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## Protecting brands in Cairo

*DOAA SOLIMAN*

Staff reporter

**INTELLECTUAL** Property Rights (IPR), Trademark security, risks of counterfeit products and many other issues were at the centre of a unique conference in Cairo yesterday.

The Brand Protection Conference, which is the first of its kind, was held under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry and organised by the US Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) and Risk Free Egypt Company.

"When we tackle the brand protection issue, we don't only target investors and producers but consumers as well," said Moustafa Abul-Einein, Deputy Chairman of the Development of International Trade Authority and the Chairman of the Commercial Registration Authority.

"When people use fake or counterfeit products that would expose them to severe dangers," Abul-Einein added. "Hence, protecting IPR and brands protects society and protects lives."

Markets of copycats and smuggled items have flourished over the last two decades to include many goods and countries. Since 1982, the amount of

illegal world trade has increased from \$5.5 billion to \$512 billion per year, according to the World's Customs Organisation (WCO) reports.

Recent reports as well stated that around 70 per cent of counterfeit products come from China to reach countries all over the globe.

Key fake products include drugs, food, cigarettes and machineries. However, for Hassanein Shabana, the Head of Anti-Smuggling Department in the Egyptian Customs Authority, the first two raise particular concerns.

"We are working as hard as possible to protect our markets, consumers and investors from illicit products," Shabana told *The Gazette*. "Yet, when it comes to drugs or foodstuffs, it becomes a real red line and is of great danger."

Participants in the conference recommend the creation of an anti-counterfeiting group with representatives from different multi-national organisations.

"These counterfeits don't only harm the genuine brands, but they harm the world's economies as well," said Joseph G. Pieretti, Assistant Attaché of the ICE. "They cut revenues, job opportunities and taxes. Hence, they finally harm the whole economic system."