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**WORLD IP DAY ARTICLE**

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**Celebrating the ‘can do’ attitude of women inventors, creators and entrepreneurs**

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Today marks World Intellectual Property (IP) Day with the theme “Women and IP: Accelerating Innovation and Creativity.” This day celebrates the role of women in driving scientific breakthroughs, creating new artistic trends, building successful businesses, and transforming the world. We want to raise awareness about the significance of IP and how it enables technological innovation, driving human progress and the blossoming of the global art scene.

**Current Situation**

The underrepresentation of women in the IP system is a concern that has been appropriately highlighted. While women bring new perspectives and talents, only a few formally participate and benefit from IP. In academia and research, women have shorter, less well-paid careers and receive less research funding than men. In entrepreneurship, women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) continue to lag with a financing gap of $1.5 trillion.

Women are underrepresented in company leadership and technical roles, with only 23% of executives worldwide being women. According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) Progress and Potential Report of 2020, about 12% of inventors are women. Globally, only 16.2% of inventors named in the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) in 2022 were women. At current rates, gender parity in the use of the PCT will only be achieved in 2064.

**Progress Made**

Most IP offices in the world are developing active research and policy agendas to strengthen women’s contribution to patenting. At ARIPO, we are proud to have nine out of our 22 Member States led by women in Cape Verde, Ghana, The Kingdom of Lesotho, Liberia, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda. We are committed to protecting the gains accrued in the journey toward closing the gender gap.

At ARIPO, we are proud that we are a truly transforming intergovernmental Member State-driven organization that strives to maintain the principles of diversity, particularly gender parity. Diversity is at the core of who we are. Many of our female associates in the organization and its Governing Bodies occupy strategic positions, including behind-the-scenes leadership structures.

As part of our mandate and value proposition, we have developed various strategies geared toward inclusive participation to ensure that we all gain from actively encouraging women to use the IP system. In the past few years, we have increased female patent examiners threefold. Patent examination is traditionally male-dominated, but through initiatives such as training, we ensure that the next generation of patent examiners will have a remarkable gender balance.

There are many examples of women using IP rights to accelerate innovation and creativity. In Botswana, the women of Chobe teamed up with the World Intellectual Property Organization **(**WIPO) to begin the IP and Branding Strategy for the Chobe Baskets Project, which supports basket producers in the Chobe community of Kasane to brand their products using IP tools. In Uganda, Grooming a Successful Woman with Intellectual Mind (GSWIM) is an organization established by a young Ugandan woman, to empower and inspire a group of 70 women-owned enterprises to be successful using IP. They have since registered 70 trademarks with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB). Dr. Mavis Owureku-Asare from Ghana offers practical solutions to problems affecting smallholder farmers and women food processors, such as improving indigenous food quality and shelf life.

It is without a doubt that women are potent agents of innovation, drivers of economic growth, and engines of employment creation. We must advance the business case for gender parity by encouraging more women to use the IP system to protect and add value to their work. At ARIPO, we are committed to strengthening women's contribution to innovation and creativity, and we encourage more women to use the IP system to achieve their goals. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and diverse world that celebrates the can-do attitude of women inventors, creators, and entrepreneurs.

**END.**