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International Authors Forum Launches at World Intellectual Property Organisation on 16th December 2013

The International Authors Forum (IAF) has been launched at the headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva, Switzerland. WIPO is a branch of the United Nations, which legislates for copyright on an international basis.

The IAF has been formed to represent authors worldwide, in particular their interests in copyright. The presence of the IAF at WIPO will reintroduce an authors' perspective to WIPO's copyright negotiations, as digitisation and globalisation pose new challenges to authors' ability to make a living from their creations. The presence of the author's voice has been acknowledged as missing from these negotiations for a number of years.

Trevor Clarke, WIPO's Assistant Director General, extended a warm welcome from WIPO to the IAF. He stressed the importance of authors being involved in WIPO's work, and the valuable contribution that authors make to the world's local and global cultures and economies.

Maureen Duffy, UK writer and authors' rights expert; Joanne Harris, prolific novelist and writer of *Chocolat*; Roberto Cabot, a respected visual artist from Brazil; and Rob Levine, writer and prominent advocate of copyright, all gave their public support to the International Authors Forum (IAF) and its aims at the launch event. Each communicated their personal experiences of why copyright and authors' rights are important to them as authors, to whom copyright fundamentally belongs, and that copyright is vital to ensure they can continue to create by earning a living.

Joanne Harris made the message clear: "We want the public to use our works. We want to help schools and libraries. But we also want to have the choice to say yes or no to these requests. It's all a matter of respect. We may sometimes give away content for free, but we want the right to choose where and when." Robert Levine added: "With so many organisations advocating for publishers and distributors it's nice to have one at WIPO that can also support authors."

Maureen Duffy concluded the programme by reading a statement from Egyptian novelist and political commentator Ahdaf Soueif. Ahdaf was unable to attend due to the current political situation in Egypt, but exercised a final plea to the WIPO delegates of the 186 Member States represented at WIPO, on behalf of authors, describing them as "the warning systems of our communities". Her powerful statement was that "it helps if we can earn our bread simply by being read. So, please take that into account in your deliberations."

Maureen Duffy expressed thanks on behalf of the IAF, saying "We are very grateful to the warm welcome from WIPO and look forward to further collaboration and making the author's voice heard globally."

About the International Authors Forum

IAF's purpose is to develop a strong network of worldwide authors' organisations with which it can consult and communicate to represent their interests; IAF can strengthen the presence of authors, and the effective representation of their rights on a global scale.

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