



PRESS RELEASE

AfrIPI and ARIPO to host a workshop on design and utility models for ARIPO Member States

Harare, Zimbabwe – 27 April 2022 – The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and the Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project in Africa (AfrIPI) will host a workshop on designs and utility models for ARIPO Member States on 27 and 28 April 2022. The workshop will take place at the ARIPO Secretariat in Harare, Zimbabwe.

This workshop aims to raise awareness, provide training and promote ARIPO's regional system for registering designs and utility model trends in various ARIPO and European jurisdictions. The workshop aligns with ARIPO's mission of 'fostering creativity and innovation for socio-economic growth of the Member States through an effective Intellectual Property System'. In addition, ARIPO examiners will explain the requirements and registration procedures for designs and utility models under the Harare Protocol.

Universities, research and development institutions, and intellectual property offices from ARIPO Member States will be part of this workshop. These stakeholders are all part of a value chain that can harness creativity and innovation in the ARIPO region to benefit inventors and the economies of ARIPO Member States.

At the workshop, ARIPO Member States will share experiences about designs and utility model in their countries. Additionally, there will be discussions to encourage innovating, registering and unlocking value from designs and utility models.

"As the ARIPO region, we find ourselves in a uniquely advantageous position because it is not every country or region where utility models are protected. In ARIPO, utility models, together with industrial designs, already have a robust instrument, the Harare Protocol. According to Statistica, the total number of utility models in the world is about 4 million and although we know we have lots of these models in our farms, firms, and in our villages, very few are formally

registered or protected. Utility model products are inextricably linked to our SMEs and have the capability of uplifting our communities from unemployment. We are a creative and problem-solving society and because of that, I see endless opportunities in utility models and industrial designs for the continent,” said Mr. Bemanya Twebaze, Director General of ARIPO.

“This workshop links innovators of more than 20 African countries with the Intellectual Property Offices of these countries. This will further boost innovation in the region, as the protection of their Industrial Property rights will allow the innovation centres to prosper, grow, and contribute to the African economies. As AfrIPI, we are delighted to facilitate workshops like these that favourably contribute to Africa’s economies and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development,” added Mr. Dennis Scheirs, Project Leader, AfrIPI.

Background

1. About Industrial Designs

A design is an original creation with a uniqueness that may result from its shape, lines, outline, configuration, colour, texture or material. Although usually referred to as an ‘industrial’ design, a design is not necessarily used in industry. The term ‘industrial’ refers to the fact that designs are mass-produced through industrial means.

Registering a design ensures that the person or entity that owns the design is assured an exclusive right against unauthorised copying or imitation of the design by third parties. The assurance of legal protection encourages investments in the creation of new designs by making it unlawful for third parties that have not contributed to the design process to benefit from the creativity of others.

ARIPO operates a system for the registration of designs based on the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs, and its Implementing Regulations. An ARIPO registered design is protected for 15 years unless the laws of an ARIPO Member State where the registration is in effect provides a different term of protection.

You can download this Protocol from the Resources section of ARIPO’s website <https://www.aripo.org/>.

2. About Utility Models

A utility model is also known as a 'petty patent'. While a patent requires complicated technical requirements to secure legal rights, a utility model is suitable for inventions involving less technical input.

A utility model must be new and useful. Most utility models consist of technical improvements to products or processes that provide a practical use or new effects, thus making the invention useful and marketable.

ARIPO registers utility models based on the Harare Protocol and its Implementing Regulations. However, not all ARIPO Member States provide the registration of utility in their national laws.

A utility model that is registered by ARIPO is valid for 10 years unless the laws of an ARIPO Member State where the registration is in effect provides a different term of protection.

3. 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. You can read more about ARIPO here: <https://www.aripo.org/>.

4. About AfrIPI

AfrIPI is a pan-African project that aims to support the European Union in creating, administering, utilising, protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights across Africa. It 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. You can read more about AfrIPI here: www.afripi.org.

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