

**General Statement of the African Group
Fifty-Fifth Session of the WIPO General Assemblies
5 October 2015**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

2. The Group wishes to thank the outgoing Chair for her hard-work over the past two years. We also welcome the new Chair of the General Assembly and his bureau, and express our full confidence in your professionalism and engaging work style. We look forward to working with you and all Member States to ensure a successful session of the General Assemblies (GA). We equally express our appreciation to the Director General and the Secretariat for their efforts towards achieving the goals and objectives of this organization. We encourage their steadfastness towards this ideal.

Mr. Chairman,

3. It is, again, a time in WIPO's calendar for stocktaking and decision making on subjects that significantly impact not only the effectiveness of the organization, but also, integrity to the responsibilities and objectives of the organization. The African Group hopes that this session of the GA can turn a page from the recent past history of its meetings. The issues for discussion are critical to the advancement of our common growth and development, for which we are optimistic that all delegations will feel a burden to make every endeavor towards success.

4. The African Group prioritizes the imperative of resuming text-based negotiations on Genetic Resources (GRs), Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs), with a view to establishing an international legally binding instrument that will ensure the effective protection of GRs, TK, and TCEs. The dearth of political will to take necessary steps to rectify the misappropriation and commercialization of the primordial and natural resources of local and indigenous communities remains a regrettable status quo.

5. Having given careful consideration to the state of negotiations in the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) and some of the avoidable elements that plague consistent and unencumbered progress in the negotiations, the African Group submitted a proposal (document WO/GA/47/16) for the conversion of the IGC into a

Standing Committee. The proposal is premised on the firm belief that such an institutional change will positively facilitate advancement of the negotiations, and crucially, focus the engagement of Member States on the substantive text-based work, while allowing for the requisite time and space for the needed reflection and consultation to build a common understanding, mutual trust and ultimately, a shared basis for a multilateral framework.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The Group also prioritizes the need for the establishment of External Offices (EOs) in Africa, being the only unrepresented continent in the dynamic. We note that WIPO EOs form an integral part of the organization's delivery of its Strategic Goals, including facilitating the use of Intellectual Property (IP) for development. Thus, we reference document A/55/INF/6, prepared by the Secretariat, which clearly illustrates the value added by EOs, and their configuration to serve different needs in line with the different levels of development of WIPO's Member States.

7. Cognizant that the existing EOs were established in response to global realities in the last ten years, the absence of Africa in the WIPO External network is conspicuous. It is further curious that the existing EOs were established during a period of global discourse on development and achieving a balance in access to economic, technological and socio-cultural enablers for developing and least developed countries; not least, the adoption of WIPO's Development Agenda Recommendations in 2007.

8. The African Group therefore makes a request to the General Assembly to approve the establishment of two EOs in Africa within the 2016/17 biennium. The presence of two EOs in Africa will facilitate WIPO's technical assistance and capacity building activities in the continent, improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of WIPO services in the continent, raise IP awareness, build respect for IP, enable a wider dissemination of IP knowledge and assets in the continent, and crucially, facilitate the use of IP for development in the continent. It needs no elaboration that Africa is content rich, but challenged by capacity gaps in the development and commercialization of its content. Thus, the establishment of EOs in Africa will be a strategic investment for WIPO and its Member States.

9. We acknowledge the importance of a predictable framework for the establishment of EOs. However, we remain concerned that negotiations of the Guiding Principles for the establishment of EOs risks becoming weighed down by competing

interests and introduction of provisions that have disconcerting effects on the negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

10. The African Group would also take this opportunity to commend some of the positive developments in WIPO negotiations this year. We particularly welcome the conclusion of the definition of "Development Expenditure" in the context of WIPO budget. We believe that this development will facilitate a better financial estimation and operational implementation of development activities by WIPO. In the same vein, we welcome agreement on a more result-oriented work agenda within the SCP, though that Committee continues to be weighed down by resistance to good faith discussions on the reorientation of the patent system to enable it become more responsive to the needs of developing and least developed countries.

11. Conversely, several other issues of importance continue to lack consensus in WIPO, such as Governance in WIPO; inclusiveness through the acknowledgement and protection of traditional forms of knowledge and asset bases in the Design Law Treaty (DLT); commitment to text-based work to facilitate access to information and knowledge in the SCCR; WIPO's engagement in the area of technology transfer; implementation of the CDIP Mandate and the Coordination Mechanism and its wider impact; amongst others. We also further underscore the measurability of impact and effectiveness as definitive components of WIPO's implementation of the Development Agenda Recommendations. In this regard, the African Group welcomes commencement of the process for the Independent Review of the Implementation of the DA Recommendations and looks forward to the outcome of that exercise.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

12. We wish to reiterate our readiness to work with you and this Assembly for a successful session. We will make further statements on specific agenda items.

13. I thank you.