



WTO

Public Forum

September 29 to October 2, 2015
Geneva, Switzerland

REPORT

by Ivan Hjertman, Chair of Standing Committee on TRIPS,
Manoj Menda, Co-Chair of Standing Committee on TRIPS,
Catherine Mateu, Member of Standing Committee on TRIPS

Introduction

The World Trade Organization, WTO, organizes since 2001 an annual event "WTO Public Forum". A wide range of organizations, including WTO Members, businesses, NGOs, academia, law firms and international organizations are invited to propose workshops/seminars on topics of their choosing at these events. The audience comes from largely the same groups, as well as from media.

The 2015 Public Forum was held over three days, September 30 to October 2. The overall theme this year was "Trade works". The 20 years anniversary of the WTO was in focus. Over the three days, a total of 88 seminars/workshops of 1,5 hours duration and two high-level plenary sessions were held. More detailed information is available on www.wto.org.

AIPPI participated for the first time at these events at this WTO Public Forum 2015. A workshop was set up titled "IP: a Trade Resource". It was held October 1, 2015. This workshop was arranged and held by the AIPPI Standing Committee TRIPS, in close cooperation with the AIPPI Reporter General Team, RGT.

Summary of meeting

Presentations at the AIPPI workshop were held by

- Ivan Hjertman, with some general background notes followed by information on the AIPPI organization and its work, notably the annual Study Questions with examples of such questions and the unbiased factual information that is available in the country reports
- Catherine Mateu, on the significance of trademarks and designs for international trade, with examples from the fashion industry, the food industry, and industrial joint ventures
- Manoj Menda, on the IP system in India and the evolution it is undergoing, notably the work on an IP policy which the Indian Government currently is discussing

As background, the far-reaching developments in trade and technology over the past 20 years and their impact on IP were noted, including globalization, the Internet, etc. Concepts frequently heard today from countries at various stages of development, including developed countries as well as countries in development, are "the knowledge economy", "knowledge based capital", and the like. With this has followed increasing realization of the importance of intellectual property, not only patents but perhaps even more copyright and trademarks. And this realization tends to extend over many sectors, not only those which traditionally are dependent on patents, e.g. the pharmaceutical and the IT sectors. A need for national IP policies can be seen as an outcome of these developments.

It was stressed to the audience as take-home message that the non-biased and factual information made available in AIPPI study questions is a resource to use. In negotiations and discussions, of course including at the WTO, it is natural that various parties have different agendas. But there is also a need for independent studies on facts, a need that is not always easy to meet. AIPPI materials in those contexts can "fill the gap" by providing unbiased facts on various IP issues.

The presentations will be published on the AIPPI website.

Conclusions / observations

The workshop was attended by some 25 participants, including representatives for WTO Members, the TRIPS Council Secretariat, industry, and media. It was referred to in a note on the WTO website on October 1. An audio recording is available on the WTO website. There were also requests for information on some listed examples of study questions after the workshop.

Actions / matters to be considered by the Bureau

The consensus opinion after the workshop of the three AIPPI panelists, Catherine Mateu, Manoj Menda and Ivan Hjertman, is very clear. What AIPPI can contribute in the discussions on the IP system certainly merits that AIPPI should take part at the WTO Public Forum 2016.

Actions / matters to be considered by other parties

Topics covered by selected AIPPI Standing Committees could potentially be taken up at an AIPPI workshop at the WTO Public Forum 2016. Topics could be selected from, for example, the Standing Committee Q220 on Geographical Indications, the Standing Committee Q184 on Free Trade Agreements, and not least the Standing Committee Q207 on Development and Intellectual Property.

Date of report

October 6, 2015