual property, and indeed the rising interest in the question of IP and in the programs and services of this Organization, these Assemblies are called to decide, over the next week, on substantive matters in order to transform into concrete action the promotion of actual wellbeing of people and their environment. Mr. President be assured that you can count on the constructive contribution of the Holy See's Delegation during these Assemblies.

I thank you, Mr. President.