

Jordanian Film Conference Remarks
Senator Chris Dodd, MPAA Chairman and CEO
Amman, Jordan
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As Prepared for Delivery

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be in Amman with all of you. I have a deep respect and emotional affection for the people of Jordan.

First of all, I want to thank George for his kind introduction and say that I am deeply impressed by the ground work that has already been laid. And I want to thank you, your highness (Princess Rym), for your support. I also want to thank His Royal Highness Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein for his generous invitation to join this forum.

In the time that I have with you today, I would like to share some thoughts concerning the tremendous value that film and television content brings to nations and cultures across the globe.

I want to talk about how that value is protected, nurtured, and continuously fostered by effective copyright frameworks. And how, working together, we can ensure that creative content and copyright protections work in conjunction for a very long time to come including in Jordan.

But before I get there, I want to begin by discussing the three bedrock on which this cherished industry depends: storytelling, storytelling, storytelling.

Storytelling is as old as people's ability to communicate.

Regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language, or custom, nothing captures the attention of a person or audience more quickly than the line "let me tell you a story".

In effect, we live our lives through stories.

We tell anecdotes, we share experiences, we talk about our families. When asked about our family members, friends or even acquaintances, we do not recite their curriculum vitae. We humanize them. We talk about ourselves, our children, our families and others in terms of things either they have done, are doing or will do or those moments we have shared together.

Storytelling is what we all do day, every day. For the most part, our daily conversations are a series of stories.

Thus, the ability, in a defined period of time, to tell a story well, to take an audience on a journey, is not only an incredible talent, it is also a tremendously powerful tool. It can help to define a people, a culture, a nation to the entire world.

There was a time, not long ago, when individuals were largely confined to the geography of their birth and upbringing, when distant communication was either limited or did not exist and travel beyond your immediate environs near impossible.

You could spend a lifetime in one place, exposed to only one culture, one way of living.

Today, everything has changed. We live an increasingly globalized world, where information flows freely and constantly across national borders, and communication is seemingly only limited by our imagination.

So now, more than ever, in this new world, it is critical to tell your own stories, define yourselves, and invite the world at large to understand you, your culture, your values, and your beliefs.

This is an important moment for Jordan, an important moment for the Arab world, to share your own stories with your community and with the world at large. Arab culture is replete with deeply vibrant written and oral histories and film, television and the internet must be an important means of communicating that story and those traditions to a larger audience.

In Jordan, this effort has already begun. Although the domestic industry is still in its early stages, the major motion picture studios represented by the MPAA, as well as others, have been, off and on, filming here for years.

The ancient city of Petra stunned audiences with its beauty in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. The Wadi Rum desert wilderness provided the expansive backdrops for Lawrence of Arabia, and 21st Century Fox's recent smash-success The Martian.

Each of these films and TV dramas, and hundreds of others, have helped bring the beauty of Jordan into the theaters and homes of people around the world.

These films and television dramas have also helped to foster a pool of talented, local crews. These crews, in turn, have worked on local, Jordanian films, which have begun to generate international acclaim.

In 2007, Captain Abu Roed won numerous awards across the globe, from Sundance, to the Heartland Film Festival to the Dubai International Film Festival.

And just this past year, Theeb was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, the first ever nomination for a Jordanian film, and Naji Abu Nowar won Best Director for Theeb in the New Horizons category at the Venice Film Festival.

I know all of you in this audience and across the country are enormously proud of these successes, and you should be.

Film informs us, entertains us, inspires us, prods us and has given us some of our most beloved tales. The audiovisual industry has become a vital part of our lives and our cultures and is clearly only growing in importance in this country of Jordan.

If asked, I imagine most of you could name a movie or television show that impacted or influenced your life in some meaningful way. Maybe it inspired you to pursue a certain career, or it made you look at an important issue in a new light because of that story well told.

And while helping distinguish what makes us and our cultures unique, movies also have the power to show us how much we truly share in common.

That is because the themes most often seen in films and on television – themes such as love, courage, compassion, honor, justice and tragedy – are universal, transcending language and national borders to resonate with all audiences across the globe.

Film is such an incredibly important tool in mankind's storytelling toolbox. But film is not important simply for its cultural impact. Consider its economic impact as well.

Wherever film industries exist, they are important contributors to national GDPs and local economies of the countries or nations in which they operate. They directly employ large numbers of workers while indirectly supporting many more in related industries. And they help expand economies through trade and overseas distribution.

In the United States, for example, the film and television industry directly and indirectly supports nearly 2 million American workers. It also pays \$41 billion to more than 300,000 businesses, most of them small business, for goods and services, and over \$16 billion in local and state taxes each year.

In Jordan, the story of economic development is similar. George David, your managing director of the Royal Film Commission, said recently that "When a film comes to Jordan, they spend an average of 100,000 Jordanian Dinars a day.

From 2007 until today, over 130,000,000 Jordanian Dinars have been spent in the country through film production." This investment supports local lighting and sound technicians, camera operators, hair and makeup artists, electricians, carpenters, seamstresses, truck drivers. The list goes on and on and on.

According to the Royal Film Commission, in 2003 only 25% of film crews in Jordan were local and most of those jobs were confined to being drivers and PAs.

Ten years later, in 2013, 98% of the production jobs are filled by Jordanians. And their salaries are, on average, higher than their counterparts in other industries. That's an amazing story in just a decade.

This, of course, is a fairly direct economic impact. But film and television's reach is so much more expansive. Film and television can have a tremendous impact on tourism, which sometimes get neglected when talking about the economic impact. As an example, a few years ago, a Brazilian soap opera filmed in different locations around Jordan. Almost immediately after the show was released in Brazil, tourism to Jordan from Brazil increased 40%.

I know this success is why, at least in part, the Royal Film Commission is so interested in establishing a film tax incentive program here in this country to continue to attract projects that drive this kind of economic activity.

The studios I represent have already had fantastic experiences filming here. It is axiomatic and understandable that studios like to return to locations where they have had previous success.

But the reality is production decisions begin with economic factors. Incentive programs have been tremendously successful throughout the United States and other parts of the world, both in attracting production, and encouraging local film and television development.

A reasonable, and balanced, competitive film tax incentive program is a smart investment, and can pay tremendous dividends, economic, cultural, educational, and social going forward.

However, investing in the infrastructure of a film industry is not enough. We must always remember that, without strong copyright and intellectual property protections, even the most robust storytelling culture will fail to foster a thriving creative industry.

These principles have been the lifeblood of the global film and television industry for the past century, and are only growing in importance with new technologies as they emerge.

In fact, one study by the investment banking firm Ocean Tomo showed that, in 1975, during my first year in the U.S. Congress, 83% of market value for companies in the S&P 500 came from tangible assets, like materials and equipment, while only 17% came from intangible assets, like intellectual property and information.

Today, 40 years later, the exact inverse is true. Intangible assets now comprise 84% of their value and tangible assets only 16%.

Copyright and intellectual property laws have guided and protected the world's creators and artists, allowing them to seek just compensation for their hard work and creativity, and stimulating innovation.

As technology continues to advance, and it is at warp speed, and as the incredible number of options for creating and consuming content continues to expand, audiences everywhere are relying more and more on digital and online platforms to watch films and television shows.

With more than 400 discrete legal online services around the world, there are now more ways available than ever before for consuming the incredible content being created by the global film and television community.

But with those great advancements come new dangers for creative industries as well. Chief among those dangers is the growing ease with which movies and television shows can be stolen and infringed online and through pirate satellite operations.

This is a growing problem that threatens the film and television industry, and every film and television creator, throughout the world.

And let me be clear: when it comes to stealing movies and television shows online, the people behind this theft do not discriminate between content created by Hollywood, and content created by their own nations' domestic film and television industry.

To these criminal elements, it is all the same.

This is a problem that all members of the global creative community must work together to solve, because, as our presence in Jordan today attests, the film and television sectors now function on a far more global scale than ever before.

Protecting intellectual property and creative content from being pirated will require a flexible, global response, which combines tackling illegal sites via the courts, educating consumers, and devising technological solutions. We also need to continue to do our part to promote consumers' access to legal content when and how they want it.

When it comes to piracy, I know that the issue is very much top of mind here in Jordan, specifically for the Royal Film Commission. There are tremendous opportunities here to strengthen copyright enforcement, including the possibility of state-of-the-art legislation on internet piracy.

My team at the MPA has provided background information to the Commission with a particular focus on the European model, which enables Internet Service Providers to block access to illegal sites. This tact has proven very effective when used elsewhere.

We have also offered information on satellite television piracy, which I know is a matter of particular concern in this region. We firmly believe satellite service providers must verify and obtain channel operators contact details before contracting with them, and must have the ability to send notices and take down infringing stations.

My team and I are honored to assist the Royal Film Commission in protecting content and I believe we must continue working together to ensure a creative and digital environment in which our industry can flourish; an environment where creators and artists feel free to experiment, to take risks – to innovate.

An environment in which those same artists can feel confident they will have the chance to earn a living doing what they love – not that everything they try will be a success, but that they will have the same opportunities to succeed as their fellow global creators.

Only when we have created an environment that promotes innovation and creativity, while protecting creators, can we be certain that this remarkable industry will be able to continue benefiting our cultures and succeeding generations.

I thank you for listening.