

Ambassador Costos' Opening Remarks
Atresmedia Anti-piracy Debate Series
Lázaro Galdiano Foundation, Calle de Serrano, 122
October 29, 2014 at 6:30pm

I would like to thank the Atresmedia team for organizing this debate series and for all the hard work the group has done in getting the word out on the importance of intellectual property rights. Thank you, Silvio, for inviting me to participate today.

Spain's culture is an important element of Brand Spain, which the government and our Embassy is actively promoting to encourage investment here as you know. And it is working.

Two weeks ago I was in Seville on the set of the most-watched TV show in the U.S., HBO's hit series Game of Thrones.

This investment will have a direct impact locally by creating jobs and raising awareness for Spain as a welcoming and competitive destination for production.

As a matter of fact, we have been fielding calls from Hollywood movie studios about more future filming in Spain.

Indirectly, filming will be an engine for increased tourism to Spain, and in the case of Game of Thrones, early reports are that Seville and Osuna, the two filming locations, have already experienced a growth in visitors of around 15 percent.

The takeaway is that creative industries create employment. And protecting intellectual property rights is crucial for these activities.

Strengthening intellectual property rights is not an end in itself. It is a means to ensure a healthy industry that creates employment and capitalizes on the creativity of the Spanish population.

It is clear that piracy has contributed to the decline in Spain's music and film sectors. To take just one example – nearly 230 movie screens have been closed in the past three years, shutting down a number of movie theaters and eliminating hundreds of jobs around the country.

Atresmedia's efforts in raising public awareness of the true costs of piracy warrant special mention.

Apart from this debate series, the company has created a wonderful anti-piracy spot that shows how piracy affects ordinary workers: make-up artists, tailors, delivery men and women, and janitors, among others.

This spot utilizes one of the most important strategies for combating piracy: education, getting the word out.

People need to know that illegally downloading copyrighted content is not only wrong, but it hurts real people, and their families, by taking away their jobs.

I have been outspoken on this issue during my time here in Spain, and wrote an op-ed on this topic that was published in a number of newspapers last month.

Atresmedia's anti-piracy spot is just the kind of initiative needed to inform the public, and I would like to encourage others to also engage and contribute to increasing public awareness.

I am looking forward to a lively debate from Jeff Jarvis and Irene Braam, who will no doubt provide an interesting and enlightening exchange.

Thank you again, Silvio, and to the Atresmedia team for your outstanding efforts – and for inviting me to set the stage for today's important discussion.