

EADUMC Opening Statement to WIPO IGC 13th Session

Greetings and thanks for the opportunity to address this very important Session of the WIPO IGC. Congratulations to the new Chair, Ambassador Rigoberto Gauto Vielman and a hearty welcome to our new Director General, Dr. Francis Gurry.

The Ethio-Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council (EADUMC) is a Rastafari Collective Organization comprising several Rastafari member and affiliate organizations in Jamaica, the Caribbean, the USA and Africa. Rastafari is a nation of people indigenous to Africa, but involuntarily displaced through slavery to Africa's Diaspora and specifically in Jamaica where the Rastafari community first manifested itself. In this respect, Rastafari is viewed by many persons as indigenous to Jamaica.

Over the last few decades, mainly through migration and Reggae music, traditional Rastafari cultural expressions have become very dominant in popular music and artistic culture, as well as in heritage tourism, often resulting in moral and economic harm to the Global Rastafari Community which has traditionally survived on its music, arts, handicrafts and integrity.

The purpose of the EADUMC is to halt the misappropriation of Rastafari culture as well as to support national and international efforts to halt misappropriation of indigenous and traditional cultures globally. In that respect, we support the IGC and look forward to strengthening the work of WIPO, just as WIPO has strengthened our Council and work in Jamaica. We would like to officially thank the WIPO Secretariat for the informative substantive documents and its pivotal role in advancing the interests of indigenous peoples and to implore member countries to be guided by the Secretariat in the IGC deliberations.

We support the African Group position that the "ultimate objective of this process should be the development and adoption of a legally binding international instrument for the protection of traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and genetic resources." In that respect, the Gap Analyses proposed by the African Group and prepared by the Secretariat is timely. Desirous to see concrete outcomes of this IGC process sooner rather than later, we support in principle the African Group proposal for inter-sessional meetings to move the deliberations expeditiously to the conclusion of some hard law by the WIPO Assembly.

The longer there exists a gaping void of no international binding law to protect indigenous and traditional resources from misappropriation, the longer will be the exploitation and marginalization of indigenous and traditional communities, who generally remain among the poorest in the world. Therefore until such a legal regime is in place, the UN is failing in its mandate to ensure world justice and world peace. Until then, the international community is failing indigenous peoples globally and continuing the promulgation of 'might is right' and subjugation of the weak, tantamount to turning a blind eye to rape, slavery and colonialism.

This is not the time for hypocrisy and politics (or as the Rastafari would say, Poly-tricks). The time now is for concerted and tangible legislative action to rescue and protect the intellectual property, genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore of Indigenous and Traditional Communities, without delay. Rastafari! Thank you.