

Global Congress Calls for Greater Effort and Resources in Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy Worldwide

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Top government officials, business leaders, and international law enforcement officials together hailed the increased level of international cooperation in combating counterfeiting and piracy. They called for an even greater marshalling of efforts and resources to counter the escalation in this illicit trade which threatens consumer health and safety and undermines economic development. This came at a high-level international gathering of public and private sector organizations hosted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva on January 30 and 31, 2007.

Over 700 delegates gathered at the Third Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy (<http://www.ccapcongress.net>) convened by WIPO, the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), with the support and cooperation of the Global Business Leaders Alliance Against Counterfeiting (GBLAAC), the International Trademark Association (INTA), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and the International Security Management Association (ISMA) under the banner "Shared Challenges-Common Goals."

"Counterfeiters and pirates are thwarting economic development and endangering health and safety. Their methods are sophisticated, their reach is far and their crimes claim victims every day. The scourge of counterfeiting and piracy has assumed epidemic proportions. This is a global phenomenon which requires global action," said Dr. Kamil Idris, Director General of WIPO." Dr. Idris welcomed the Third Global Congress as "an important step in developing the networks and harnessing the collective expertise necessary to develop durable solutions to this all-pervasive problem as each player brings to the table their unique experience in the fight against this illegal activity." Dr. Idris underscored that "all stakeholders need to join forces in supporting countries in establishing effective intellectual property systems to enable them to harness their creative resources for economic development."

Mr. Ronald K. Noble, Secretary General, Interpol, said "We have said many times that only through united efforts by the public and private sectors that real successes in combating counterfeiting and piracy can be achieved." He added, "Interpol's new database on international Intellectual Property crime will take this co-operation to a new level by making information provided by private companies available to law enforcement worldwide to assist in their investigations into those involved in counterfeiting."

Mr. Michel Danet, WCO Secretary General, said that "Through our collective efforts to combat counterfeiting and piracy, we will, I firmly believe, engender a sense of responsibility and mobilize support against this empire of fraud, illusion, and deceit which places human lives at risk and wrecks initiatives to promote economic and social prosperity. This global phenomenon calls for an international response and a strategy which targets all actors in the counterfeiting chain, from consumer to counterfeiter in every country."

Representatives of government and inter-governmental organizations emphasized the importance of joint public and private sector partnerships in combating counterfeiting and piracy. This was echoed by top business leaders at the Global Congress.

"While there is increased awareness and urgency among businesses and governments that the expanding trade in counterfeit goods must be stopped, we need to further boost our efforts in finding and implementing real solutions," said Mr. Gerd T. Becht, Vice President and General Counsel of DaimlerChrysler, representing the Global Business Leaders Alliance Against Counterfeiting (GBLAAC). "Many excellent approaches have been introduced, but more resources and support are needed to ensure their effectiveness. The demand for counterfeit goods must also be addressed by focusing greater attention on consumer education and effective ways to discourage consumers and businesses from knowingly purchasing such products. We must arrive at practical solutions that can be implemented in the near future. This Congress is a perfect forum for moving these objectives ahead," he added.

Ms. Dee Ann Weldon-Wilson, the President of INTA, said "Counterfeiting and piracy have gone from being a business infraction at the local level to a global problem touching all industry sectors and consumers. Governments, businesses and intellectual property organizations must work together to combat the ever-increasing problem of counterfeiting."

Mr. Bob Wright, Vice Chairman and Executive Officer, General Electric, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, NBC Universal, speaking on behalf of the ICC BASCAP initiative, noted that "Just as the issue of global warming is now starting to capture the attention of businesses and governments around the world, so is the issue of counterfeiting and piracy. This Congress is a critical step toward uniting the key players in this fight around our common goals. Accomplishing our goals begins with understanding that we must move past abstract statements to concrete actions." Mr. Guy Sebban, ICC Secretary General, added "The pirates are organized. This Congress is a necessary call for business and governments to get organized in response."

The staggering economic costs of counterfeiting and piracy have a deep impact on the economy as a whole as they translate into lost earnings, lost jobs and lost tax revenues. Today, almost every product on the market is a target of counterfeiting and piracy, endangering human health and safety and undermining economic development.

The First Global Congress was held in Brussels, Belgium in 2004 and hosted by the WCO; the Second Global Congress in 2005 was hosted by Interpol in Lyon, France. These international gatherings have provided a valuable forum for representatives from both the public and private sectors to pool their experience, raise awareness, enhance cooperation and identify strategies to deal more effectively with the global problem of counterfeiting and piracy. Details of previous meetings and the Third Global Congress, including the programme and list of speakers is available at www.ccapcongress.net.

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