

# WIPO Defends Involvement In IP Enforcement Meeting In The Philippines

Date: 24 October 2011

Source: Intellectual Property Watch

Link: <http://www.ip-watch.org/weblog/2011/10/24/wipo-defends-involvement-in-ip-enforcement-meeting-in-the-philippines/>

The World Intellectual Property Organization, a United Nations agency with nearly 200 member states, is under criticism for its connection with a Western industry-heavy event this week in the Philippines aimed at fighting intellectual property counterfeiting and piracy. The concern from technology industry and consumer advocates is that WIPO is involved in an overly one-sided event and did not sufficiently notify its diverse membership or the public of its activities.

Within the 24-28 October meeting in Makati City, a financial centre of Manila, the Philippines, is one of a series of meetings with the title, WIPO Regional Workshop on “The Dangers of Counterfeit Goods to Public Health and Safety”.

The event was not posted to the WIPO website events calendar until today (after WIPO was contacted about it), and no information other than the title and date is available on WIPO’s site. Regional meetings on the WIPO calendar of events appear to frequently not include the agenda or any other information than the title and date. For instance, this month there is a meeting on implementing the WIPO Development Agenda in Argentina, and a meeting in Ukraine on “the role of the copyright system in promoting the publishing industry.” But no further information is available about these.

The agenda of the Philippines enforcement meeting was found on Google and is available here [pdf]. It shows that the first two days are mainly officials from WIPO and the Philippines government. It includes several government speakers responsible for industry sectors including food and drugs, books and optical media (CDs and DVDs). It is not clear how the latter items relate to public health and safety. There is a chamber of commerce representative, an academic, and a consumer representative on the agenda. The two-day segment of the meeting wraps up with all participants developing an “action plan”.

The remaining three days are called the “IPR Business Partnership Workshop on Effective Border Control Measures,” and it includes a long list of representatives from some of the world’s best-known trademarks and

brands, such as the Swiss Watch Federation, Chanel, Philips, Louis Vuitton, Hewlett Packard, and Pfizer. The meeting opens with the same WIPO official, is led by the International Trademark Industry Association, and includes a US official as a speaker.

The Philippines IP Office posted an [announcement of the event here](#). It states: “Fresh from the recent removal of the Philippines from the United States Trade Representative (USTR) Out-of-Cycle Review (OCR) due to progress in IPR enforcement efforts, the Summit is seen as a positive commitment from the Philippines, hailed as the ASEAN IPR Enforcement Champion, towards a stronger, more balanced and viable intellectual property system.” (ASEAN is the Association of South-East Asian Nations.)

Influential US blog [boingboing.net](#) posted [a note on 22 October](#) accusing WIPO of involvement in a secret meeting filled with representatives of corporations seeking stronger enforcement of their trademarks, and no one representing “moderation and balance.”

Asked about the meeting, a WIPO press officer said: “WIPO is not holding a ‘secret’ meeting. WIPO is jointly organizing, with the Philippines Intellectual Property Office, a two-day regional workshop on “The Dangers of Counterfeit Goods to Public Health and Safety”, which is part of a broader week-long program organized by the government of the Philippines on various aspects of counterfeiting and piracy. The program of the WIPO workshop includes speakers from WIPO, Philippines government agencies, universities, and representatives of consumer groups and the local chamber of commerce. Numerous government officials and journalists from the region have been invited to participate.”

“WIPO’s involvement in the program relates to the first two days (workshop referred to above),” the spokesperson said. “The remainder of the program is organized by the Philippines government. The objective of the WIPO program focuses on developing and implementing national strategies on awareness raising through cross-sectorial collaboration. WIPO’s contribution to the program – in particular through the WIPO speakers – will address the question of balance and the cross-sectorial nature of the issue in line with strategic goal VI.”

It was noted that *Intellectual Property Watch* previously wrote about the initiative leading to these events, funded by the US government and announced by the US ambassador in Geneva earlier this year ([IPW, Enforcement, 26 April 2011](#)). The US mission press release from April [is here](#).

US mission photos from the April event, [posted here](#), show that the same WIPO official leading the Philippines event, Enforcement Director Louise Van Greunen, was on hand to receive the announcement of the US grant to WIPO for enforcement activities.

There are two more meetings in the series now showing on the WIPO calendar: 1-3 November in Mombasa, Kenya, and 5-7 December in Casablanca, Morocco. Neither event on the WIPO calendar include any information about the meeting.

Asked about the meeting, Nick Ashton-Hart, US technology industry representative in Geneva, said, "Given that activities of the Building Respect for IP programme must reflect a balanced approach as enshrined in the member-states-agreed Development Agenda, CCIA [Computer and Communications Industry Association] sees the clear bias in the programme and the lack of transparency about WIPO's engagement in it as very troubling."

"Since more than 90% of WIPO's funds come from patent and trademark registrants," he said, "we believe that full disclosure of all events which WIPO is a part of organising, or where WIPO is a substantial participant, must be disclosed on WIPO's website with full details well in advance."

Keywords: WIPO / Defends / IP / Philippines