

THIRD MEETING OF THE UNESCO INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS Paris, May 25 to June 4, 2005

Opening statement by the International Federation of Actors (FIA)

The International Federation of Actors represents more than 100 performers' unions, guilds and professional associations around the world on all continents. Our members and us speak for hundreds of thousands of actors, broadcast professionals, singers, dancers, variety artists and other performers who play a key role in the diversity of cultural expressions that this Convention is aiming to protect.

We understand the concern of many delegations about the introduction of an explicit reference to international treaties on intellectual property.

However, we strongly believe that the extremely weak reference to intellectual property rights provided in paragraph 16 of the Preamble is shockingly inadequate. Recognising the importance of intellectual property rights in sustaining those involved in cultural creativity is a far cry from what should be stated loud and clear.

Intellectual property rights are a vital tool for cultural diversity. Reading one article published in *Le Monde* some days ago, it struck me that only 2% of the sound tapes distributed in African countries are legal. Businesses are going bust one after the other, as they cannot face soaring levels of piracy. There is increasing pressure at global level aiming to water down intellectual property to the maximum possible level, a "culture" of free access to all which is highly detrimental to actors and all other creative players in this business. A growing lobby claiming that copyright and neighbouring rights are detrimental to culture, especially in developing countries. The reality clearly shows how fallacious and dangerous these claims really are. Combined with the growing spread of digital technologies and digitalisation, the absence of a truly enforceable intellectual property rights system cannot but undermine the creativity that we wish to protect and promote in this forum.

We believe that the Preamble – or the Principles - should therefore clearly recognise that truly effective intellectual property rights and their implementation are not only important to those involved in cultural creativity but are an essential tool to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions around the world.

This statement is also supported by the International Publishers Association and by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.