



Statement by the South Centre to the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP)

May 4, 2026, Geneva, Switzerland

We must note at the outset that a small number of Member States consistently resist efforts to advance the IP and development agenda within WIPO, prioritising commercial interests over IP policymaking that effectively promotes development. This is the primary reason the Development Agenda's (DA) transformative vision remains unfulfilled.

Next year, the WIPO Development Agenda will mark its twentieth anniversary. It was adopted in 2007 as a landmark commitment — a promise, made unanimously by all Member States, that intellectual property would serve development, particularly the needs of developing countries. As the South Centre has documented, that promise has yet to be kept. Two decades on, WIPO's technical assistance remains supply-driven, development discussions remain siloed within this Committee, and not a single DA project has been approved to facilitate the use of TRIPS flexibilities for health, education, or food security.

We also wish to address directly the view that WIPO's work on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) falls outside its mandate. This is incorrect. Under the Agreement between the United Nations and WIPO, this Organisation is explicitly recognised as a specialised agency responsible for promoting intellectual creativity and facilitating the transfer of technology to developing countries in order to accelerate economic, social and cultural development. WIPO's work must therefore be aligned with the UN's development goals, including the SDGs. Positions that seek to confine WIPO to IP protection as an end in itself contradicts this foundational obligation.

The agenda before us reflects these enduring tensions. We welcome timely proposals such as Chile's project proposal on AI and IP. We have serious concerns about the UK proposal which, despite multiple revisions, remains enforcement-led and development-blind. We also urge the CDIP to establish time-bound milestones for the implementation of the recommendations from the independent reviews of WIPO's technical assistance and of the Development Agenda.

The Development Agenda was not designed to be a tangential programme, but to reorient WIPO by streamlining development in all its activities. As we approach its twentieth year, the South Centre urges the CDIP to move from activity reporting to development outcomes, from superficial references of TRIPS flexibilities to their operationalization, and from isolated projects, to genuine mainstreaming across all of WIPO's work.