

Committee on Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM)

Press Release by IFLA/CLM and eIFL

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL)

Are the UN's richest members committed to access to knowledge for all?

International library organisations call for an end to deadlock in discussions for a Development Agenda for WIPO

IFLA World Library and Information Congress, Oslo 16th of August 2005

IFLA and eIFL welcome the broad agreement on the need for a 'Development Agenda' for WIPO following the third session of the specially convened Inter-Sessional Intergovernmental Meeting (IIM) in Geneva, July 20-22, 2005. Together with many public interest NGOs, IFLA and eIFL supported proposals by the Group of Friends of Development submitted to the 2004 General Assemblies and elaborated upon during the IIMs -- www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=42376

"We are deeply disappointed, however, that after nine days of discussion not only did the delegates fail to agree on any of the substantive issues, but due to resistance from the US and Japan a consensus on how to handle the discussions in the future was rendered impossible," says Mr. Winston Tabb, Chair of IFLA CLM.

"We share in the frustration of many government delegates from developing countries that the IIMs are thus unable to make recommendations and will instead leave it to the 2005 General Assemblies to decide on the future of this important process," echoed Ms. Rima Kupryte, Director eIFL.net.

A key component of the Development Agenda proposals is a call for a Treaty on Access to Knowledge. An 'A2K' treaty is important for libraries since our business is to enable people to find and use knowledge and information. This ability is essential to development and relies on exceptions and limitations to copyright. In the last decade international treaties, supranational directives from the European Union, national legislation and the terms of some Free Trade Agreements have created a trend towards the monopolisation and privatisation of information by eroding the exceptions and limitations to copyright, especially in the digital environment.

Fair access to information for all is essential to nurture education and stimulate innovation. A treaty is necessary to redress the balance and establish an international framework setting out the norms by which copyright protects user rights while

maintaining adequate protection for rightsholders.

"This is not an issue just for developing countries, but one also for developed countries since knowledge is a universal right, and equal access is an indispensable underpinning for an inclusive, democratic society," said Winston Tabb and Rima Kupryte today in a joint statement.

Further information:

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Notes for Editors

IFLA is an independent, international, non-governmental organisation representing the interest of libraries, librarians and the users of libraries worldwide. Founded in 1927, it now has members in over 150 countries, representing hundreds of thousand of library and information staff. IFLA is accredited by a number of United Nations agencies, including UNESCO and WIPO. CLM represents the voice of the international library community in copyright concerns.

eIFL

www.eifl.net is an international foundation which supports library consortia in transition and developing countries to negotiate and advocate for the wide availability of electronic information to education, research and professional communities as well as governmental organisations and civil society. This global network embraces millions of users in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

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