

Speech by SCIT at IPD Open Day (English only)

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Following is a speech by the Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology, Mr Joseph WP Wong, at the Intellectual Property Department (IPD) Open Day today (February 28):

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I am delighted to have the opportunity to tour around the IPD on its Open Day. I have enjoyed the short presentation made to me just now and I hope that you will find likewise.

In today's global information economy, intellectual property is an important source and generator of wealth. IP rights have gained international recognition as rights that deserve exploitation and protection. The proactive management of intellectual assets to create wealth is a growing trend in the world, and Hong Kong is no exception.

To enable our economy to benefit from innovations and creativities, we need to provide a robust IP protection regime. To this end, we are continuing our efforts in safeguarding the interests of IP owners on three fronts.

Firstly, we are committed to providing a legal framework for the protection of IP rights which reflect the latest social and technological developments. In this regard, we are working on a package of legislative amendments to improve the Copyright Ordinance. In coming up with the legislative proposals, we have received much valuable feedback and comments from stakeholder groups including owners and users of copyright works, and of course some of the distinguished guests here. We aim to present a package of legislative amendments which will strike the right balance between providing effective protection for the rights of copyright owners on the one hand and not undermining the legitimate uses of copyright works by members of the public on the other. We will submit the Amendment Bill to the Legislative Council for consideration during this Legislative Council session.

Secondly, we have been taking vigorous enforcement action against piracy and counterfeiting activities. The landmark Bit Torrent prosecution case last year bears testimony to the sterling efforts made by our colleagues in the Customs and Excise Department in protecting the rights of IP owners. It also demonstrates the capacity of our enforcement agency to keep up with the latest technological

developments, and to ensure that our enforcement capability will not be undermined.

Yet, the results from these efforts would never be sustained if they were not supported by our community. Therefore, the third component of our IP protection regime is to increase the awareness of and respect for IP rights in the community. I am pleased to note that the IPD has done a lot of work on this front and its public education activities have reached out to different sectors in the community including SMEs, retailers, trade associations, students, teachers, and the general public. Indeed, it is encouraging to note from the latest annual survey conducted by the IPD that Hong Kong people are becoming more aware of the importance of protecting IP rights.

Looking ahead, we need to do more to nurture a culture among our younger generation to develop their creative talents and to respect others' creativity and innovations. The IPD's existing programmes, such as training qualified teachers to teach IP concepts in secondary schools, and organising a training programme to promote the awareness of and respect for IP amongst scouts, are a good start in this direction.

Before closing, let me say a few words about IPD's e-services. IPD first rolled out its electronic services in 2003 and has been enhancing these services over the years. IPD's system can now provide web-based electronic search of the register, electronic filing of applications for registration, electronic publication for applications for registration, as well as real-time renewal of trademarks and patents and changes of a registrant's name.

We need e-citizens to make e-Government a success. Hong Kong is fortunate in having IP agents and legal practitioners who think flexibly and are prepared to take on new challenges. This is reflected in the positive response to IPD's e-commerce initiatives. The migration rate to online filing of applications for trade mark registrations has already exceeded 60%. I shall be delighted to give our recognition to the top e-filers who transact the highest volume of business online.

Thank you very much.

Ends

Tuesday, February 28, 2006