

# Murky waters on the banks of Lake Geneva

**Doubts over Kamil Idris's future at WIPO remain. While they do, the organisation will be hamstrung and ineffective**

What on earth is going on at WIPO headquarters in Geneva? Has Kamil Idris, the organisation's embattled director-general, said that he will be stepping down from his role, or has he not?

According to Warren Tichenor, the US's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and International

Organizations, the answer is yes. "We look forward to participating in the nominating process for a new Director General, and will work with other member states to ensure that leadership transition arrangements are transparent and will support the smooth and effective functioning of this vital organisation," he is quoted as saying in an official statement released on 14th November.

But, if this is the case, where is Idris's resignation letter? There has been no hint of anything official on the WIPO website, neither has there been any quote from the director-

general saying that he will be standing down. Instead, the only communication from him is an email he sent to WIPO employee's on 13th November, part of which read: "I should like to inform all staff members that I have decided to advance the process for nominating and appointing a Director General ... Following discussions with the Chairs of the General Assembly and of the Coordination Committee, we will shortly be issuing a circular inviting WIPO Member States to nominate for consideration by the Coordination Committee in May 2008,

candidates for appointment by the General Assembly at its next session in September 2008."

Which raises the question: if there is no resignation letter and if Idris has not said publicly he will be standing down, could one of the candidates that emerges in the spring of next year be him? It is a possibility that Cincinnatus – a group claiming to represent WIPO employees "from all grades, nationalities, races and religions" – has already raised. In an open letter to Idris released on 19th November, which compares the director-general to the dictator Big Brother from George Orwell's book *1984*, Cincinnatus state: "We don't trust you Big Brother. You have cheated on us too much ... Bets are already

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## A tale of two letters

### Email from Kamil Idris to all WIPO staff, 13th November:

I should like to inform all staff members that I have decided to advance the process for nominating and appointing a Director General, based on the Procedures for the Nomination and Appointment of Directors General of WIPO, adopted by the General Assembly of WIPO in September 1998.

Following discussions with the Chairs of the General Assembly and of the Coordination Committee, we will shortly be issuing a circular inviting WIPO Member States to nominate for consideration by the Coordination Committee in May 2008, candidates for appointment by the General Assembly at its next session in September 2008.

With regard to the 2008/2009 Program and Budget recommended for approval by the Program and Budget

Committee to the Assemblies of Member States of WIPO in 2007, the Chair of the General Assembly will continue his consultations with group coordinators and will meet in two weeks to consider this important issue. I have personally urged all concerned, in the best interests of the Organization, to proceed soon with the formal approval of the 2008/2009 Program and Budget.

In the interim, I should like to thank all of you for your continued support and diligence. As I have repeatedly said, the Organization's strongest asset is its staff members. I look forward to your continued collaboration and do appreciate your many efforts and hard work.

Thank you.

Source: <http://www.ip-watch.org/weblog/index.php?p=830>

### Excerpt from the Cincinnatus letter to Kamil Idris, 19th November 2007:

You also said that you will "ensure that the transition of leadership in the organization is conducted with dignity and in conformity with extant rules and regulations." We don't trust you Big Brother. You have cheated on us too much ... You are launching early elections to catch Switzerland and the United States – who asked for it – in their own trap. But what of your resignation? ... Bets are already being taken in the Secretariat that you will sacrifice yourself Big Brother when, with the situation deadlocked as a result of the multiple candidacies you are soliciting, your allies will come and ask you to accept a third term! Delaying tactics, electoral schemes, your allies have already been briefed. Who do you think you are fooling without your letter of resignation

signed sealed and delivered? A dignified handover of power? We take you at your word Big Brother. Suspend recruitments, promotions at the director level and all plans to restructure WIPO during the next 10 months. These decisions belong to your successor. Here too we will be vigilant Big Brother and we will not permit your faithful followers to establish empires for themselves in the Organization so as to protect their rear, as the Controller has just done surreptitiously.

Too many lies. Too many illicit rewards. Too much favouritism. We don't trust you anymore Big Brother. Because we think that "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

Source: <http://www.ip-watch.org/weblog/index.php?p=829>