



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

Keynote Address (Virtual) by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi at the National IP and Brand Protection Summit organized by NUST, Islamabad

27 June 2022

**Rector NUST, Lt. Gen (Retd) Javed Bukhari,
Pro-Rector Dr. Rizwan Riaz,
Director General IPO-Pakistan,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Assalam-o-Alaikum!

On behalf of Pakistan Mission in Geneva, I commend the NUST leadership for pioneering this national event on the crosscutting themes of intellectual property, innovation, branding and commercialization.

We are very pleased to partner with NUST and IPO-Pakistan in organizing this event. It is indeed heartening to see participation from representatives of academia, industry and government.

I want to thank Mr. Daren Tang, the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for sharing his thoughts at this summit. Mr. Tang has brought fresh dynamism to the organization. I would like to convey our deep appreciation to him and his team at WIPO for their assistance to and growing partnership with Pakistan and the Mission in Geneva.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to share some thoughts on the theme of this event.

First, the world has witnessed major economic and social transformation in the past four decades. Technology and innovation have been and will be the key drivers of this change.

What does it mean for countries like Pakistan? To me, it is clear that leveraging and prioritizing innovation is no longer an option; it has become an imperative.

And countries that synergized legislation, policies and collaboration with academia and industry have managed to move up the value chain and improved their national standing.

Let me cite a few examples. Rwanda is a country that emerged from a devastating conflict nearly 25 years ago. Yet, it managed to put technology and innovation at the heart of its economic policy framework. As a result, Rwanda is now seen as a success story in terms of leveraging innovation in sub-Saharan Africa. A key indicator is its over 7 % economic growth over the past decade.

Middle income countries like Malaysia, Turkey and Vietnam have invested in building innovation ecosystems which in turn have added more resilience and growth to their economies.

Closer to home, massive industrial transformation achieved by China in the last two decades and its subsequent progression to the second largest economy in the world in 2019, owes a great deal to innovation.

In 2020, more than 85% of all patent filings were from China, U.S., Japan, the Republic of Korea and EU. China alone accounted for 45.7% of the world total of patent filings.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that innovation emerged as a global problem-solver. We know now that countries, organizations and corporations which possessed state-of-the-art research and development capacities and strong Intellectual Property protection regimes had an intrinsic advantage over the rest.

During the pandemic, there was 7.6% increase in publication of scientific articles and 3.5% rise in patent filings related to medical technology, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is encouraging to note that Pakistan is taking steps to foster a culture of innovation through legislative steps, policies and institutional mechanisms.

Steps such as enactment of Geographical Indication Act and accession to Madrid Protocol on trademarks are positive. Similarly, the recent formulation of Science, Technology & Innovation Policy and the establishment of National Incubation Centers and Ignite National Technology Fund are steps in the right direction.

The start-up ecosystem, especially in the IT sector, is performing well and the indicators such as the IT-based exports crossing more than 2 billion USD in 2021-22 are indeed encouraging.

The convening of this summit and participation from academia, industry and government is also evidence of positive trajectory.

Yet the full potential of a dynamic youth with English language skills and a strong ICT base remains untapped. There is a clear case for leveraging this potential by greater public and private investments in R & D, by promoting synergies between academia and industry and by mainstreaming these efforts towards economic growth.

Since agriculture remains a mainstay of our economy, the summit participants may wish to discuss how branding and commercialization can be enhanced for more value added agriproducts and many others where Pakistan has comparative advantages.

Pakistan's accession to the Madrid Protocol for International Registration of Marks represents a promising pathway for Pakistani brand owners as it opens up the world market for them through single application.

Similarly, increasing the domestic trademark filings is a low-hanging fruit with long term positive impacts as far as branding is concerned.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally a few words on what Pakistan Mission in Geneva is doing in advancing the goal of developing an IP and innovation ecosystem in Pakistan.

We are actively engaged and are a key conduit between IPO-Pakistan, WIPO and other stakeholders. I am pleased to share that the Mission has taken several initiatives in close partnership with IPO-Pakistan and WIPO.

We have helped expedite signing of an agreement between IPO-Pakistan and WIPO which enables an efficient IP administration in the country.

Working closely with WIPO in Geneva and IPO-Pakistan, the Mission has put together a six-year Country Plan for Pakistan. The Plan is in advance stages of approval. It envisages important projects such as development of a national IP strategy, a project on branding and commercialization and more.

We are also working closely with WIPO to support protection and commercialization of Pakistani Geographical Indications such as Basmati Rice, Pink Rock Salt and Pakistani mangoes.

There are many other proposals in the works.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite public and private universities, academia and research institutions, private sector organizations in Pakistan to emulate the example set by NUST in pioneering this important work on intellectual property and innovation. We will be happy to assist in these endeavours from Geneva.

We hope this summit helps in raising further awareness on the intersection between innovation and intellectual property; on how to build and drive synergies between various stakeholders and how best to mainstream an IP ecosystem in Pakistan as a key driver of economic growth.

I wish the organizers and participants every success.

Thank you.