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Good afternoon. My name is Ángeles González-Sinde. I'm a screenwriter and film director, and one of the Vice Presidents of CISAC, representing over five million creators worldwide.

I'm speaking to you today from a triple perspective: as someone who writes and directs films, as someone who worked in cultural policy as former minister of culture, and as someone who represents audiovisual authors globally.

Let me start with a simple, uncomfortable fact: **a few weeks ago, I finished postproduction of a film. That film is now being marketed internationally. And like most directors and screenwriters, I have no idea how many times it will be viewed, on which platforms, or what revenues it will generate beyond my initial fee.**

This is not an exception. This is the norm for audiovisual creators worldwide. And it shouldn't be.

To understand what we've lost and what we risk of losing, we need to remember why authors' rights were created in the first place.

Authors' rights as we understand them today, were born with the French Revolution, the same moment that gave us human rights. This is not a coincidence.

In 1791 and 1793, revolutionary France established a radical principle: **a work belongs to who creates it, not to the patron, not to the publisher, not to the monarch who grants privileges.**

Beaumarchais, yes, the author of *The Barber of Seville*, fought for this idea. The argument was simple and powerful: if intellectual work has value, those who create it must be able to live from it. Not as a favour, but as a right.

There's a famous caricature by Jean-Louis Forain that captures this perfectly. He drew it back in 1897 and it shows two children in rags looking through a shop window at a luxurious room full of wealthy men in top hats, attending an art auction. One child points and says: *"Look, one of papa's paintings!"*

In a single image, you understand everything about authors' rights. The work generates wealth. But not for who created it.

Why does this matter? Because **without economic return, only the wealthy can afford to create.** Authors' rights democratized creation. They made it possible for someone without fortune to dedicate themselves professionally to writing, composing, filming.

But establishing this principle on paper is one thing. Making it work in practice is another.

Mark Twain understood this painfully well. In the 19th century, his books sold hundreds of thousands of copies in England and Canada **without him receiving a single cent because there was no such thing as international copyright law.** Publishers made fortunes from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, while Twain saw nothing.

This radicalized him. Twain became one of the most vocal advocates for international copyright protection. At 71, he testified before the U.S. Congress with a devastating argument: "Why should property in land pass from generation to generation indefinitely, but property in the work of my mind expires?"

But Twain understood something deeper than economics. He connected copyright with **intellectual freedom**. He knew that without sustainable income from their works, writers could only write what wealthy patrons commissioned losing their critical independence.

Think about it: could Twain have written his fierce satire against racism, imperialism, and religious hypocrisy if he had depended exclusively on commissions from rich, conservative sponsors?

Twain fought his entire life for fair remuneration. He died in 1910, largely in bankruptcy despite being one of the most widely read authors in the world.

His struggle achieved important victories: the International Copyright Act of 1891, the Copyright Act of 1909. But these came **only through organized mobilization of authors**, not from the goodwill of publishers or legislators. This brings me to what's fundamentally at stake: **authors' rights guarantee intellectual independence and democratic pluralism**.

An author who receives no ongoing income from their works is forced to create exclusively what their single patron commissions without intellectual or ideological autonomy.

This is not theoretical. We've seen it throughout history.

The data is clear: in countries with strong authors' rights systems, we see more professional creators, greater diversity of genres and formats, less market concentration.

A recent British study showed that 75% of film professionals in the UK now come from upper-middle-class families, versus 40% thirty years ago. **When you can't live from your work, only those who can afford to work for free survive**. Without authors' rights, culture becomes privilege, not democracy.

Now, here's our paradox: cinema was born after authors' rights already existed for literature, music, and theatre. But audiovisual took decades to be recognized as authored work.

In Europe, we progressively recognized directors and screenwriters as authors. But in Anglo-Saxon systems, "work for hire" prevailed: the work belongs to the producer or studio.

Today, this creates a global fracture. In some regions, directors and screenwriters aren't even recognized as authors of their works. In most countries, they have no right to ongoing remuneration proportional to how their works are used. **Cinema is an art form, but it also operates in an increasingly globalized ecosystem dominated by a handful of major players**. This concentration of power makes collective action even more essential.

And the digital age has made this worse, not better. Works circulate globally as never before available to more people, in greater quantities, across more platforms than at any point in history. IP is more valuable than ever. This should be a golden age for creators.

Instead, **the chain of return to creators has broken**.

Mark Twain would recognize this situation immediately: the technology has changed from printing presses to streaming platforms, but the structure of exploitation remains the same. Publishers knew exactly how many books they printed and sold; platforms know exactly how many times each work is viewed and where. But in both cases, creators are kept in the dark.

This is why CISAC launched our Audiovisual Campaign to establish the basic right to fair remuneration for audiovisual creators worldwide.

We've made progress: several Latin American countries have introduced new legislation. At WIPO, we've achieved approval for a global study on the legal and economic situation of audiovisual creators.

These are important steps. But like Twain's struggle, they require patience, strategy, and above all, unity.

And then comes Artificial Intelligence which doesn't create a new problem but exposes and accelerates an existing one. AI platforms are being trained on our works often without permission, certainly without remuneration. A CISAC study shows that GenAI could put 21% of audiovisual revenues at risk.

But here's what worries me most: **if creators already struggle to know how and where their works are used, how will we ever track AI's use of our works?**

Christopher Nolan, newly elected President of the Directors Guild of America, said it clearly last week: "We generally aren't the copyright holders of our work, but our income depends on the appropriate monetization of those copyrights." Yet we're not at the table in discussions about AI regulation.

We've seen promising signs - the German court ruling that GEMA's repertoire used to train AI constitutes copyright infringement, the Anthropic settlement with writers. But we need comprehensive frameworks, not isolated victories. If we look at history, technological disruption always follows a pattern:

First, uncertainty - new technology emerges, legal frameworks don't apply, everyone scrambles to understand what's happening.

Second, regulation - slowly, painfully, with fierce resistance from those who profit from legal uncertainty, frameworks emerge.

Third, a new normal - the regulation is accepted, internalized, becomes standard practice.

We've seen this with photography, with cinema, with recording, with photocopying, with the internet, with streaming. We are now in the first phase with AI. Some want to keep us there indefinitely, because uncertainty benefits those with power and resources. But history shows that we always reach phase three **if we fight for it.**

Let me be clear about something: **regulating AI is not censorship. It is democratic hygiene.**

When we call for transparency obligations, for licensing frameworks, for fair remuneration we are not stifling innovation. We are ensuring that the code of algorithms does not override the social contract that sustains our democracies.

If tech giants remain shielded from moral and legal responsibility, we will have handed over our collective imagination, our stories, our cultural memory, our capacity to imagine alternative futures to tools designed solely to maximize profit for a few.

This is not a future nor a society any of us should accept.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a crossroads.

Either we accept a future where only those who can afford to create for free will create producing a culture of privilege, automated content, and homogenized voices.

Or we reclaim the revolutionary principle of 1793 and the fighting spirit of Mark Twain: **those who create must be able to live from their creation, and that economic independence guarantees cultural democracy.**

The technology exists to track every use of every work. The platforms have this data. What's missing is not capability it's political will.

Mark Twain once said: "Only one thing is impossible for God: to find any sense in any copyright law on the planet." That was in 1903. We can do better in 2026.

As creators, we must make our voices heard. We are net contributors to economies, we provide jobs, we embody cultural diversity, we enrich millions of lives.

Policymakers need to understand this is not about protecting the past. **This is about ensuring that future generations can afford to tell stories that challenge power, question assumptions, and imagine different worlds.**

That's what authors' rights have always been about. That's what Mark Twain fought for. That's what we at CISAC are fighting for: **fair compensation for all audiovisual creators, regardless of where they are born or where they create.** We hope you will join us. Let's work together, let's support one another and unite.

Thank you.