President,

Honourable Members,

My statement on this issue this afternoon will necessarily be brief.

As you know, discussions within the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on how to provide better access to information, culture and communication for the visually impaired and persons with print disabilities have been underway since 2009. The focus of these discussions has been to expand the number of copyrighted works in accessible formats and improve access to them.

In June last year the Commission submitted to the Council a recommendation requesting authorisation to open and conduct negotiations on behalf of the European Union on an international agreement in the context of WIPO. On 26 November 2012,
the Council issued negotiating directives to the Commission and authorized it to participate in the negotiations on behalf of the Union.

The WIPO General Assembly decided on 18 December 2012 to convene a diplomatic conference in Marrakesh on 17-28 June 2013. A draft text of an international instrument was recently circulated by the WIPO Secretariat as a basis for discussions at that conference.

The Commission will represent the EU at the Marrakesh Conference, and will negotiate on its behalf in line with the negotiating directives which it has received from the Council. It would clearly not be appropriate for me here to enter into a public discussion on the content of the mandate which has been given to the Commission and which is internal to the EU.

I am sure that the Commission, as negotiator, will keep this Parliament fully and immediately informed as the negotiations progress.

I thank you for your attention, and I very much look forward to hearing the views of the Honourable Members here today.

ENDS