The Hague, 2 July 2012

IFLA and EBLIDA Statement on ACTA and the Importance of Multilateral Multi-stakeholder IP Policy Formation

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) represent the interests of the global and European library communities. Libraries are explicitly connected to national and international copyright systems and play an important cultural role in both preserving and making available access to information that is in copyright or the public domain. Library and information professionals understand and respect the role that copyright plays in information creation and dissemination around the world and place the highest emphasis on compliance with copyright principles and regulations. In doing so, they understand that copyright must provide for a fair and profitable balance between the needs of information users and society at large and the commercial imperatives of creators and content providers.

Ahead of a vote on whether to approve or reject the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) in the European Parliament planned on July 4th, IFLA and EBLIDA wish to reiterate the library community's concerns regarding the way this proposed agreement has evolved outside the existing IP norm setting frameworks. While we strongly support international efforts to control systemic commercial counterfeiting, we are concerned that ACTA erodes the fundamental balance in copyright law and does not seriously consider and protect the interest of the broader community in having equitable access to knowledge and cultural expression. It has essentially bypassed the existing global structures for IP norm setting – namely the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

During ACTA's drafting process the library community has been alarmed by the extreme secrecy surrounding the negotiations. The lack of transparency related to ACTA's procedures, provisions, and priorities was unprecedented for a global-norm setting activity among democratic nations in the sphere of intellectual property. As a result, mistrust has developed amongst many of those who were not consulted at any stage in the Agreement's genesis.

Digital technology is offering citizens new and exciting means of access to information and IFLA and EBLIDA believe that flexible and balanced copyright frameworks are needed to reap the full benefits of the digital information revolution. For this very reason IFLA and EBLIDA firmly believe that the best forum for any discussions of this magnitude is the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), where it is possible to ensure the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

IFLA and EBLIDA therefore urge MEPs to reject a continuing legislative focus on copyright enforcement at the expense of flexibility. When voting in Parliament on July 4th, MEPs should reject ACTA.

About IFLA

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. IFLA has members in over 150 countries, including 46 in Europe. It is the global voice of the library and information profession and aims to:

- Promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services
- Encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library & information services
- Represent the interests of our members throughout the world.

About EBLIDA

The European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) is an independent umbrella association of library, information, documentation and archive associations and institutions in Europe.

EBLIDA concentrates on European information society issues, including copyright & licensing, culture & education. EBLIDA promotes unhindered access to information in the digital age and the role of archives and libraries in achieving this goal.