



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ground-breaking Seminar on IP Awareness for African Universities

Harare, 6 December 2022: The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), the Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation in Africa (AfrIPI), and the European Patent Office (EPO) are hosting a **PATLIB Seminar: IP awareness sessions on patents and innovation for Africa** from 6 to 7 December 2022. It will take place at the ARIPO Headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Participants for this event were drawn from universities in African countries. The participating states include Angola, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. The seminar will be attended onsite and online to ensure maximum reach to participants and stakeholders.

The two-day seminar aims to promote awareness of the importance of Intellectual Property (IP) to universities, research and development institutions, and innovation associations. This is because, internationally, the role of universities and learning institutions has evolved beyond just imparting knowledge to students. In the knowledge economy in which these institutions now operate, there is a greater need to harness information, promote innovation and create innovation value chains that contribute towards the sustainable development of communities and national economies.

The seminar will also demonstrate how universities can leverage increased efficiencies in patent searches and innovation. This information is accessible from the PATLIB network that the EPO coordinates.

Some of the participating institutions and universities at this seminar include:

Name	Country
University of Cabo Verde	Cape Verde
Addis Ababa Science & Technology University	Ethiopia
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Ghana
Malawi University of Science and Technology	Malawi
Eduardo Mondlane University	Mozambique
Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	Nigeria
College of Medicine	Nigeria
University of Rwanda	Rwanda
The University of Sao Tome and Principe	Sao Tome & Principe
University of Seychelles	Seychelles
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	South Africa
School of Medicine University of Minho	Tunisia
Africa University	Zimbabwe



Funded by the European Union



AfrIPI, project funded by the European Union and implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)



Name

Bulawayo Polytechnic
Chinhoyi University of Technology
Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies
National University of Science and Technology
University of Zimbabwe

Country

Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe

Background

1. About Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property rights ('IPRs' or 'IP rights') are legally enforceable rights over the use of inventions or other creative works. According to the definition of the World Intellectual Property Organization (<https://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/>), 'IP is protected in law by, for example, patents, copyright and trade marks, which enable people to earn recognition or financial benefit from what they invent or create. By striking the right balance between the interests of innovators and the wider public interest, the IP system aims to foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish.'

IPRs include trade marks, patents, utility models, industrial designs, copyright, plant breeders' rights, layout designs of integrated circuits, geographical indications, new plant varieties and traditional knowledge, genetic resources, and expressions of folklore. However, certain variations in definitions and categories may be found in each country.

IP rights, as intangible assets, are key to the competitiveness of businesses in the global economy. IP rights are a primary method of securing a return on investment in innovation, creativity, and reputation. Apart from helping companies to protect their inventions from competitors, IP rights can also be an essential source of cash flow through licensing deals or IP sales. They are also a significant pull factor for attracting investors.

2. About PATLIB

PATLIB is the EPO's network of patent information centres. There are over 300 patent information (PATLIB) centres spread regionally across the EPO's member states. PATLIB centres provide local access to patent information and related issues. They are familiar with the local industrial, economic, and business landscape and provide valuable services to entrepreneurs, SMEs, private inventors, and students. Many PATLIB centre employees are experienced patent search experts. They may also offer other patent information services. These can include technology and competitor watches, patent statistics, patent valuation/audits, advice on patent strategy, and guidance on commercialisation/technology transfer. PATLIB centres can also provide practical assistance on other intellectual property rights. You can read more about PATLIB [here](#).

3. About AfrIPI

AfrIPI is a pan-African project that aims to support the European Union (EU) in creating, administering, utilising, protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights across Africa. It



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aligns with international and European best practices and supports the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The overall objective of the AfriPI project is to facilitate intra-African trade and African and European investment. It runs from February 2020 to February 2025. The AfriPI project covers 54 countries in Africa and was allocated a budget of EUR 17 million.

AfriPI aims to boost the African economy and foster trade between Europe and Africa. To achieve this objective, AfriPI's work is divided into four components, as follows:

- i) The activities of the first component promote international IP rights and the IP Chapter negotiations under the African Free Trade Area Agreement.
- ii) The activities of the second component aim to strengthen national and regional intellectual property institutions, networks, and tools.
- iii) The third component aims to strengthen the capacities of the productive sectors of IP. This is done by raising awareness of intellectual property and its opportunities in different sectors of society. Additionally, this component makes SMEs aware of the advantages that IP can bring to their businesses. This training activity, for instance, is carried out under this component, as well as the Africa IP SME Helpdesk.
- iv) The activities of the fourth component lend support to the African Union's Continental Strategy for Geographical Indications, more commonly referred to as GIs. GIs are local products that obtain their characteristics by being produced in a specific geographical area. They can boost the local economy when properly exploited and protected.

You can read more about AfriPI at www.afripi.org

4. About the Africa IP SME Helpdesk

The Africa IP SME Helpdesk is an EU-funded project implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). It is a first-line IP assistance service providing free-of-charge support for EU small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to protect and enforce their IP rights in Africa. The Helpdesk is a cooperation program focusing on IP and Innovation in Africa which closely cooperates with partners such as the European Commission, EU Delegations, EU Member State authorities and agencies, IP experts, business representatives, and chambers of commerce in Africa.

You can read more about AfriPI at www.africaiphelpdesk.eu

5. About ARIPO

ARIPO is an intergovernmental organisation that facilitates cooperation among its Member States in intellectual property matters. The purpose of ARIPO is to pool resources for the promotion, development, and harmonisation of the IP laws and policies of ARIPO Member States. The objective of ARIPO, amongst others, is to establish common services and organs for IP coordination, development and harmonisation. The Member States of ARIPO comprise Botswana, The Kingdom of Eswatini, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, The Kingdom of Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. You can read more about ARIPO at www.aripo.org





6. About EPO

The European Patent Office (EPO) examines European patent applications, enabling inventors, researchers and companies from around the world to obtain protection for their inventions in up to 44 countries through a centralised and uniform procedure that requires a single application. You can read more about EPO at www.epo.org.

For more information, please contact:

Mitchell Tikiwa
Communications Officer, AfrIPI
mitchell.tikiwa@afripi.org

Susan Mwiti
Communications Officer, ARIPO
smwiti@aripo.org

Valérie Gray
Communications, EPO
vgray@epo.org