

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF AUDIO VISUAL RIGHTS SOCIETY OF NIGERIA (AVRS), MR. BOND EMERUWA, ON THE OCASSION OF THE WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DAY, APRIL 26, 2016.

The World Intellectual Property Day is observed annually on April 26. It was established by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2000 to "raise awareness of how patents, copyright, trademarks and designs impact on daily life" and "to celebrate creativity, and the contribution made by creators and innovators to the development of societies across the globe"

The theme for this year's WIP Day is **Digital Creativity: Culture Reimagined**. In line with the theme, stakeholders are exploring the future of culture in the digital age: how we create it, how we access it, how we finance it. We are looking into how a flexible intellectual property system helps ensure that the artists and creative industries are properly paid for their work, to enable them sustain their creativity.

Given that we live in a digital age where digital revolution has been the game changer in all sectors, it may be assumed that stakeholders in the creative industries are only enjoying the blessings of digital creativity. But a closer look at the nexus between intellectual property rights and digital creativity would show that the challenges faced by creators in the digital landscape are quite intricate and enormous, with direct impact on the future of the creative content economy.

Central among such challenges is the menace of digital piracy – the unauthorized reproduction and commercial exploitation of copyrighted materials available in electronic form. Available digital piracy statistics within and outside Nigeria would show how deeply this debilitating cancer has eaten into our creative economy and denied us unimaginable revenue which, in most cases have truncated the creative efforts of practitioners leaving them jobless after investing heavily in their respective creative processes.

From the standpoint of film makers and particularly as Nigeria's sole collective management organization for cinematograph films, AVRS would like to use the commemoration of the 2016 World Intellectual Property Day to mobilize public support towards the eradication of digital piracy, not only as it affects the film industry, but the entire creative sector.

Accordingly, we would like to call on the Federal Government to speed up the process of implementation of the Copyright Levy (on Materials) order 2012 which was signed and left unimplemented since 2012 to the detriment of Nigeria's creative economy. In making this call, we are fully aware of the tireless and commendable efforts of the Nigerian Copyright Commission towards actualizing the implementation of the Order. The time has come, however, when we, the stakeholders must take it upon ourselves to embark on a sustained

campaign to ensure the implementation of the Order, which would go a long way to reduce the cancer of digital piracy.

Nollywood, apart from its contribution to Nigeria's GDP, has become a powerful window of international good will to the country. It has attracted development partnerships and foreign direct investments in the creative sector, thereby employing thousands of Nigerians and taking them off the streets. The least the Federal Government can do for Nollywood and the entire creative sector is to implement the Copyright Levy (on Materials) Order, which is already operational in most countries, including West African countries like Ghana. It is long overdue. Its continued delay is beginning to appear as a calculated denial of our entitlement by government. I am hoping that we shall not be constrained to take to the streets or embark on other alternative campaign media before our genuine demand is granted.

Thank you.

Bond Emeruwa

Chairman

Audio Visual Rights Society of Nigeria (AVRS)

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