

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (ARIPO) DURING THE FIFTY FIFTH SERIES OF MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE MEMBER STATES OF WIPO, GENEVA, OCTOBER 5 TO OCTOBER 14, 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

Honourable Delegates,

It is a pleasure and honour for me, on behalf of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) to address the Fifty-fifth Series of Meetings of the Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Firstly, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman His Excellency, Ambassador Gabriel Duque of Colombia, for having been nominated to chair this Assembly. **I also wish to congratulate your two Vice Chairpersons** and I have the confidence that you will steer these Series of Meetings diligently and successfully.

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by acknowledging the wonderful work of the Director General of WIPO, Dr. Francis Gury and his Secretariat for coming up with very comprehensive working documents. The working documents put forward these august assemblies include topics which are very relevant to the Member States of ARIPO and Africa at large.

On this score, my delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the delegations of Nigeria on behalf of the African group and the delegation of Benin on behalf of the Least Developed Countries.

Mr Chairman,

With great satisfaction, I wish to bring on record some remarkable achievements in the ARIPO system.

The Swakopmund Protocol on the protection of traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore became operational on May 11, 2015. The Swakopmund Protocol has been ratified by 7 member states and it is now possible for applicants to apply for the protection of Trans-border traditional knowledge intellectual property rights at the ARIPO office.

Therefore, ARIPO fully associates with the position of the African Group and that of the Least Developed Countries on the establishment of a Standing Committee of Intergovernmental Committee on Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore

The ARIPO Protocol for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (so called Arusha Protocol) was adopted by the Diplomatic Conference that was held in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania on July 6, 2015. The Protocol seeks to provide Member States with a regional plant variety protection system that recognizes the need to provide growers and farmers with improved varieties of plants in order to ensure sustainable Agricultural production.

Five Member States have signed the Protocol which shall remain open for more signatures by Member States of the Organization and other States in the continent until December 31, 2015.

The Management in the prosecution of applications lodged through the ARIPO route is being enhanced through the utilization of the new Polite+ Software which was developed with the assistance of the Korean International Agency (KOICA) of the Government of the Republic of Korea with the cooperation of WIPO. The system was launched on April 25, 2015 and has since facilitated online business processing of applications including online filing, file inspection and online payment.

Thanks to the new system, the grant and registration of IP rights using the “ARIPO Route” is attainable through interactive procedures between the ARIPO Office and the national IP Offices of the Member States. That interaction will be further enhanced once the Member States’ Module component which will facilitate online communication between ARIPO and its member states will be initiated through the project developed by KOICA with the cooperation of the WIPO Global Infrastructure Sector.

Mr Chairman,

WIPO in cooperation with ARIPO, have continued to organize workshops and seminars in the African region to create awareness on the importance and use of IP for technological and economic development.

ARIPO is also very active in capacity building and human resources development in the region. In this respect, I am also pleased to report the involvement of WIPO in this initiative through its various divisions particularly the WIPO Regional Bureau for Africa, the World Wide academy, in cooperation with the Japanese Patent Office which have continued to support the ARIPO-WIPO Africa University Master's Degree Program (MIP) in intellectual property which is now running for the eighth year and has produced over 200 IP experts. These experts are currently engaged with the IP Offices, teaching institutions, IP firms across Africa and are providing a tremendous contribution in the development of IP in the continent. The curriculum of the programme is being revised and improved, more dynamic and competent lectures incorporated and topical debates brought forward through the annual conference organized at the end of the programme.

Mr. Chairman,

Under its mandate on Copyright and Related Rights, ARIPO with the support of WIPO and the cooperation of the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations (IFRRO), is developing training materials on collective management of reprography, to be used in training activities at the ARIPO Regional Training Centre. Further, with the cooperation of WIPO and IFRRO, a training workshop on Copyright and Related Rights was held at the African Regional Training Centre.

WIPO Regional Bureau for Africa is also supporting many African countries to complete questionnaires on the status of Copyright and Related Rights in their respective countries. This data will help ARIPO and its Member States to develop appropriate policies with regard to Copyright and Related Rights in Africa at large.

Mr. Chairman,

The ARIPO Secretariat is also committed to improve the working conditions at its headquarters and to provide high quality services. I am therefore; glad to announce that the Project of the construction of the extension of the ARIPO headquarters has started in April 2015 and is being implemented according the schedule set. The new building will accommodate more

offices, conference rooms, meeting rooms and new parking bays. It is our hope that as we celebrate the 40 years of ARIPO next year a new building will be unveiled.

Mr. Chairman,

Lastly, I am pleased to report that the ARIPO the 39th Session of the ARIPO Administrative Council and the 15th Session of the Council of Ministers will be held in Lusaka, Zambia from November 16 to 20, 2015 and therefore wish to use this opportunity to invite the Director General, Dr. Francis Gury to come and give a key note address to the Council of Ministers session and other WIPO divisional heads and cooperating partners to come and address both Administrative Council and Council of Ministers of ARIPO.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations.