



IFLA Statements – WIPO Assemblies 2021

ITEM 5 – General Statements

Mr Chair, Your Excellency, thank you for the floor.

I am speaking on behalf of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, which represents libraries of all types, globally.

First of all, I would like to offer our congratulations to His Excellency the Director General, Daren Tang, on his first year in office.

IFLA works to promote excellent library services around the world, providing a core infrastructure for equitable education, research, and cultural participation, supporting progress across the Sustainable Development Goals.

But the effectiveness of these services depends heavily on the copyright laws in place. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a stark illustration of their impact on the ability of libraries to continue to serve communities at distance.

It is therefore welcome to see the strong focus in the WIPO Programme of Work and Budget on understanding the impact of COVID.

As a core part of the UN system, WIPO has a unique role both in advancing policies and practices that support a strong and equitable response to and recovery from COVID, and in working to overcome the difficulties caused by misalignments between national laws.

We hope therefore that WIPO will be able to answer the call, and contribute to building a truly equitable and sustainable new development paradigm.

Thank you.

ITEM 13 – Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights

Mr Chair, thank you for the floor.

My organisation, IFLA, has engaged in the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights for many years, given our confidence in WIPO as a force for positive change.

It should be a space for exchange about how we can maintain the balance that copyright laws have always been supposed to seek during changing times, achieving both the right of creators to benefit from the fruits of their work, while also guaranteeing the rights to culture, science, education and information for all.

But as set out in the Mandate from the 2012 General Assembly, it needs also to work towards an international instrument, in whatever form.

We cannot forget that this is the Committee that brought forth the Marrakesh Treaty, which has not only seen rapid take-up around the world, but has led to real legislative change which would have been unimaginable without the impetus it provides.

The work under the SCCR Action Plans in 2018 and 2019, combined with the experience of the impacts of unnecessarily restrictive or inadapted copyright laws during COVID, only highlight the relevance of efforts to support action around digital uses, cross-border working and preservation and access.

The latter is particularly relevant as we look to COP26 next month, and reflect on how we can minimise the damage that climate change does to our cultures and societies.

We therefore hope that upcoming meetings of SCCR will look to take meaningful steps towards action on these long-standing agenda items, where there is so much potential for positive impact.

Thank you.

ITEM 28 – Marrakesh Treaty

Your Excellency, Mr Chair, thank you.

The Marrakesh Treaty represents a major achievement of the international system, providing both a response to a clear market failure, and a powerful impetus for national reforms around the world in favour of people with disabilities.

It is an illustration of how, through promoting exceptions and limitations to copyright, WIPO can contribute to achieving a wider range of development goals, as well as the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We therefore strongly hope that the pace of ratifications and accessions – and perhaps more importantly, national implementing reforms – will keep up, and that Member States will seize the opportunity that is there to consider how other groups of persons with disabilities might benefit.

In parallel, we also encourage delegates to the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights to consider how the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty may be more formally extended to other groups, removing legal uncertainty around cross-border exchange there.

Thank you.