

**Article for the World IP Day, 26 April 2022**

**Intellectual Property& Youth: Innovating for a Better Future**

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The 2022 World Intellectual Property (IP) Day theme is "IP and Youth: Innovating for a better future."This theme resonates with the African continent, which hasthe youngest and fastest-growing population globally. The continent is home to over 1.2 billion people, and youth below the age of 25 make up60% of the population. Our young people are an incredible source of creativity and ingenuity. Positive change cannot be drivenon the continent without them.

The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) believes that the fundamental aspects of IP need to be introduced to the youth at an early ageto understand IP, its generation, protection, and commercialization.

For this reason, ARIPO undertakes initiatives in its Member States to promote innovation, IP protection, and commercialization among the youth. The following are some ofthe initiatives undertaken by the Organization:

**Hosting students for educational visits**

The Organization hosts students, mostly from tertiary institutions, who visit the ARIPO Secretariat to learn about the operations of the Organization and how to protect intellectual property.

**Promoting the development and use of institutional IP policies**

Academic and research institutions host many youths who are innovative and creative. In these institutions, where close to 90% of knowledge and IP are created and disseminated, theinstitutions must be aware of the IP system and its importance for innovation and creativity.

To promote the generation and exploitation of IP by owners, ARIPO encourages the development and use of institutional IP policies. ARIPO does this by conducting IP awareness seminars for academic and research institutions in its Member States. ARIPO also developed in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) guidelines for developing institutional IP policies for universities and research institutions. These initiatives will help enhance IP awareness and IP protection among students, mainly the youth.

**Masters in Intellectual Property**

ARIPO partnered with universities in its Member States to jointly offer a master's program in intellectual property. The objective is to create a human resource pool in IP for Africa as a continent. Specifically, the Organization partnered with Africa University in Zimbabwe, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where we have young people enrolling to study for a master's degree in intellectual property. The Organization offers scholarships to some of the students to allow them to undertake their studies in IP. A tracer study undertaken to assess the impact and effectiveness of the master's program revealed that the young graduates have remained relevant to the IP system in their countries. Some have been instrumental in reviewing IP acts and laws, teaching IP in educational institutions, conducting IP awareness, and managing IP units in universities and research institutions. This contributes to building the needed capacity in IP development.

**The Way Forward**

ARIPO is planning to develop a Model IP Curriculum for universities and colleges. The aim is to assist these institutions in introducing IP teaching to all students. This will help to ensure that every student who graduates from these institutions is aware of the IP system and its benefits to IP owners and generators.

In the past, ARIPO has also engaged the youth through initiatives such as copyright competitions and the production of songs, building awareness on trademark counterfeiting and piracy, in collaboration with WIPO and the Japan Patent Office. The success of these events led to the ARIPO Member States considering and adopting the proposal to promote IP awareness and building respect in the Member States' schools in 2019. Based on the foregoing, in 2022, ARIPO commenced the implementation of the Pilot Project on the "Establishment of IP Clubs in Secondary Schools" in Botswana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, with a view to eventually cover all the ARIPO Member States.

We are cognizant that the futureis characterized by a high youth population, the convergence of IP norms, and opportunities and challenges posed by the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) Technologies. These technologies—Big Data, blockchain, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, augmented reality, cloud computing, and autonomous robots–embracedmainly bythe youth—will reshape norms, rules, and standards, particularly at the interface of IP and industry. As the 4IR developsand evolves, ARIPO will be at the forefront of developing a shared approach to these issues regionally and globally.

The continent'syouth are its most valuable human capital resource and constitute its engineof growth. To that end,by supporting the youth in protecting their innovation and creativity, we willcreate and foster a culture of innovation and creativity that will drive economic growthin Africa.

**END**