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The Future of Intellectual Property in the Asia-Pacific Debated

Sydney, Australia, January 31, 2007 -- More than five hundred leading intellectual property (IP) policy officials, business executives, patent attorneys, legal professionals and inventors have concluded one of the largest IP symposiums ever held in the APEC Region.

Held in Sydney from January 28-30, the Trading Ideas Symposium looked at the future for business and government in relation to IP, which is one of the most important areas of the knowledge economy of tomorrow.

The symposium covered areas relevant to the health of the global economy such as the harmonization of IP laws and processes across borders to reduce red tape, piracy and the counterfeiting in the Asia-Pacific region and the enforcement of IP rights.

One of the key issues of discussion was the growing number of IP applications that have been filed in major countries of innovation. The potential of developing a system that could one day see all applications lodged via a single website and for examination to be recognized throughout the world was discussed by delegates including Mr. Francis Gurry, the Deputy Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

"I think it is not only possible but probably necessary that in the space of say the next 25 years there must be some globalised procedure." Mr. Gurry said at the Roundtable discussion at the conclusion of the symposium.

"I am not sure that we will get to a point of entirely harmonized laws, but I think it is entirely possible and necessary that we get to a point where we have a single application, a single procedure for dealing with an application and then it would pass into the national or regional level for a decision on grant."

The readiness of Australian and other countries in the region to adapt to an appreciation of the value of IP was also discussed with the Managing Editor of BRW magazine, Mr. Peter Roberts, saying that he "does not believe Australian companies fully understand the ins and outs of managing IP."

"I think that Australian business has a long way to go in terms understanding and using IP, understanding the need for investing in it and its role in management," Mr. Roberts said.

"Clearly there are nodes of IP excellence in this country such as in mining and software for example. But we have yet to make a decision in this country about what we are really good at and to invest in that."

Discussion also focused on the incidents of piracy and counterfeiting in the region and what that means for economic growth and jobs in the years to come

"Every issue comes down to one question, whether or not people are serious about long term innovation or short term gain," said Mr. John Dudas, the United States Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property who is also the Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

"Counterfeiting and piracy is very much a short term gain, a counterfeiter may make money by stealing but in the long term it won't work for the economy and the wellbeing of the people."

The Trading Ideas Symposium was hosted and organized by the Australian Government in association with APEC. The core Australian Government departments responsible for organizing the symposium were IP Australia and the Attorney-General's Department.