My decision to publish this Reference Guide follows over a decade of engagement in policy and scholarly discussions of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and its activities. It is the first instalment of ongoing research for a forthcoming book on the power politics, dynamics and evolution of WIPO’s governance. In the process of that research, I have regularly lamented the absence of a reference work on WIPO’s governance. Meanwhile, amidst protracted debates on all manner of issues at WIPO, concerns about governance regularly arises. It is now commonplace for stakeholders and commentators to describe WIPO’s governance system as complex and opaque. Member States too complain of their struggle to navigate and piece together the vast and dispersed web of relevant documents. To help fill the gap, I decided to take on the task of compiling a basic reference guide to WIPO’s governance system in practical, readily accessible terms for policymakers, stakeholders and scholars.

My research on WIPO benefited greatly from assistance from a number of WIPO staff. The author thanks Edward Kwakwa, WIPO’s Legal Counsel, and Christine Castro Hublin, Head of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Section within the Office of WIPO’s Legal Counsel, for their clarification of several aspects of WIPO’s governance system and their feedback on drafts of this book.

Over the past several years, I have benefited from conversations with a broad range of WIPO staff and Member States in the context of my work as co-author of a 2011 External Review of WIPO’s Technical Assistance in the Area of Cooperation for Development (commissioned by the WIPO Secretariat on behalf of Member States in accordance with Development Agenda Recommendation 31) and author of a 2012 Independent Strategic Review of the WIPO Academy (commissioned by the Secretariat on its own behalf). Together, these assignments provided me with a privileged insight into the internal workings and dynamics of the organisation, as well as the relationships between staff
and Member States. I extend special thanks also to Lise Macleod at the WIPO Library for swift archival assistance and helping to locate a number of WIPO’s historical documents, and to Maya Bachner, who was an invaluable guide to the intricacies of WIPO during the External Review process.

Further, my background research for this book drew regularly on news reports and analysis published by Intellectual Property Watch, which I founded in 2004 and continue to serve as the Chair of its Board.

I extend great thanks to Ahmed Abdel-Latif and Pedro Roffe, who have been fantastic companions and sounding boards throughout my work on the international intellectual property system and WIPO. I am grateful to each for enriching my work and for their friendship.

This book also benefited from feedback from an informal dialogue with officials from WIPO, delegates from a number of WIPO Member States, and experts hosted by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development in March 2015, where an early draft of this book was distributed for feedback. In the final stages, I also received valuable input from three of Edward Elgar Publishing’s independent reviewers.

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