

INTERNATIONALER VERBAND
ZUM SCHUTZ VON
PFLANZENZÜCHTUNGEN
GENÈVE, SCHWEIZ



UNION INTERNATIONALE
POUR LA PROTECTION
DES OBTENTIONS VÉGÉTALES
GENÈVE, SUISSE

INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF
NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

UPOV Press Release No. 25

Geneva, October 29, 1997

IDRIS TO SUCCEED BOGSCH AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UPOV

Dr. Arpad Bogsch (78), citizen of the United States of America, Secretary General of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) for the last 24 years, will retire on November 30, 1997.

Today, Wednesday, 29th of October 1997, the Council of UPOV, by acclamation appointed Dr. Kamil Idris to the post of Secretary-General.

Dr. Idris, the third Secretary-General of UPOV, a national of Sudan, fluent in English, French and Arabic, has been appointed for a term of office of six years from the 1st of December 1997 through the 30th of November 2003.

Dr. Idris has had a remarkable career, from being an Ambassador of his country, a Professor of Public International Law, a private Practitioner and Lawyer, a member of the United Nations International Law Commission (ILC), a Deputy Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Director General of WIPO as of 1st of December 1997.

Dr. Idris, who was appointed by the WIPO General Assembly on the 22nd of September 1997 as the third Director General of that Organization, emerging from within the Organization, has intimate knowledge of UPOV's activities as well as the views of its staff.

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In his acceptance speech to the UPOV Council, this morning, the Secretary-General elect said that, in approaching his duties as Secretary-General of UPOV, he will ensure that “the principles of transparency, accountability, effective collaboration and a mutually responsible relationship between member States, market-sector interests and the Secretariat will guide the Office of UPOV in the years ahead.”

Dr. Idris paid tribute to the energy, foresight and vision of the outgoing Secretary-General, Dr. Arpad Bogsch.

The acceptance speech of Dr. Idris to the Council of UPOV is annexed to this press release.

[Annex follows]

**Acceptance Speech
of the new Secretary-General of
the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV),
Dr. Kamil Idris**

October 29, 1997

Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

May I first pay respect, Mr. President, to the excellent manner in which you have presided over the Council and the Consultative Committee of UPOV during the last three years.

I am greatly honored by your decision here today to appoint me as Secretary-General of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, which we all know by the familiar acronym UPOV. I pledge to honor, with all loyalty, discretion and conscience the trust placed in me.

I should like to pay tribute to the energy, foresight and vision of Dr. Arpad Bogsch who has played a unique and constructive role in the development of UPOV. He was on hand and influential when the UPOV Convention first came into force and under his wise counsels a completely new concept at the international level, the protection of new plant varieties, has become a dynamic form of intellectual property protection.

In approaching my duties as Secretary-General of UPOV, I will ensure that the principles of transparency, accountability, effective collaboration and a mutually responsive relationship between member States, market-sector interests and the Secretariat will guide the Office of UPOV in the years ahead. I have been particularly gratified to see the open and cooperative relationship between UPOV and the industry sectors interested in plant development and improvement.

Plants are, to a large extent, the basis for virtually the whole of the nutrition of animals and men. Plants are also a major source of materials for shelter, clothing, fuel and medicines and, in the case of ornamentals, are the source of aesthetic pleasure and responsible for the enhancement of our environment and consequently of our planet.

The greatest challenge facing mankind is, and will continue to be, achieving food security in a sustainable manner. How can the population of the world be fed whilst using technology that does not damage the fertility of the world's soils, thus threatening the long-term survival of mankind? The encouragement of plant improvement is the essential purpose of UPOV, and securing production increases through genetic improvement without recourse to excessive use of artificial fertilizers or chemicals is at the heart of all answers to this challenge.

The conservation of and access to genetic diversity and the deployment of biotechnology are major global issues with crucial implications for effective plant breeding. However, the relationship of intellectual property to genetic resources and biotechnology has become an acutely political question and has generated widespread misunderstanding and confusion. "Farmer's right," "access," "equitable sharing of benefits"—these have become slogans frequently reiterated without an in-depth assessment of their practical significance. To the extent that the resulting confusion tends to obstruct or delay the implementation of measures which have the potential to contribute to food security, it is especially unfortunate. These are all issues on which UPOV has an important voice and must make itself heard.

Amidst the controversy, UPOV concentrates upon its essential task which is to explain the objectives and workings of the UPOV Convention and to demonstrate how it has contributed, and can contribute in the future, to the development of agriculture. The recent increase in the number of UPOV member States has been impressive, while the list of States which have introduced laws conforming to the UPOV Convention and which have commenced the process leading to accession to the Convention includes some of the world's most populous and agriculturally productive States. These States have recognized that the encouragement of private sector involvement in their seed and plant breeding industries is essential to the future development of their agriculture and thus to their economies.

These States will be joined in 1998 and 1999 by additional States which realize that they must provide plant variety protection in one form or another by the year 2000, in order to meet their obligations under the TRIPS Agreement. It is indispensable that UPOV provide information, guidance and assistance to all countries expressing interest in plant variety protection, and I am particularly concerned to examine how the resources available to UPOV for this vital task can be increased or optimized in the immediate future so as to ensure that all States are able to benefit from effective systems of plant variety protection. This is a critical challenge. Critical because it gives UPOV a more global reach, making it more attractive and of greater benefit, in particular to developing countries and countries in transition.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

The Office of UPOV has a modest secretariat of dedicated staff carrying the responsibility for the future development of UPOV. The Union is fortunate that the staffing of the Office has been stable. The members of its staff are very experienced and set high standards. I should like to use this occasion to publicly pay tribute to that staff. I am confident that they are well-equipped to handle, together with the member States, the policy development of the Union.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

I believe that the member States of UPOV, though having in many cases agricultural industries which are distinct, are both uniform and consistent in their approach to UPOV. All appreciate the primordial importance of plant breeding and the seed and plant industries to their economies, all appreciate the necessity to secure the balanced participation of both public and private sectors in the field of plant improvement and all appreciate the transnational nature of plant improvement research and the need for close international cooperation. UPOV has a prominent place among international organizations and has a demanding mandate.

In accepting the appointment as Secretary-General of UPOV I measure with humility the responsibility that is before me and that is before all of us, but guided by confidence in the nobility of our goals, in the inspiration of our common spirit and in the determination of our common effort. Alone, I can do little. Together we can advance the mission of UPOV into the 21st century for the benefit of all mankind.

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