



PRESS RELEASE

Kampala (Uganda), 26 August 2021

Pan-African intellectual property project officially launched

On 26 August, the Africa Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project (**AfrIPI**) was officially launched during an event on the sidelines of the Africa Regional Intellectual Property Organisation Diplomatic Conference held in Kampala (Uganda). AfrIPI, a five-year EU-funded international cooperation project, will involve collaboration with African governments, regional IP organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector to create, protect and promote IP rights in Africa.

Key speakers at the event included Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the **African Union Commission**, Attilio Pacifici, Ambassador at the EU Delegation to Uganda, Ignacio de Medrano, Head of the EUIPO's International Cooperation Service, Bemanya Twebaze, Director General of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (**ARIPO**), and Denis Bohoussou, Director General of the African Intellectual Property Organisation (**OAPI**). The launch event also included the participation of Malawian artist and singer, Tay Grin.

'AfrIPI is a major step in enhancing IP rights in Africa. Thanks to this initiative, businesses, producers and citizens will benefit from stronger protection leading to higher salaries, economic growth and a safer investment landscape in Africa. We are working hand in hand with the African intellectual property organisations ARIPO and OAPI, the African Union and national administrations to improve the legal framework and enforcement systems. It is not only a question of protecting patents, trade marks and registered designs, but also other intellectual property rights such as geographical indications which have a huge potential in Africa', stated **Dennis Scheirs, AfrIPI project leader**.

'The EU, and particularly the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) fully back the AfrIPI. It is by far our most ambitious IP cooperation project worldwide. AfrIPI seeks to unleash trade, economic growth, creativity, and continental cooperation. The EU praises the African Union Commission and the IP regional organisations ARIPO and OAPI for their commitment to enhance and protect intellectual property rights in Africa. Together, we will boost intellectual property systems and make the most of African capabilities', added **Ignacio de Medrano Caballero, Head of the EUIPO's International Cooperation Service**.

AfrIPI began operations in 2020 in spite of the COVID-19 crisis and will run until 2025. Among other activities, AfrIPI has already successfully supported an application to protect the Cameroonian GI 'Penja Pepper' at EU level, the commercial launch of the 'Cabrito de Tete' GI in Mozambique, the development of examination guidelines for trade marks and designs in OAPI, and the development of common guidelines on trade marks for ARIPO Member States. It has also raised awareness on plant variety protection (Arusha protocol), a centralised registration procedure for trade marks (Banjul Protocol), and IP rights favouring small and medium enterprises. Last but not least, AfrIPI was involved in and supported preparations for the **ARIPO Protocol on Voluntary Registration of Copyright and Related Rights**, which was successfully signed at the Kampala Diplomatic Conference.



Funded by the European Union





In summary, AfrIPI has successfully established in record time, a rooted IP partnership in Africa with regional and national actors working together on the promotion and protection of IP rights.

Background

As a Pan-African action targeting many countries and sub-regions, a geographical balance of activity implementation is sought. Activities are identified each year in close coordination with stakeholders, particularly the African Union Member States, ARIPO, OAPI, National IP Offices, the private sector and other organisations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the European Patent Office (EPO), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union Commission (AUC).

AfrIPI's objective is to facilitate economic growth in Africa. It aims to promote, enhance and protect IPRs across Africa in support of the [African Continental Free Trade Area](#) (AfCFTA), which entered into force in May 2019 and created the potential of integrating the economies of the 54 countries that signed the Agreement, and the [African Union's Agenda 2063](#).

Funded by the EU, AfrIPI will also strengthen IP protection in Africa and raise awareness of the importance and value of IP rights such as geographical indications, patents or trade marks among African micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), the economy and society.

More information is available on the [AfrIPI website](#).

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