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Counterfeiting and piracy endangers global economic recovery say Global Congress leaders

CANCUN, Mexico – Top government officials, business leaders and senior law enforcement authorities meeting in Cancun, Mexico urged national and international political and business leaders to step up actions against counterfeiting and piracy to help boost global economic recovery. The call for increased action came at the close of the Fifth Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy held in Cancun from 1-3 December.

The international event brought together more than 800 delegates from 80 countries to share proposals for disrupting and curbing the worldwide illicit trade in counterfeit and pirated goods, identify more innovative and effective solutions and build upon successful strategies already in place.

The Fifth Congress was hosted by INTERPOL and the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property (IMPI), with support from the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) through its Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy (BASCAP) initiative, the International Trademark Association (INTA) and the International Security Management Association (ISMA).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented updated data indicating that international trade in counterfeit and pirated goods has increased to more than US \$250 billion, almost 2% of world trade, up from US \$200 billion reported in 2007. Other data released at the Congress showed that economic losses from counterfeiting and piracy is costing the economies of the G20 countries more than €100 billion, and putting 2.5 million legitimate jobs at risk. Another report released at the Congress showed that 80% of consumers admit they regularly buy fake or pirated products, with little remorse or concern about the consequences of those purchases.

Speakers presented a range of new approaches for more effectively combating counterfeiting and piracy through enhanced co-operation and co-ordination and increased public and political awareness of the issue. New perspectives on improving legislation and enforcement measures to deter and punish those involved in the domestic and international trade of counterfeit and pirated goods, and the sale of these illicit products over the Internet were also presented. An important new focus at the Congress was the responsibility of third parties who knowingly assist counterfeiters in the sale or distribution of fake and pirated goods. These themes will be developed into a series of key recommendations for specific actions that will be released in January 2010.

"A recurring theme of this Congress and a constant characteristic of counterfeiting and piracy is the central role of transnational organized criminals," said John Newton, responsible for INTERPOL's Intellectual Property Rights programme. "They commit these crimes without a care about the often deadly effect of products, including fake medical products and dangerous electrical products, on unknowing consumers. Fortunately another feature of the Congress was the clear determination of law enforcement agencies and customs worldwide to consistently target these criminals wherever they are."

"International leaders from the public and private sectors and international agencies represented here in Cancun have provided new and more effective strategies for combating counterfeiting and piracy," said Jorge Amigo, IMPI Director General. "As these leaders and others return to the 80 countries represented

at this Congress, we hope the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that was so evident here, will continue and lead to concrete actions that will reduce the threats to consumers and our economy in Mexico, and around the world."

Yo Takagi, WIPO Assistant Director General, representing WIPO Director General Francis Gurry at the event, said that the Global Congress was an important forum for exchanging views and experiences on the challenges presented by the global trade in counterfeit and pirated goods. He underlined the critical importance of international co-operation in identifying effective actions to disrupt and curb this illegal trade. Mr. Takagi reaffirmed WIPO's commitment to a more inclusive, development-oriented and balanced approach to promoting greater respect for IP rights with a view to identifying solutions that make a difference.

WIPO will be the chair for the Sixth Global Congress. WIPO announced it will be co-hosting this event in Paris in February 2011 with the French National Institute for Industrial Property (INPI).

"Consumers around the world, especially those from vulnerable communities, expect the Congress to deliver tangible strategies that will protect them from harm; the way forward reached by the Congress which I have been following closely will, I am quite certain, meet their expectations," said WCO Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya.

"Up-skilling the risk analysis and interception techniques of Customs officials through effective capacity building will assist the global Customs community to meet its commitment to combating the cross-border trade in dangerous counterfeit goods and fake medicines, and enhance implementation of the WTO TRIPS Agreement," Mr. Mikuriya added.

David Benjamin, Co-Chair of BASCAP and Senior Vice President Anti-Piracy - Universal Music Group, emphasized that protecting intellectual property is an essential part of attracting investment and job development. "This Congress demonstrated that there is some momentum building in terms of growing recognition that counterfeiting and piracy are costing all of us tens of billions of dollars and millions of jobs lost or at risk," he said. "However, we must now build on this momentum and not let current economic pressures detract from the important work that needs to be done."

Richard Heath, President of INTA and Vice President of Unilever PLC, said it was evident from the three days of discussions President of that much had already been done to combat counterfeiting and piracy. He emphasized, however, that more needed to be done at the global and local level. "From an industry perspective, we need to not only continue, but increase collaboration with each other and with governments to improve enforcement, enhance legislation and educate and protect consumers from the dangers of counterfeiting," he said. "INTA stands ready to work with our industry colleagues and government to effectively combat this growing problem."

About the Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy

The Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy represents a unique, international public-private sector partnership that is united in its efforts to identify solutions to the growing menace of the illegal trade in counterfeiting and piracy and facilitate their implementation. The Congress has become a leading international forum for shaping practical strategies to combat counterfeiting and piracy

The Global Congress to Combat Counterfeiting and Piracy was previously hosted by WCO in 2008 in Dubai; by WIPO in 2007 in Geneva; by INTERPOL in 2005 in Lyon, France; and by WCO in 2004 in Brussels. These international gatherings have provided a valuable forum for representatives from both the public and private sectors to pool their experience, raise awareness, enhance co-operation and identify strategies to deal more effectively with the global problem of counterfeiting and piracy.

Details of previous meetings are available at the permanent Global Congress website: www.ccapcongress.net.

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