

STATEMENT BY
FREE SOFTWARE FOUNDATION EUROPE (FSFE)
AT THE SECOND
INTER-SESSIONAL, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL
MEETING ON A
DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR WIPO
(Geneva, 20-22 June 2005)

Mr. Chairman,
on behalf of the Free Software Foundation Europe (FSFE), let me express my congratulations on your chairing this most important session. The FSFE is a globally active centre of expertise focussed on Europe, acting in a network with sister organisations in India, Latin America and the United States of America.

Our area of expertise are the issues raised by a digitised society and economy, questions which are addressed effectively by Free Software; as defined by the freedom of unlimited use for any purpose, the freedom to study, the freedom to modify and the freedom to distribute.

We commend the Friends of Development on their clear and constructive proposal on how to improve the effectiveness of WIPO in terms of becoming a true “World Intellectual Wealth Organisation.” We also commend all other countries on their proposals, which, as we have noted, all involve Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

In accordance with the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted by all UN Member States during the December 2003 World Summit on the Information Society, we emphasise the need for such activities to not de-facto or de-jure mandate the specific software model employed, be it proprietary or Free Software.

Mr. Chairman,
like proprietary software, Free Software is using copyright: It does so by mitigating some of the restrictions to best fit the social and economic needs of all players; actors in the Free Software field range from large companies such as SUN and IBM, to cities like Munich and Vienna, and to non-governmental organisations, such as ourselves.

Although Free Software is a model employed with great success by a large number of developed and developing states, most of current WIPO activities are focussing on proprietary software only. For the upcoming discussions we therefore call upon WIPO to specifically also include Free Software in all its programmes and activities, educating its member states on the social and economic benefits of the Free Software model.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
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