

Intervention at IIM2 delivered by Mr. Dick Kawooya, Uganda on behalf of eIFL

Electronic Information for Libraries Intervention IIM2, 20-22 June 2005

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to speak today.

Electronic Information for Libraries represents nearly 4,000 leading academic and research libraries serving millions of users in 50 developing countries. Our interest is in copyright and related rights. As a member of the International Federation of Library Associations, eIFL fully supports IFLA's intervention at this meeting.

Our members are working every day to provide students in developing countries with access to learning materials and quality electronic resources. Access to information and knowledge is critical to the education and training needs of poor countries whose human resource is central to their development.

The reality in most LDCs is that students struggle to access basic learning materials. Extreme poverty in my country Uganda, for instance, means that students at Uganda's Makerere University simply cannot afford to buy the textbooks and reference materials necessary for their studies. Yet graduates from Makerere University are critical, not only to Uganda's socio-economic, political and cultural development, but also to creating a critical mass of users of copyright products and services.

So students at Makerere and in most LDCs rely entirely on the university library to provide learning and research materials for their courses. This is why it is essential to have well resourced libraries with the ability to provide reasonable access and use for students to resources and materials that the library has purchased.

In this context, one of the key proposals for us is the elaboration of a treaty on access to knowledge and technology. Such a treaty would be a key component in policy interventions to alleviate situations in countries such as Uganda.

Such a treaty would provide for guaranteed minimum levels of exceptions and limitations to copyright, which allow for reasonable portions of copyright material to be reproduced for education and research purposes, and private study. It would provide checks and balances to preserve a healthy tension between protecting rights holders and the need to use information.

The preamble of the WIPO copyright treaty states, "the need to maintain a balance between the rights of authors, and the larger public interest, particularly education, research and access to information, as reflected in the Berne Convention." However the balance has become distorted, at the expense of consumers of information. We therefore, urge WIPO to address these important issues through a treaty on access to knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.