

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ARIPO DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE
FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT PROTOCOL ON VOLUNTARY
REGISTRATION OF COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS**

**SPEECH OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ARIPO, MR. BEMANYA
TWEBAZE**

August 27 to 28, 2021

Kampala, Uganda

The Guest of Honour, Your Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda;

The First Lady of Uganda and Minister of Education and Sports of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni;

The Chairperson of the ARIPO Council of Ministers, Hon. Mawine G. Diggs, MP, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Liberia;

The Attorney General of the Republic of Uganda, Mr Kiryowa Kiwanuka;

The Deputy Attorney General and Acting Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of the Republic of Uganda; Hon. Jackson Kafuuzi;

Honourable Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Uganda here present;

Honourable Ministers of the ARIPO Member States present;

My Lord the Chief Justice of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Justice Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny-Dollo;

My Lord the Principal Judge, Dr. Justice Flavian Zeija;

Honourable Judges of the Supreme and High Courts of Uganda;

Permanent Secretaries of the Republic of Uganda here present;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Republic of Uganda;

Accredited Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of
ARIPO;

The Chairperson of the Administrative Council of ARIPO, Hon. P. Adelyn
Cooper, Director General, Liberia Intellectual Property Office;

Heads of IP Offices and Members of the Administrative Council of ARIPO
present;

The Representative of the Director General of the World Intellectual Property
Organization (WIPO);

The Director General of the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI),
Dr Denis Loukou Bohoussou;

Distinguished Representatives of Governments of the potential Member States
of ARIPO;

Distinguished Representatives of our Cooperating Partners here present;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocol observed;

I have the honour to address and welcome all of you, distinguished participants to the Diplomatic Conference for the adoption of the Draft Protocol on Voluntary Registration of Copyright and Related Rights which is taking place here in this beautiful city of Kampala. Allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Uganda for hosting ARIPO during this week and for the continuous support to our Organization. We are delighted to be here.

Kindly permit me at the outset to pay special tribute to His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, who has graced this conference in person to preside over this opening ceremony. It shows the commitment of this country to the cause of Intellectual Property and the important role that ARIPO is playing for the development of Intellectual Property on the African continent.

Your Excellency, we are extremely overjoyed and I want to express my utmost appreciation to you for taking time off your undoubtedly busy schedule to grace us with your presence and to officially open the Diplomatic Conference.

Your Excellency,

ARIPO was founded in 1976 with Uganda being a founding member and indeed its first Director General was a Ugandan national – the late Justice

Herbert Ntabgoba. Over time it has grown to 20 Member States from Southern, East, Central and West Africa including Botswana, Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe which is a representative of the Organisation's roots as a true Pan African institution.

ARIPO was established to promote the harmonization and development of the Intellectual Property laws, and related matters and to create such common services or organs for the coordination, harmonization and development of the intellectual property activities affecting its Member States among others. It is a one stop shop trusted by users who seek to protect their Intellectual Property rights in the 20 Member States. We are the center of excellence in training and awareness creation related activities in the Intellectual Property field in Africa.

On behalf of its Member States, ARIPO currently administers four Protocols including the Harare Protocol, Banjul Protocol, Swakopmund Protocol and Arusha Protocol which provide for protection of patents, utility models, trademarks, industrial designs, traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore as well as new varieties of plants.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished delegates,

The main aim of this Diplomatic Conference is to adopt a new Protocol on Voluntary Registration of Copyright and Related Rights. This Protocol on copyright will be the first of its kind in Africa and represents a historical moment in which we, as Africans, are charting our own course for growth and creating opportunities for realizing socioeconomic development in our respective countries through the use of Intellectual Property.

The Protocol will establish a regional voluntary system of registration of Copyright and Related Rights, as well as create and maintain a Regional Database for Copyright and Related Rights.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished delegates,

Registration is a critical input in determining the ownership of copyright which in turn creates certainty and provides guarantees for those selling or buying or otherwise dealing in or interested in investing in the creative sector.

Your Excellency, as a registered owner of copyright yourself for the musical work “*You Want Another Rap*”, the message you sent out through that registration is loud and clear that registration of copyright is vital for growing the creative industry. It is therefore befitting, **Your Excellency**, that Uganda, under your leadership, hosts this Conference!

The Protocol is therefore, geared towards promoting protection of copyright in Africa through creating a conducive environment for ensuring respect for intellectual property rights. Through this Protocol’s mechanisms, ARIPO and its Member States will be facilitating access to a combined market of over 360 million people in the 20 Member States of ARIPO for authors, performers, broadcasters and producers in the creative sector.

It comes at an apt time when the creative industry is buckling under the pressure from measures deployed by our governments to combat the pandemic. It offers a ray of hope in the gloom of the tragedy that is the COVID 19 pandemic by creating common and harmonized system for protecting and consequently enforcing copyright in 20 countries in Africa through a single and simplified mechanism.

The Protocol therefore, will support the goals of the African Union Agenda 2063, which aims at transforming our economies and creating a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics and will complement and support Member States' interventions in realizing the objectives of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area towards a competitive creative industry in Africa.

Your Excellency,

Africa is at a threshold; we have a young and growing population, our democracies are maturing and our Leaders are driving our economies with vision which is demonstrated by your presence here today – a first in the history of ARIPO.

The creative industry, including film makers, musicians, authors, producers, broadcasters, among others, represent an-untapped potential which I believe currently contributes between 3 to 5% of GDP of our countries. We at ARIPO are persuaded, **Your Excellency**, that with your visionary leadership and that of the Council of Ministers of ARIPO, together with the direction of the Administrative Council of ARIPO, we will realise this potential of the creative industries, and this Protocol offers us an opportunity in that direction.

For this reason, we welcome our Ministers from the various Member States with whom we look forward to the Protocol's adoption and more critically its implementation as we grow our economies together.

Your Excellency, allow me at this juncture to extend my deepest appreciation to you, **Your Excellency**, for participating in this conference and through you to the Government and people of Uganda for hosting this conference despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The attendance of many delegates from over 25 countries in and outside Africa is a sign of confidence in your leadership through crisis which has enabled Uganda to persevere through these troubling times.

I would also like to pay special tribute and appreciation to the Attorney General of Uganda, Mr Kiryowa Kiwanuka, who spared no effort in ensuring the conference is held and its objectives are met.

I also would like to pay special tribute and appreciation to the Deputy Attorney General and Acting Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of Uganda, Hon. Jackson Kafuuzi who personally engaged and invited his colleague

Ministers here in Uganda and in the ARIPO countries and ensured resources were mobilized to support this conference.

Your Excellency,

This conference is taking place in Uganda because the former Chairman of the Council of Ministers and current Minister of Internal Affairs of Uganda offered to host it in Uganda. Maj Gen (Rtd) Kahinda Otafiire left a lasting mark on ARIPO during his term including ensuring that the resolution of member States to construct new ARIPO headquarters was implemented, that the Arusha Protocol on Plant Varieties was adopted by Member States, to mention but a few achievements under his Chairmanship.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers who continues to provide guidance and direction to the Secretariat and has graced us with her presence. Welcome Hon. Mawine G. Diggs.

And together with the Chairperson of the Administrative Council Hon. P. Adelyn Cooper, your steady and assured leadership of ARIPO has brought us this far and we will continue to grow in leaps and bounds.

To our cooperating partners including WIPO, OAPI which is represented by the Director of Legal Affairs, Dr Maurice Batanga, and especially the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) who have invested considerable time and financial resources in this conference. The success of this Protocol will also be your success and we look to many more years of cooperation towards supporting Member States of ARIPO in the use of IP for development.

I reserve my utmost appreciation to the teams at Uganda Registration Services Bureau and the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Government of Uganda that supported this conference. I particularly would like to thank the Registrar General, M/s Mercy Kainobwisho led by the Board through the Chairman Amb. Francis K. Butagira. Thank you for the excellent preparations, the warm hospitality extended to all delegations that ensured that we hold this conference in a safe and secure environment and the support extended to me personally and the secretariat. We deeply appreciate.

Allow me also to welcome all delegates: members of the Administrative Council, Cooperating partners attending this gathering virtually; thank you for your support.

Distinguished delegates,

I want to especially recognize and welcome the high-level delegations, all the Honourable Ministers who came from our Member States to this Diplomatic Conference. We know how busy you are, and your presence here is a strong signal of your support to Copyright and Related Rights. We are sincerely grateful to you.

In conclusion, **Your Excellency, distinguished delegates**, Africa does not deserve anything less than success from us; and we at ARIPO aim for accomplishment in the implementation of this Protocol. I plead that we all aim for victory of the Protocol.

I thank you very much for your attention!