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Opening Remarks

29<sup>th</sup> IPA Congress

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Thank you for that very kind introduction, Jens.

First, I'd like to add my welcome for all of you to the 29<sup>th</sup> International Publishers Congress here in Cape Town, South Africa. I feel very fortunate to be in such stunning surroundings for this Congress. Just the view of Table Mountain was worth that 15 hour flight, wasn't it?

Second, I would like to recognize those who have worked exceptionally hard to make this Congress happen. IPA Executive Committee Director and Executive Director of the Publishers Association of South African (PASA) Brian Wafawarowa has been a driving force behind this Congress. I also want to recognize Marion and Nicol Faasen, and the entire PASA staff, as well as Cheryl Marsh, the PCO organizer, and her team. Finally, I must of course recognize the IPA Secretariat. I am going to point them out now so that if you have any questions during the Congress, you know who they are. Jens, whom you've just seen, as well as Alexis Krikorian, Antje Sorensen, and Joanna Bazan Babczonek. Please do not hesitate to come to any of us with questions or comments.

I also want to thank YOU! Yes, you, the speakers, and you, the delegates, for making the journey to Cape Town and bringing your enthusiasm, your passion, and your insights to share with each other. We have delegates here from every continent except Antarctica. We have publishers from every sector imaginable—from trade to education to children's books to STM—and we have writers, lawyers, policy makers, and more. I feel privileged to be in the company of so many great minds, each from different backgrounds and bringing their own unique stories. I hope you will all share your thoughts with us while you are here, so we can get to know you all better.

This is the first time in its 116-year history that the IPA Congress has been held on the African continent. Unfortunately, the FIFA World Cup beat us to it, but better late than never, right? I am very proud that we are having this Congress in South Africa, and I think it is truly important. Part of why it is so

important that we are here on the African continent is because, as Talent Nyathi, member of the Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust, remarked, “African publishers are not just in business. They are part of the process of change.”

We in the publishing community know that educational publishers are essential to any knowledge economy and to publishing in general, particularly in developing countries. Because educational publishing generates stable, long-term income, it provides publishers with the ability to sustain other activities, such as trade publishing.

But this is not always obvious to others. Here in South Africa, the governing political party, the African National Congress (ANC) has recently called for state publishing, or for the government to take charge of publishing educational textbooks. One of the reasons the ANC wants government publishing is because they believe there has been a “lack of transformation in the country’s publishing industry.” As our colleagues from South Africa can tell you, this is not true. Educational publishers in South Africa have dealt with many difficulties, including an ever-changing school curriculum and delays in payment of more than one year, yet they have persisted in producing high-quality textbooks.

We need to make sure others outside of the publishing community know how important publishing is to a country’s economy: as Tanzanian publisher Walter Bgoya said, “We are constantly told by governments that agriculture is the backbone of African economies, although agriculture is in fact extremely weak. I don’t know whether publishing is the collar bone or which bone it is, but we need to find a way of persuading governments to take us seriously.” This recent call by the ANC for state publishing demonstrates that the value added by publishers is not fully understood. This Congress provides us with an opportunity to articulate a clear vision of the vital role that publishers play in an economy. Let’s take advantage of it.

Perhaps one reason our role is not clear is that our industry is amidst tremendous change. The theme of this Congress is “Publishing for a New Era”. I think you will all agree that this is a timely and relevant theme. We truly are entering a new era, and it is unbelievably exciting time to be in publishing. As we all know, there are threats to our industry’s sustainability. We cannot ignore these. We need to confront them head on. But change doesn’t have to be a bad thing—in fact, it can be a very good thing.

But we need to move towards change, to be the drivers of change. We need to work together to impact the future of publishing in positive ways.

Behind many, if not all, of these changes is the digital revolution. In a world of crowd-sourced content, self-publishing, free information, and open resources, some have questioned whether publishing can survive. But do not be mistaken! Publishing is FAR from dead. The Internet and the digital economy are not threats to publishing—they are opportunities. Publishing is undoubtedly changing: some markets are waning as new technologies simplify certain traditional functions of publishers, while other sectors are growing as the skills that publishers bring are increasingly important. We are engaging with new partners – increasingly you will see collaboration between publishers and technology companies. At the next IPA Congress in Bangkok in 2014, you will see a lot more technologists in the audience. We're not even finished with the first session of this Congress, and I'm already talking about the next one. Indeed, a lot of what we will be doing during this Congress is looking forward. But, we should not forget where we came from, and what lies at the essence of what it means to be a publisher.

Publishers, at our core, are curators of high quality content. Our standards and efficiency need to be maintained and improved—technology is only useful if it connects the user to high-quality content. We need to engage with the technologists to make sure we are fully leveraging what is available to better serve our readers. At the same time, we need to continue to do the same things we have been doing for centuries—finding the best authors and the best content, and helping to bring that content to as many readers as possible. I want to quote one of our speakers, Maria Pallante, whose bio unfortunately is not in your programmes, but she is the Register of Copyrights for the United States. In March, in her address to the Association of American Publishers, she succinctly summed up the value of publishers to a society (in this case, the United States's society). She said,

“[Publishers] are—and always have been— so much more than an industry. Since the very beginning of our nation, publishers have been catalysts for democracy, guardians of free speech, stewards of scholarship and education, disseminators of scientific discovery, and champions of literature. However one defines a knowledge economy today, it could not have emerged (and is not worth sustaining) without the production and distribution of books, journals and other professional content.”

Technology is certainly making this production and distribution of content easier, but it is not replacing skills like editing and curating content. The explosion of content brought on by the digital revolution—what I call information overload—means that the skill of curating content and guiding readers to the information that they need is more important than ever.

Another core tenet of publishing is that we want our content to be available to all, at prices that are both sustainable and affordable. Recently, a debate at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has centered on copyright exceptions and limitations for print disabled persons. Global and universal accessibility is a key element of publishing strategy. There is a lot of goodwill and movement towards improved access for print disabled persons, and publishers are and want to be a central part of that. We are committed to, compassionate about, and active in providing access to persons with print disabilities. Publishers want a legal instrument that caters to the reality in which persons with print disabilities are being served by publishers directly, through charities and through other mechanisms such as collective licenses. This puts persons with print disabilities on the same level as any other person. Copyright exceptions are one way to increase accessibility, but they are not the only way. The most important thing is that access is increased *in practice* and not just in words, and working mechanisms should be allowed to continue.

Finally, for those of us living in Western countries, it can be easy to take freedom of expression and freedom to publish for granted. However, these remain key issues in many parts of the world. Lobbying to bring attention to these injustices is one of IPA's most important roles. I am grateful to our members for bringing our attention to instances where freedom to publish is being restricted, and for contributing their time, expertise and energy to helping us fight these wrongs. It is often difficult and thankless work. This year's IPA Freedom to Publish Prize recipient, Jonathan Shapiro, also knows that it can also be expensive to be in the business of freedom of expression. We commend Shapiro and everyone else around the world for their courage in continuing to fight for this basic human right.

To conclude, we are here with a mission: to share the experiences of publishers around the world with the changes in technology and society, to showcase growing markets and important innovations, and to explore how public policies are influencing the future of the publishing industry. And as Maria said, we are so much more than an industry. After all, it is not just African publishers who are part of the process of change—all publishers are part of the process of change. We will be most effective when we work

together, sharing our experiences and thinking critically about solutions and ways we can improve our industry. I am looking forward to hearing from our many speakers as well as our participants. The strength of this Congress will lie in your engagement with each other.

Thank you, and enjoy the Congress!