

**63<sup>rd</sup> Series of Meetings of the WIPO General Assemblies, 14-22 July 2022: Agenda Item 4 –**

**General Statements**

**Pacific Islands Group Statement**

Madam Chair, Your Excellency Ambassador Tatiana Molcean,

Director General Mr Daren Tang,

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates.

Vanuatu is pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Pacific Group.

At the outset, the Pacific Group wishes to congratulate the Chair for her appointment and we convey our best wishes for a successful Assembly before us.

Whilst we note the challenges in hosting international conferences in the midst of unprecedented times resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize and thank Director General Daren Tang and the WIPO Secretariat for all the efforts undertaken in order to organize and convene this 63<sup>rd</sup> Series of Meetings of the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO.

In saying this, we wish to align ourselves with the statement delivered by India on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group members.

Chair,

The Pacific Group attests great importance to this Organisation. Our presence today is a testament of a new engagement the Pacific as a group has with WIPO which signifies our commitment to ensuring that our voices are heard, our interests are manifested, our partnership with the wider WIPO family is reaffirmed, and as smaller island economies our recognition and support for multilateralism. During this challenging period, in view of the exceptional threats to multilateralism, we express our support to WIPO as a critical multilateral organisation that must continue to reaffirm the promotion and protection of IP worldwide.

Secondly, we welcome with appreciation WIPO's focus on Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). We agree with this focus as a substantial number of entrepreneurs in our region fall within this category whose work needs to be recognized and supported. IP plays a critical role in their growth. Right policy tools compounded with enhanced IP laws that safeguard SMEs are an important ingredient for economic prosperity and the sustainability of our islands. We recognise the opportunities for Pacific businesses such as SMEs to tap into these disciplines, all of which requires closer cooperation with WIPO.

As a highly diverse group of islands with rich IP knowledge that needs to be safeguarded, the Pacific Group welcomes WIPO's focus on designing impactful projects on the ground for the benefit of our key industries. In this regard, we commend the Division for Asia and the Pacific for our previous cooperation on specific industries that are of regional importance such as the Nonu fruit initiative in Samoa from 2019-20, the Bilum initiative in Papua New Guinea in 2021 and the current initiative on Kava for eight Pacific Island countries which started in 2021.

We call for the extension of work in the existing projects and the development of additional projects for specific exports in which the Pacific have prospects and comparative advantage in IP.

Thirdly, the Capacity Building opportunities provided through the WIPO Academy courses and scholarships offered by the Distance Learning Program have great value for our region and so we recognise their contribution to our knowledge base and increasing the opportunities we get from these experiences. Between 2017 and 2021, 315 participants from the Pacific Islands benefitted from the Program including 51 participants who were awarded WIPO scholarships. The Pacific Group stresses the importance of these opportunities to enhance the knowledge of our capital officials and stakeholders, and thus calls on this Assembly to continue this program to strengthen our region's understanding of IP including its relevance and benefits in the short- to long-term economic development as aligned with our SDG targets and goals.

Regarding targeted capacity building efforts for the region in the areas discussed by IGC, either in the form of a webinar or briefing, is hereby called for in view of our members inability to attend meetings despite sponsorship provisions. Such targeted initiatives will serve both as knowledge sharing and promotional incentives to encourage the participation of our members to future IGC meetings.

Chair,

In terms of the normative agenda of WIPO, most of which are on the agenda of this General Assembly, the Pacific region holds key interest in the work of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore. This work will support the growth in cultural industries across the Pacific. We will engage actively in the IGC's work program for the 2022-23 period to advance the negotiations of the draft texts on TK and expressions of culture and on TK and genetic resource. The Pacific Group calls on those Members who had previously expressed reservations on some of the substantive and pertinent matters to now engage in positive manner and support us the Pacific Group, and the majority of the WIPO members to advance the discussions.

Finally, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the continual detection of new variants, we recognize the efforts by WIPO in combatting the pandemic through its COVID-19 response package and the important cooperation efforts the organization has taken particularly the trilateral cooperation with WHO and WTO which aims to develop effective solutions to the challenges our economies are facing. We support all efforts undertaken to ensure fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and other necessary medical products.

We look forward to further working with WIPO and Members to ensure that IP remains as an effective development tool for our economies.

Thank you.

*Geneva, Switzerland, 14 July 2022*