

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE AFRICAN
REGIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
(ARIPO), MR. FERNANDO DOS SANTOS, DURING THE 61ST SERIES
OF MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF WIPO MEMBER STATES**

SEPTEMBER 21 TO 25, 2020

Mr. Chairman,

I wish first of all to congratulate you for your election as the Chair of these Assemblies.

Allow me also to particularly express ARIPO's profound gratitude to the outgoing Director General, Dr. Francis Gurry. ARIPO benefited a lot from the cooperation with WIPO under Dr. Gurry's stewardship. I cannot enumerate the achievements we recorded in the framework of that cooperation, but let me single out the historical conclusion in 2018 of the WIPO-ARIPO-OAPI Agreement, also known as WAO.

I wish to seize this opportunity to congratulate once again the Director General elect, Mr Daren Tang, and assure him of ARIPO's availability to continue working together with WIPO and bring our cooperation to even greater heights.

I would also like to send ARIPO's heartfelt condolences to the whole WIPO family for the loss of Ms. Carole Croela who was the Senior Counsellor, Copyright Law Division. Ms. Carole Croela showed unprecedented commitment to the development of copyright and related rights systems in Africa. We worked together on several copyright initiatives that ARIPO undertook for the benefit of its Member States and Africa at large. She will be dearly missed. May Her Soul Rest In Peace.

Mr. Chairman,

ARIPO associates itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Africa Group. Let me at this juncture briefly highlight remarkable achievements that were registered during this year in ARIPO with the support of WIPO.

Like other Organizations, ARIPO was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was also an opportunity for ARIPO to appreciate the relevance of our ICT infrastructure which proved to be the pillar of the survival of the Organization. I wish to renew our gratitude to WIPO for its sustained support to improve our ICT system, more particularly the ARIPO on-line services, also

known as ‘Polite+ System’ that were introduced few years ago thanks to the joint ARIPO-KOICA-WIPO Project. The ARIPO e-services allowed the Office to keep the operations almost unaffected by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same vein, of relevance is also the support we continue to receive from WIPO in extending the Member State Module to ARIPO Member States, as well as the Regional Database that contributed a lot in maintaining the

During the year 2020, a number of activities were performed under the WIPO-ARIPO-OAPI umbrella. These include the Roundtable Discussion on Intellectual Property and the African Continental Free Trade Area that allowed the exchange with Delegates of Regional Economic Communities; awareness campaigns through webinars under various topics like the “Role of IP Offices in the context of Covid-19 in Africa”; “Regional and international treaties and agreements: opportunities and advantages” for the benefit of Cabo Verde Policy makers, to mention but a few.

This year, despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic, we also recorded achievements in capacity building, specifically the Master’s Degree Program in Intellectual Property, offered at the Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe, in cooperation with WIPO, which is now running for the thirteenth year. A similar Programme is also running in Ghana and Tanzania.

Finally, **Mr Chairman**, allow me to express ARIPO’s utmost gratitude to WIPO for the continued support rendered to ARIPO and its Member States during the year 2020 and it is my sincere hope that the cooperation shall continue for the benefit of our Member States and Africa at large.

Thank you.