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ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL  
DE LA PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL

ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ СОБСТВЕННОСТИ

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### INVENTORS' CONFERENCE AT WIPO

An International Conference on the Situation of Inventors was held at WIPO from May 21 to 24, 1984. It was organized jointly by WIPO and IFIA. There were 78 participants, from the following 36 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Singapore, Soviet Union, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire and six international organizations.

The participants were inventors, officials of national associations of inventors, officials of the International Federation of Inventors' Associations and Government officials working in institutions and departments responsible for the promotion of inventiveness.

The main purpose of the Conference was to create more awareness among inventors, in official circles, and in the general public about the role of inventors in contemporary society and the legitimate need they have to be better protected and better encouraged.

The Conference was opened by Dr. Arpad Bogsch, Director General of WIPO, and Dr. L.L. Ware, President of IFIA. Dr. Bogsch was assisted by three co-Chairmen. They were Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Saada, of Egypt, who presided

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over the discussions on the importance of the inventor in society; Dr. Ware, who presided over the discussions on the rights of inventors under the patent system, and Mr. Einar Nyren, of Sweden, who presided over the discussions on the inventor's need for protection and assistance.

During the Conference, a WIPO Gold Medal was presented to Mr. Sam Green, for his services to inventors in his own country, the United Kingdom, and internationally through IFIA. The Conference welcomed information provided concerning the 1986 International Inventors Awards in Stockholm, and the World Exhibition of Achievements of Young Inventors in Plovdiv (Bulgaria) in 1985.

The discussions took place on the basis of 41 papers presented by WIPO and participants from the following countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Denmark, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Greece, Hungary, Ivory Coast, Peru, Soviet Union, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, Zaire.

On the question of the importance of the inventor in society, it was agreed that, in order to improve their situation and to achieve a fuller recognition of their importance in economic and social development, inventors should act collectively through national associations and through IFIA. Many participants noted that laws, governmental institutions and collective agreements for the protection of inventors' interests did not and would not suffice to improve the situation of inventors, without recognition by governments, industry and the public as a whole of the status of the inventor in society. It was urged that national associations and their members should write articles for publication in newspapers and encourage radio and television broadcasters to bring the achievements of inventors to the attention of the public.

A number of papers, and many of the speakers in the discussions, stressed that the process of invention, whether by an independent inventor or by an employed inventor, is essentially creative and individual, and cannot be dissociated from the personality of the inventor.

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The Conference noted that the problems of inventors were particularly acute in developing countries, welcomed the recent formation of national associations of inventors in countries such as the Ivory Coast and Zaire, and considered that WIPO and IFIA, in their future cooperation, should give high priority to programs of assistance to such countries. In this connection, the successful efforts of the Filipino Inventors' Society were hailed as an example to inventors in other countries.

In connection with the rights of the inventor under the patent system, dissatisfaction was expressed on behalf of inventors with patent laws which did not provide for the possibility of non-prejudicial disclosure by the inventor before the filing of a patent application (frequently referred to as the question of a "grace period"). The present WIPO study of the possibility of the establishment of a uniform solution was therefore of great interest to inventors.

It was noted that inventors as owners of patent rights were in need of expert legal advice on how best to use and not to lose such rights, and that associations of inventors had an important role to play in this regard. National laws on the rights of employed inventors needed to be kept under constant review and to be improved so as to reflect a higher status of the inventor as a personal contributor to economic and social progress. A wealth of comparative studies and other material on this question already existed, should be kept up to date and should be made available, through IFIA, to national associations of inventors for this purpose.

Many participants expressed the view that all patent laws should require that a patent application be filed by the inventor himself, that the period of patent protection in many countries was unreasonably short and that, in the interests of the independent inventor, the costs and complications of patent procedure should be reduced.

On the question of the inventor's need for protection and assistance, a number of papers described existing systems and experiments, in the public and private sectors, for the benefit of inventors. It was noted that

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some such systems provided financial assistance and technical and legal advice in the obtaining of inventors rights. Some such systems provided financial and other incentives and rewards; it was noted with interest that the reward system for Chinese inventors in China would continue to exist parallel to the new patent law in that country.

Interest was expressed in the encouragement by national associations of the availability of venture capital for the exploitation of inventions, and of freedom of movement of inventors between employment, including government employment, and independent activities.

It was noted that the inventor required and deserved assistance not only in relation to the creative act of invention itself (education, facilities, access to information etc.) but also in the vastly more time-, money- and energy-consuming process of developing the invention and bringing it to the market. This latter process requires skills and attitudes unrelated to those of an inventor as such.

It was emphasized that public financial assistance for the encouragement, development and implementation of inventions, however well designed, can be effective only if it is provided on a scale appropriate to the size of the society served by inventors and the economic value of their contribution to the community. Such financial assistance should be regarded by the government not as charity but as an investment.

The Conference noted with pleasure that several national associations of inventors which had not yet joined IFIA were actively considering doing so; IFIA was encouraged to draw the attention of all countries to the advantages of membership (possibly establishing a structure of regional Vice-Presidents for this purpose) and, in cooperation with WIPO, to assist in the establishment of national associations of inventors where these did not yet exist.

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The Conference noted with satisfaction that WIPO and IFIA intended to continue their close cooperation, and, in particular, to explore together the possibility of undertaking the following joint activities:

1. Assistance to associations of inventors in developing countries, including assistance in establishing such associations.
2. Collecting and disseminating information on laws and financial and administrative systems for the promotion, support and protection of inventors.
3. Public information through the mass media.
4. Organizing further joint conferences.
5. International prizes to inventors.

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