

WIPO Director General Daren Tang
34, chemin des Colombettes
CH-1211 Geneva 20
28 February 2022

Subject: Ukraine invasion: closure of WIPO Russia Office

Dear Director General,

We write as WIPO whistleblowers and staff representatives to call on you to publicly condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to do all that it is in your power to ensure the rapid closure of WIPO's Russia Office. **We believe there is no justification for WIPO to continue providing technical cooperation to Russia, when it may have benefitted from this agreement to pursue and develop weapons that are now being used against Ukraine and to kill innocent civilians.**

We urge you to schedule an emergency extraordinary meeting of WIPO's Coordination Committee, consistent with your powers under Article 8.4(b) of the WIPO Convention¹, and to seek the Member States' decision to close WIPO's Russia Office without delay.

Russia has prioritized the development of intellectual property (IP) for military equipment and weapons, including by establishing in 2016 a new IP register specifically for military equipment and weapons. The purpose of the new register was to "systematize Russian intellectual property assets in the field of military and defence, the amount of which has significantly increased in recent years", according to IP Watch reporting in 2016². The need for the new register was considered "acute" due to "a significant increase in the number of inventions and discoveries in the Russian military and defence in recent years". The Russian Defence Ministry stated that this is "largely due to the ongoing militarization of Russia and the rise of its defence budget up to RUB 3.3 trillion (US\$70 billion) per year, which has resulted in the increase of the volume of R&D activities in the field of defence. This, in turn, has led to the growth of the demand for legal protection of finished products of military origin in Russia". Further, according to analysts of the Russian Federal Intellectual Property, Patent and Trademark Service (Rospatent), "in recent years the domestic defence industry has become one of the biggest generators of inventions and discoveries in Russia, which resulted in a significant increase of patent applications". According to the Russian Defence Ministry, Valery Gerasimov, Russia's Chief of General Staff and the highest-ranking officer of the Russian Armed Forces, was placed in charge of the creation of the new register and its use. Valery Gerasimov is currently the subject of sanctions by the US, European Union, Australia and other countries³.

¹ <https://wipolex.wipo.int/en/treaties/textdetails/12412>

² <https://www.ip-watch.org/2016/12/06/russia-establish-new-ip-register-military-equipment-weapons/>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valery_Gerasimov

As outlined on WIPO's website⁴, the activities of the WIPO Russia Office include to:

- *promote cooperation between WIPO and the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as the private sector and civil society, in the field of Intellectual property (IP);*
- *raise awareness of WIPO activities and the international IP system throughout Russia;*
- *promote WIPO's global IP services;*
- *support the development of innovation and IP systems in Russia, in order to facilitate the use of IP for social, economic, and cultural development;*
- *deliver technical assistance in relation to WIPO's global infrastructure programs; and*
- *further capacity-building activities in the field of IP.*

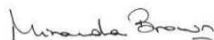
The WIPO Russia Office has been controversial since its opening in 2014. In November 2011, we blew the whistle to Member States (including the US, UK, France, Australian and others) on your predecessor former Director General Francis Gurry's decision to secretly open a WIPO Office in Russia without the Member States' knowledge or consent. The WIPO Legal Counsel subsequently confirmed to Member States the illegality of this decision, during a meeting of the Coordination Committee. We also blew the whistle on WIPO's illicit shipments of American IT equipment to North Korea and Iran – these transfers and the opening of the external office in Russia, as well as the retaliation against us for making these disclosures, were the subject of a US Congressional inquiry in 2012 and then a hearing in 2016⁵.

Over the past few days WIPO staff have contacted us to express their concerns that WIPO's activities may have inadvertently assisted Russia in developing and commercializing military equipment that is now being used against Ukraine and to kill innocent civilians.

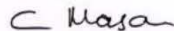
We request that you:

1. Publicly condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and **do all that is within your power to ensure the rapid closure of the WIPO Russia Office**, as it may have inadvertently assisted WIPO in developing and commercializing military equipment that is now being used against Ukraine and to kill innocent civilians.
2. Immediately acknowledge and **address the concerns held by WIPO staff who do not want to work on issues relating to Russia** but may be too fearful of raising their concerns.
3. **Address the ongoing retaliation against us as whistleblowers at WIPO** and work with us to ensure that WIPO is an organization where staff can speak up about abuses without fear.

Yours sincerely,



Miranda Brown



Christopher Mason



Olivier Steele

⁴ https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/offices/russia/about_wro/

⁵ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg98830/html/CHRG-114hhrg98830.htm>