

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE
AFRICAN REGIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
ORGANIZATION (ARIPO) DURING THE FIFTY SIXTH
SERIES OF MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE
MEMBER STATES OF WIPO, GENEVA, OCTOBER 3 TO
OCTOBER 11, 2016.**

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-Sixth 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 Jānis Kārklīņš, of Latvia to 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,

Please allow me to acknowledge 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 for the Fifty-Sixth Series of Assemblies of WIPO include topics which are very relevant to ARIPO, its Member States and Africa at large.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the delegations of Nigeria on behalf of the African group and the delegation of Bangladesh on behalf of the Least Developed Countries.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to bring on record some remarkable achievements in the ARIPO system which, have been achieved with the support of WIPO and other cooperating partners.

Therefore, ARIPO fully associates with the position of the African Group and that of the Least Developed Countries on the work of the Committee on the Development and Intellectual property which has facilitated many projects to be undertaken in developing countries and the urge to create an International framework for the protection of Traditional Knowledge, and Expressions of Folklore.

I have to mention here that ARIPO has already adopted a framework for the protection Traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore through the Swakopmond Protocol which came in force on May11, 2015

Mr. Chairman,

WIPO in cooperation with other cooperating partners, have continued not only to organize workshops and seminars in the African region to create awareness on the importance and use of IP for technological and economic development but also undertake projects at the ARIPO Office and those of its Member States which facilitate the business processing and management of Intellectual Property Rights. For example WIPO through its Global Infrastructural Division has initiated the digitization of back files of the ARIPO office and those of its member states and the automation of member states' offices using IPAS.

WIPO with the support of the Japanese Patent Office also held and facilitated various Regional Workshops including: the Development and Effective Use of Intellectual Property Statistics for ARIPO Member States. This workshop was highly appreciated by all stakeholders and participants as it included the technical evaluation and audit of IP Statistics,

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 ninth year and has produced over 230 IP experts.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) Congratulates the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and all countries that have ratified or acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled which was concluded in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The ARIPO Member States that signed the Treaty at that time include: Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The Treaty entered into force on September 30, 2016, which is three months after June 30, 2016, the date by which twenty eligible states had deposited instruments of ratification or accession.

It has been established that the majority of persons who are blind and visually impaired live in developing countries and least developed countries. At the same time, it has also been found that the levels of access to information and employment by these people are lowest in such countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The ARIPO Office has requested WIPO through the IP Development Match Making Sector for support in the development and implementation of a Regional Database or Digital Library on Traditional Knowledge and a Copyright Web Based Database for the ARIPO Office and its Member States and I am happy to announce that many donors willing to support the two projects have come forward and discussions on the projects will be undertaken on the side-lines of the Assemblies

Mr. Chairman,

Lastly, I am pleased to report that the ARIPO the 40th Session of the ARIPO Administrative Council will be held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 5 to 7 December 2016. The ARIPO 40 years Anniversary will be celebrated together with the Inauguration of the extension of the ARIPO Headquarters Building which will be held on 8th and 9th December 2016. The celebrations will include an International Conference with high level speakers on Intellectual Property and Innovation in Africa.

Therefore, please allow me to use this opportunity to invite the Director General, Dr. Francis Gury and Heads of our cooperating partners to come and share with us their high level input during this historical event.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates

Thank you for your attention.