

Advisory Committee on Enforcement

Eighteenth Session
Geneva, June 2 to 4, 2026

RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH PASSION: “SUPPORT FOOTBALL, DISCOURAGE PIRACY”

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ABSTRACT

This contribution highlights the “Support football, discourage piracy” (*Alentá el fútbol, desalentá la piratería*) awareness-raising campaign recently conducted in Paraguay. Designed by the National Intellectual Property Directorate (DINAPI) and the Paraguayan Football Association (APF), the campaign was conducted in collaboration with strategic partners from the public and private sectors. Its aim was to bring visibility to the issue of piracy and the damage it causes football in Paraguay, jeopardizing club finances and the development of emerging talent. The campaign consisted of various phases, including awareness-raising, training for key stakeholder groups and enforcement actions, and was a resounding success.

* The views expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Secretariat or of the Member States of WIPO.

I. THE PASSION FOR FOOTBALL IN PARAGUAY AND PIRACY

1. In Paraguay, football is a passion that draws vast crowds and by far the country's most popular sport. The choice of a sports club is often a family tradition, with parents passing on the loyalty for their club to their children at an early age. Some say that football was invented by the Guaraní, an Indigenous People from the land that is now Paraguay.

2. Paraguay has long hosted regional football competitions, including qualifying tournaments for the Olympics, youth championships for World Cup qualification, the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) cup finals and Copa América, South American Sports Organization (ODESUR) and Junior Panamerican games. Paraguay will host an opening match for the 2030 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup.

3. The love for this sport has enabled practices like piracy to gain ground, as there is widespread demand for football match broadcasts, but little awareness of or concern about the monetary investment required to make such content available or the potential for investing broadcast royalties in the development of clubs and new talent.

4. According to a study by the Center for Telecommunications Studies of Latin America (CET.LA), an initiative of the Inter-American Association of Telecommunications Companies (ASITET), nearly six out of 10 Paraguayans access audiovisual content via illegal platforms. This jeopardizes the investment made to bring such sporting events to the screen, as piracy diverts funds that should reward creative efforts throughout the value chain.

5. To tackle the problem, DINAPI and the APF, with the support of strategic allies in the public and private sector, drew up a plan for a national awareness-raising campaign to emphasize that piracy is a crime with legal consequences. The idea was also to highlight the negative impact of piracy on creators, producers and other indirect beneficiaries, which in turn affects football club finances and hinders the rise of new talent.

6. The campaign involved educational outreach activities for key groups such as influencers and other content creators identified as participating, many of them unwittingly, in the distribution and marketing of pirated content.

7. Lastly, outreach and training needed to be complemented by tangible actions to enforce intellectual property rights (IPRs). Those actions were broadly publicized to highlight the severe consequences of IP infringement in Paraguay.

8. The campaign name, "Support football, discourage piracy" (*Alentá el fútbol, desalentá la piratería*), clearly and concisely sums up the message that piracy directly harms the football clubs that fans profess to support, diverting significant revenue from them through unauthorized content use. As a result, piracy is no longer seen as a way to watch football matches for free, but as conduct that undermines fans' passion for the sport and their beloved teams.

II. CAMPAIGN PHASES

9. Public-private collaboration played a key role in the campaign's success, helping to build a united front against piracy and raise awareness of its seriousness. All of the country's football clubs joined in the effort, demonstrating that, despite their rivalries, they were on the same team in the fight against piracy. Rights holders, public entities and other stakeholders also joined the initiative to encourage consumers to choose legal sports-related products and services.

10. The campaign was launched jointly by DINAPI and the APF, the national member of the FIFA and affiliated with CONMEBOL, which brings together all the country's football clubs. Strategic partners and key players such as the National Police, the Paraguayan Industrial Union, Tigo Sports and Puma also provided support.

11. The partnership underscored the message that piracy in football and the counterfeiting of sports apparel undermine IP and the country's image, harming clubs, players and the businesses that invest in Paraguay.

12. The campaign launch at APF headquarters was attended by senior officials of the organizing bodies and representatives from supporting entities. They viewed the campaign's first audiovisual content, declaring piracy a serious "red-card play", and learned about the campaign's three phases and objectives.



A. PHASE 1: PUBLIC AWARENESS-RAISING MATCH

13. The first phase of the campaign kicked off during the Cerro Porteño vs Olimpia match, a traditional showdown between two of the country's top clubs held at the legendary Defensores del Chaco stadium, an icon of South American football.

14. During the match, promotional messages were conveyed via goalpost installations, banners – behind which players posed alongside children wearing campaign vests – screen projections and loudspeaker announcements. There were also on-field interviews with key figures before and after the match.

15. A stadium full of fans received a powerful message: piracy is a crime that hurts the club you love.



B. PHASE 2: TRAINING A KEY GROUP

16. One reason for the growing problem of piracy is the ease of running illegal content operations. In this respect, content creators and influencers have a key role to play, especially among the younger public. Studies conducted by DINAPI have found that young content creators and influencers provide, distribute and disseminate illegal streaming services, often unaware that the content being promoted to their followers is pirated.

17. The second phase of the campaign therefore focused on that group. DINAPI ran training workshops, with presentations by experts who emphasized the legal consequences of marketing and distributing pirated content, the impact of such actions on one's reputation and personal brand, and the possible blocking or demonetization of social media accounts in the event of a violation of the platforms' terms and conditions. The workshops also addressed cybersecurity risks associated with downloading from illegal platforms, including data theft and compromised bank accounts and payment systems.



18. The one-day workshop was offered to content creators and influencers with a wide audience in the country, to help them to raise awareness among their followers of the risks of piracy and the importance of choosing to stream content from legal platforms.

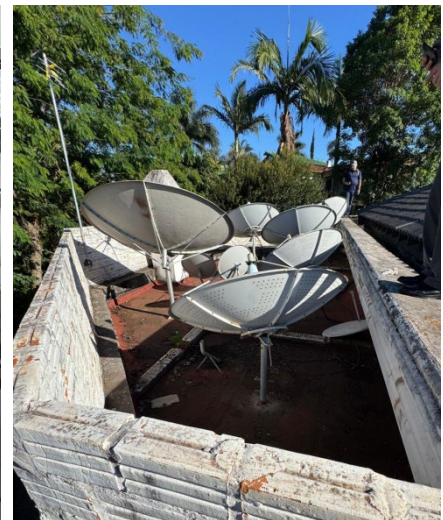


C. PHASE 3: INTERAGENCY COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATION

19. The final phase involved delivering a firm and well-coordinated counter-piracy response through Operation 451, in which an illegal streaming hub run from a lavish residence in Alto Paraná, in the tri-border region of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, was dismantled.

20. The interagency operation involved the Office of the Public Prosecutor, DINAPI and the National Police. It began with a right-holder's complaint, which led to the seizure of hundreds of IPTV receivers and satellites, and other devices such as servers, decoders, antennas and computer equipment.

21. The lavish mansion, located in an exclusive neighborhood, and the perpetrators' luxury vehicles clearly showed how lucrative piracy can be, and that the investment required is minimal compared with the illegal profits made. The complainants in this case estimated industry losses of US dollars 5 million a year resulting from the offenders' illegal activities.



22. The perpetrators face charges of copyright and related rights infringement and prison sentences of up to eight years if the offense is deemed particularly serious.

23. This coordinated effort by the authorities and the private sector helped to raise public awareness of the fact that infringing IPRs carries serious penalties, and that the Government not only implements preventive measures, but also enforces sanctions to address violations.

24. The operation heightened public awareness and revealed the true face of piracy, carried out by individuals who, far from acting altruistically, profit from the creative efforts of others and deprive the formal industry of valuable resources that support the growth of the sport.

25. To drive home that point, the campaign ended with televised messages featuring two Paraguayan youth academy football players, enabling viewers to connect with those rising stars, hear about the sacrifices they have made to fulfil their dreams and understand the importance of revenue from IPRs for improving club infrastructure and conditions.

III. IMPACT AND SCOPE

26. The campaign's broad dissemination via radio, television and social media allowed each phase to reach hundreds of thousands of people across the country. Interviews with leading representatives of the organizing entities fostered discussion on piracy and how to better protect IP at the national level.

27. The campaign, in addition to other DINAPI awareness-raising, training and enforcement initiatives, is part of a clear policy to instill a culture of respect for IPRs in the country, as they form the cornerstone of innovation, investment and economic development.

IV. CONCLUSION

28. The "Support football, discourage piracy" campaign was an unprecedented success in terms of coordinating strategies between the public and private sectors to promote respect for IPRs.

29. To succeed, such campaigns must convey a straightforward message, be adequately structured and have clear objectives. Beyond raising awareness among the general public, each phase should address specific audiences, with targeted training for key groups.

30. Such campaigns must also incorporate effective enforcement actions to demonstrate that there are serious consequences for those who engage in piracy. They should expose the lavish lifestyles enjoyed by pirates and counterfeiters thanks to their illegal revenue, and address the lack of disapproval that persists in Paraguayan society regarding such illicit activities.

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