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REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE IFLA AFRICA SECTION

Victoria Okojie

Delivered by Lindy Nhlapo, IFLA Regional Manager for Africa
at the 2nd International Conference on African Digital Libraries and Archives (ICADLA-2),
University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa,
14th – 18th November, 2011

The Deputy Minister, South African Ministry of Arts and Culture, Dr. Joseph Phaahla
The Vice Chancellor, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Professor Loyiso Nongxa
The Keynote Speaker, Professor John Anyanwu, African Development Bank
Dr. Magdi Khalifa, African Union Commission

Dear Colleagues
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel highly honoured and privileged to be invited to make some remarks at the 2nd International Conference on African Digital Libraries & Archives (ICADLA-2). Let me reiterate that the IFLA Africa Section participated actively in organizing the first conference (ICADLA-1) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2009 and I am happy that the second conference is taking place in South Africa, thereby giving more colleagues from the different sub-regions of Africa to participate. I believe that this conference will provide the opportunity for participants to review how many of the Action Plans achieved at the first conference have been carried out, what lessons have been learnt and what prospects there are for the future. The theme of this conference, "Developing knowledge for economic advancement in Africa", is very appropriate, considering the current global economic recession. This is more so because Africa as a continent should be in a hurry to harness her abundant resources to bring about development that impacts in real terms on her citizenry.

One of the ways of engendering development is to enhance our knowledge base and reposition it in such a way that it can stimulate economic advancement. The huge potentials of our Indigenous Knowledge have been largely untapped. Our traditional knowledge management systems need to be explored better and there is the need to actively engage in the uploading of local content. I am aware that there are pockets of digitization projects in progress in Africa, but many colleagues are not aware of these projects. This conference will fill the gap by providing information on the digitization projects in Africa and the rest of the world. Other benefits that will accrue from the conference include:

- providing the platform to share best practice from the international scene and from the region;
- sharing experiences and lessons learnt in creating digital archives, Institutional Repositories and Open Access Repositories;
- opportunities for future linkages, collaborations and partnerships;
- providing funding for on-going and new projects;
- supporting efforts to bridge the digital divide; and

- providing opportunities for capacity building programmes on the continent.

The Africa Section hopes that at the end of this conference, we would have come closer to developing an African Digital Library and Archive that is more participatory and that will be a pride to us as African librarians and archivists. To achieve this, there must be regular capacity building programmes to develop the skills and competencies of librarians in Africa to sustain the project. Africa must develop a policy with appropriate legislative frameworks that provides the infrastructure and enabling environment for the development and sustainability of a digital library and archive. There is also the need to leverage on the presence of other stakeholders participating in this conference to develop Public/Private Partnerships that add value to existing efforts. These must be done in a strategic and coordinated manner using umbrella networks such as the IFLA Africa Section.

Let me once again thank the organizers of ICADLA-2 for inviting me to make a brief input. In closing, it is perhaps pertinent here to ask a few questions:

- What will the digital future of libraries and archives in Africa be in, say, the next ten years?
- Who has the responsibility to bring this "future" to pass?
- How can this be achieved?

I am sure that these and many more are some of the issues that will be discussed and addressed at ICADLA-2. As Chair of IFLA Africa Section, I am eagerly awaiting the outcomes from this conference in order to discuss how the Section can take some of the Action Points forward. Rest assured, you have the full support of the Africa Section!

Thank you and best wishes for a successful conference.

Victoria Okojie
Chair, IFLA Africa Section

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE