

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE HON. CALLE SCHLETTWEIN MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA AT THE FIFTY- FIRST MEETINGS OF WIPO ASSEMBLIES- SEPTEMBER 2013

Madam President, Namibia too would like to congratulate you on your election to the chair and wish to assure you of our full cooperation. On behalf of my delegation I would like to thank the Director General and his able staff for the quality of the documents and the excellent preparation for our meetings.

To start with may I state that Namibia supports the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the African Group. We also support the statement made by Brazil on behalf of the Development Group.

No intellectual property and business registration system makes an effective contribution to economic development unless these systems are known to, and used by those for whose benefit they are established. Not only should these systems be well-established, but to remain relevant they should also be regularly reviewed and aligned to an ever changing environment.

A second related point is that of capacity building. Users, as well as regulators must be afforded regular opportunities to learn and upgrade their knowledge and skills in this very complex and technical field. Business registration and intellectual property systems have always been an integral part of economic, social and cultural developments, hence the need of a continuous effort in capacity building.

The establishment of a sound Intellectual Property regime including the facilitation and promotion of commercial and industrial activities is a priority for Namibia. The challenges, which call for changes and new developments especially as regards information technology and the increasing use of electronic information distribution and electronic transactions has prompted Namibia to come up with a law on Information, Communication and Technology which enables and enhances innovation through the Science and Technology Centres at our tertiary institutions.

The Intellectual Property Act, passed in 2012 is in conformity with the Agreement on Trade -Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

As part of comprehensive review of Namibia's business environment Namibia is developing a legal framework through which a stand alone and autonomous authority is mandated to give effect to all functions in respect of administering, promoting and registering business and intellectual property rights.

Madam President, the General Assembly may recall that Botswana, on behalf of the member states of ARIPO did submit to the Intergovernmental Committee on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC), the Swakopmund Protocol to be used as a working document in the work of the IGC. Namibia supports the decision of the IGC.

Considering that it is more than a decade since the IGC was established Namibia is now calling for a diplomatic conference in 2014 for the development and adoption of a legally binding instrument on the Protection of Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore.

Madam President, Africa sustained economic growth rates substantially higher than the global average and Africa has bounced back after the financial and economic crises. Africa is the home of significant genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore. In spite of that there are no WIPO regional offices on the African continent, a glaring gap in our opinion. We are therefore calling for the establishment of such Regional Offices on the African continent.

In conclusion allow me to pay tribute to WIPO for the continuous technical assistance on the automation of our IPR office and the capacity building initiatives that are ongoing, including the facilitation of the participation of my delegation in these Assemblies.

I thank you