‘Promoting and Protecting the Culture and Heritage of the African Countries through their Postage Stamps and Taking Measures to Combat the Production and Distribution of Illegal Stamps

On behalf of the Worldwide Philatelic Observatory
The Worldwide Philatelic Observatory brings together well-known experts and specialists in various disciplines of the philatelic activity and the stamp business. Its home base is in Tunisia from where activities are coordinated. Its main aim is to help preserve the cultural heritage of Nations by watching over the integrity of the postage stamp and philately and safeguarding them from continuous industry abuses.

As the present Conference is dealing with various expressions of culture, its promotion and preservation, in order to provide a better understanding of the issue subject of this presentation (Promoting and Protecting the Culture and Heritage of the African Countries through their Postage Stamps and Taking Measures to Combat the Production and Distribution of Illegal Stamps), we deemed it useful to provide, first of all, examples of linkages between the postage stamp and culture, as Part 1. Part 2 will discuss copyright principles and illustrate various examples of abuses.
Article 6 of the Universal Postal Union Convention defines the postage stamp

2 Postage stamps:

2.1 shall be issued and put into circulation solely under the authority of the member country or territory, in conformity with the Acts of the Union;

2.2 are a manifestation of sovereignty and constitute proof of prepayment of the postage corresponding to their intrinsic value when affixed to postal items, in conformity with the Acts of the Union;

2.3 must be in circulation, for postal prepayment or for philatelic purposes, in the member country or territory of issue, according to its national legislation;

2.4 must be accessible to all citizens within the member country or territory of issue.

The Universal Postal Union Convention is the international treaty governing the exchange of mails among the 192 signatory member countries that, together, form a single postal territory for favouring communications and cultural and economic exchanges.
**Background to philately**

“Philately” is the proper term for the studying of stamps and stamp collecting that go back to the earliest days of paid postage. While the primary purpose of stamps has been to pre-pay for the transportation and delivery of mail, postage has helped preserve histories around the world, as recounted by numerous postal historians.

Postage can reveal more than the history of a letter, it can reveal the history of a nation. To quote Chief philately curator Cheryl R. Ganz at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum: “Every stamp and piece of mail tells a story.” ...often multiple stories, ranging from concept to art design to production to usage, often with tales of politics, history, technology, biography, genealogy, economics, geography, disaster, and triumph. The lens of philately ...can also help deepen the understanding of world cultures... “Stamps can be a good way of establishing a ‘national brand,’” says West. Indeed, a nation’s stamps express the identity and the ambitions of a country. (Chris West is a philatelist and author of *A History of Britain in Thirty-Six Postage Stamps*).

Sources: Smithsonian.com and Wikipedia
Linkages between the postage stamp and culture (I)

The postage stamp is actually an exceptional expression of the culture of the country concerned due to its unique nature as a “miniature work of art” and “roving Ambassador” of the Nation.

“Endangered heritage: cultural sites at risk from conflict on postage stamps”

The appreciation of postage stamp designs transcends the mere aesthetic since their designs can be used to enhance our understanding on a range of contemporary concerns relating to heritage. This is best exemplified with the postage stamps of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen depicting heritage sites destroyed, or at risk of destruction from armed conflict.” (British Library Asian and African Studies blog – 21 February 2018).
More Linkages between the postage stamp and culture (II)

The postage stamp can provide the outsider of the region with a special window into the region.

Postage stamps give us a sense of being part of a larger community – the wider world, an international community. For stamps are published not only to commemorate local events and customs but also to celebrate international days of significance and achievements that have global implications (the first airborne flight, the first landing on the moon, etc.).

In this sense, postage stamps are a fabric woven of local and international strands depicting the interconnectedness of the world's civilisations. (maldivesculture.com).

Postage stamps offer visual evidence of a country’s cultural heritage, history, existence, role and contribution on the regional and global levels... Sent both domestically and abroad, the symbolic value of stamps is immeasurable. Vivid images on postage stamps depict events that provide a sense of history, ideological vision, and competing identities that “reflect ideologies, aspirations and values, attesting to political, social and cultural ideas and aesthetic tastes.” (palestine-studies.org).
More Linkages between the postage stamp and culture (III)

A study demonstrated how religious expressions of national identity were regularly promoted through the issue of postage stamps, over a period from 2006 to 2010, in seven Central European countries: Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

While the national societies in question exhibit very different religious inclinations, ... the stamps they issued over a 5-year period enrich our understanding of the religious elements and traditions that form an integral part of Central European identities..... The stamps demonstrate how states employ religious traditions and heritage to perpetuate a sense of national community. (Religious themes in Central European postage stamps, 2006–2010: - Journal of Cultural Geography, Dept of Social Geography, Czech Republic)

Postage stamps and related objects are miniature communication tools, and they tell a story about cultural and political identities and about artistic forms of identity expressions. They are part of the world’s material heritage, and part of history. Ever more of this postal heritage becomes available online, published by stamp collectors’ organizations, auction houses, commercial stamp shops, online catalogues, and individual collectors. (African Studies Centre, African Postal Heritage, Leiden, January 2017).
More Linkages between the postage stamp and culture (IV)

Burma puts its stamp on the world: Philately and foreign policy

When subjects like soft power and public diplomacy are discussed in forums like this, few people have postage stamps in mind, but there has long been a close connection between philately and foreign policy.

In themselves, stamps express sovereignty, but they are also examples of political iconography and visual indicators of official attitudes and policies, aimed at both domestic and international audiences. ... providing a window onto the domestic and international politics of countries.

Stamps are emblematic devices that illustrate how the issuing states wish to be seen, not only by their own citizens but also by those beyond their borders.

It is possible that in this era of emails, Skype and social media, the heyday of the postage stamp is over, but they are still important. This is particularly so in countries like Burma, where electronic communications are underdeveloped. In any case, given the dearth of reliable information about Burma's domestic politics and foreign relations, no source should be seen as unworthy of serious consideration. (The Interpreter – Lowy Institute – Andrew Smith – 7 Jan. 2014).
The Philately of Southern Africa

Republic of South Africa (1961-): The first set of the Republic was issued on 31 May 1961. Until 1966, stamps were inscribed "REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA". From 1967, stamps were inscribed "RSA". Modern issues are just inscribed "South Africa". (Wikipedia.org)

Southern African stamp history:

Bechuanaland Protectorate had stamps 1888 to 1966, when became Botswana.

Basutoland had its first stamps in 1933, becoming Lesotho in 1966.

Swaziland was under the protection of the ZA Republiek (stamps from 1889), then a British protectorate, with stamps from 1933, independent in 1968.

The stamp history of Rhodesia began in 1892 with stamps inscribed British South Africa Company - in 1909 stamps inscribed as Rhodesia. In 1924 stamps for Southern Rhodesia continued as stamp issues as Rhodesia that became Zimbabwe in 1980.

In 1925 stamps were for Northern Rhodesia that became Zambia in 1964.

Malawi had its first stamps issued in 1964. It had earlier been part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1954.

Namibia first had stamps inscribed for German South West Africa (1897), then South West Africa (1923) and finally Namibia in 1990. (stamps.org.za).
A postage stamp of South Africa on a mail item addressed anywhere in the world will promote that image of South Africa all over the world.

**South African Post Office Philatelic promotion:** Stamp collecting is one of the most popular hobbies in the world. The estimated number of collectors in South Africa is relatively small, with only about 5000 official members, while in the United States there are up to 20 million collectors. Postage stamps are often collected for their historical value and geographical aspects and... for the many different subjects depicted, ranging from ships, horses, birds, Kings, Queens and Presidents, etc.. For the latest philatelic news download [SETEMPE](#), the South African Post Office philatelic quarterly magazine. Login and indulge yourselves in buying our Proudly South African Stamps (www.virtualpostoffice.co.za).

**South African Post Office Museum:** It was started in 1974 when the South African Post Office and Telkom were still one company. A collection of unique objects (including philately and art) form the core of the museum’s activities for exhibitions, public programmes and research. The object collection portrays the postal history of South Africa and the philately collection represents the total philatelic history of South Africa. (www.postoffice.co.za/about/museum).
The Philately of South Africa (II)

One example where South Africa’s cultural heritage is enhanced thru postage stamps: an exhibition offering the most comprehensive presentation to date of South African artist Siemon Allen’s “collection projects.”

In Stamps, a massive inventory of over 50,000 stamps released in his native country from the colonial era to the present, Allen probes the official construction of an idealized national identity often at odds with social realities…. Each stamp operates not only aesthetically, but also as a vehicle for a very particular subject. For Allen, “it is a kind of public relations gesture - a highly self-conscious attempt to express through a single image some aspect of national identity.” He describes Stamp Collection as “a history told in a succession of scenes, in a voice that is constantly relocating with subtle and dramatic shifts in political power”…. (www.siemonallen.org).
2018 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY

BEYOND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY?
Trends and Issues in National and Regional Economies

Day 2 – 8 March 2018 – PARALLEL C4 on IP, Copyright and Ownership

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Article 6 of the Universal Postal Union Convention also takes a position on copyright as concerns images reproduced on postage stamp:

4 Emblems of state, official control marks and logos of intergovernmental organizations featuring on postage stamps shall be protected within the meaning of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

Position of several African countries on copyright as concerns images reproduced on a postage stamp

Malawi: Under Section 13 of Malawi's Copyright Act, 1989, the copyright term for works by the government is 50 years from the date of first publication and for works by individual authors is life of the author plus fifty years. Since the first stamps of Malawi were issued on 6 July 1964, the earliest any stamp of Malawi will be PD is 2015 (and even then only if the artwork depicted on the stamp is a government work).

Mozambique: Mozambique copyright law instituted in 2001 states that copyright subsists for 70 years following completion for "works of applied art" which appears to cover stamps.
The Postage Stamp and Copyright (II)

Position of several African countries on copyright as concerns images reproduced on a postage stamp

(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Stamps/Public_domain):

**Namibia:** According to the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Protection Act 6 of 1994, copyright of government-produced work is held by the state, and lasts for a period of 50 years after publication. The Namibian post was originally a department of the government's Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication, and became Namibia Post Ltd, or NamPost, in 1992.

**Seychelles:** Seychelles was a British colony until June 1976; its stamps of the colonial era are covered by the "Crown Copyright", which expires after 50 years and puts the stamps in the public domain. Postage stamps first published 25 years ago or earlier are not in the public domain, and should not be uploaded.

**South Africa:** South African stamps older than 50 years are in the public domain.
Position of several African countries on copyright as concerns images reproduced on a postage stamp (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Stamps/Public_domain):

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Identity Theft of a Country’s Name

Identity theft is the deliberate use of someone else's identity, usually as a method to gain a financial advantage or obtain credit and other benefits in the other person's name, and perhaps to the other person's disadvantage or loss. The person whose identity has been assumed may suffer adverse consequences, especially if they are held responsible for the perpetrator's actions. Identity theft occurs when someone uses another's personally identifying information, like their name, identifying number, or credit card number, without their permission, to commit fraud or other crimes (https://en.wikipedia.org).

Consequently, “Identity theft” applies to the deliberate reproduction of a country’s name on so-called “stamps”, without the knowledge of the country concerned and without their authorization. Several images that follow demonstrate how badly the name of certain countries has been abused through the medium of “stamps”. This reinforces all the more that measures need to be taken to redress such a situation that is reprehensible and damaging to that country’s reputation.
Illegal Stamps in the SADC Countries
Angola
Botswana

King of Rock and Roll

Elvis Presley
(1935-1977)

Actress

Marilyn Monroe
(1926-1962)
Lesotho
Madagascar
Mauritius
Mozambique
Seychelles, Swaziland
Zimbabwe (Total: 76 such sheetlets)
**Proposed Actions against Illegal Stamps**

1. The Nation needs to ensure total control over the production and distribution of their postage stamps that should be widely publicized and marketed at national and international events.

2. Once illegal stamps have been identified:
   - Request, as a priority action, the publication of an official denouncement of the illegal stamps via the UPU Circular system that will inform the entire world and philatelic community.
   - Create a National Task Force (ITF) of philatelic, legal and security experts – ministerial and postal operator - to coordinate and undertake the necessary remedial steps, in liaison with national authorities (police, customs, etc.).
   - Request, at the level of SAPOA and SADC, the creation of a regional Revenue Protection Task Force to ensure synergies with other partners and relevant bodies.
   - Ensure continued monitoring of the national stamp situation and external market to ensure full respect of cultural heritage.
In final conclusion, the Worldwide Philatelic Observatory, in cooperation with the South Africa Philatelic Federation, is grateful for the opportunity that was provided by the present International Conference of the South African Cultural Observatory to highlight the need to promote and protect the Culture and Heritage of the African Countries through their Postage Stamps and to take Measures to Combat the Production and Distribution of Illegal Stamps.

Thank you for your attention.

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