E-commerce and intellectual property - challenges for developing countries

By WIPO for eTrade for all
Q. According to WIPO, what are the main challenges that countries will have to face to further engage in e-commerce and make it more inclusive to foster development?

R. E-commerce today is a major driver of economic growth in many countries. As such, a key challenge and priority for governments is to develop and maintain the right legal and regulatory framework that strikes the appropriate balance between the interests of the public as consumers and the enterprise sector, including SMEs, as producers. This requires policy makers to be equipped with the most relevant and up to date information to be able to institute the right policies that allow the requisite space for e-commerce to flourish and jobs to be created.

Q. Would you like to give us a short overview of WIPO activities in the field of intellectual property that touch upon e-commerce and the digital economy?

R. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, WIPO helps governments, businesses and society to realize the benefits of intellectual property (IP) by serving as the global forum for IP policy, services, information and cooperation. Through its Member States, WIPO works to develop a balanced international IP legal framework that enables innovation and creativity to take place in the digital economy for the benefit of all, and to meet society’s evolving needs. This work is done regularly in the various WIPO Committees and decision-making bodies that negotiate the changes and new rules needed to ensure that the international IP system keeps pace with the changing world, and continues to serve its fundamental purpose of encouraging innovation and creativity.

WIPO offers a range of global services to the business community for obtaining IP rights in multiple countries, and for resolving disputes outside the courts in a single neutral forum, saving significant time and money. This is particularly relevant for e-commerce businesses and innovators because they need easy, cost-effective ways to protect their inventions, their brands, and their designs in multiple countries. A good example is the service provided by the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (WIPO Center) to build confidence and security in the use of e-commerce services. The WIPO Center promotes a balanced legal framework for the protection of IP in the Internet Domain Name System (DNS). It provides leadership in the development of dispute prevention
and settlement, and options to address tensions arising from the unauthorized use of IP, in particular trademarks, in the DNS. Building on its more than 17 years of experience following some 39,000 domain name-related disputes, the WIPO Center continues to liaise with DNS stakeholders, including trademark owners and representatives, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and registration authorities.

WIPO delivers extensive capacity-building and training programs that help all countries to develop the skills and institutional capacity they need to administer, manage, build respect for, and use IP in the digital environment. WIPO is also a gateway to a unique collection of resources and reference material that is freely available online such as the Global Innovation Index (GII) that is recognized as a leading benchmarking tool for business executives, policy makers and others seeking insight into the state of innovation around the world. WIPO’s global databases make it easy for any business, anywhere, to access the wealth of information in the IP system.

Q. What prompted your organization to join a multi-stakeholder partnership such as eTrade for all and what are your expectations out of it?

R. Contributing to the ability of developing countries and least developed countries, to use and benefit from e-commerce was a strong motivator. As part of the UN system, WIPO expects to demonstrate the positive role played by IP as an enabler of e-commerce, and as a policy tool that facilitates the creation and protection of the goods and services that are bought and sold over the Internet in the digital economy.

Q. Is there something else you would like to share with the eTrade for all family?

R. WIPO is excited and looks forward to working closely with the eTrade for all partners on tangible projects that would assist Member States to benefit from e-commerce.