



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Training by ARIPO, AfrIPI and EPO to Address the Lack of Practical Skills in Examining Patents in Africa

Zanzibar, 11 July 2022: The Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project in Africa (AfrIPI), the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) are holding the Module B curriculum training of the ARIPO Patent Examination Training (ARPET) programme from 11 to 15 July 2022. The training will take place at Hotel Verde in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Under the ARPET programme, AfrIPI, ARIPO and the EPO have joined forces to train patent examiners from the national patent offices of ARIPO Member and Observer States. The training will enable participants to use patents as a source of information and build their search and examination capacity. It will also ensure the timely granting of high-quality patents and stimulate the filing of patent applications in Africa – that has recorded an average of 0.6 % of the global patent applications over the years.

The training programme aims to develop the knowledge and skills of patent examiners of ARIPO Member and Observer States, specifically Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Although empowered through their national laws to provide search and examination of patent application services, most ARIPO Member States and Observer States lack the capacity, knowledge and skills to perform timely and high-quality searches and examinations of patent applications for their local constituents. Therefore, the knowledge and skills of these examiners must be developed through continuous training on patent search and examination topics to improve their skill base, substantive capacities and efficiencies.

The EPO and ARIPO launched the ARPET programme in September 2021 through the introduction of Module A training. This year, the ARPET programme will focus on Module B – Advanced Patent Examination. Under Module B, participants will be divided into three groups: Engineering, Biotechnology/Chemistry and Portuguese-speaking examiners. Their training, based on competency-based framework and curriculum to train examiners, covers topics such as conducting timely, high-quality searches and examinations of local applications, implementing international and EPO procedures, and second filing practices, among others.

“Through the ARIPO Patent Examination Training program, AfrIPI aims to support the development and strengthening of patent search and examination in Africa. The aim is to be achieved by improving the capacity, knowledge and skills of patent examiners in Africa so that they are better equipped to improve their skill base and substantive capacities and efficiencies and to carry out patent examinations in accordance with international best practices,” said Ms Beata Suwala, AfrIPI representative.

“ARPET training aims to build capacity of the participating Member States’ Intellectual Property Offices in conducting patent search and examination based on Patent Cooperation Treaty standards. The training will also build the capacity of Research and Development (R&D) institutions in conducting patent searches. In R&D institutions, the patent searches are



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a necessity in exploitation of patents both as a vehicle of protection and a source of information because patent databases contain more than 80% of all technical information worldwide, and this information is never published in any other form,” added Mr Said Ramadhan, the Representative of The Director General of ARIPO.

“EPO is also eager to ensure sustainability of this programme and the examination systems in the countries. In view of that, apart from empowering you to become competent in patent search and examination, but enable you, in turn, to teach others what you have learnt. So, we look forward still to the train-the-trainer course that will follow this module, so that you can, also support local innovators more effectively, when it comes to protecting and commercialising their inventions, which is a key objective of the co-operation partners, as well as a key component of the EPO’s strategic plan,” stated Dr Fernando António dos Santos, EPO Representative.

Background

1. About Patents

A patent is an exclusive right granted by countries to protect inventions, whether products or processes, that offer a new technical solution or provide a new process. It lasts for a limited period of time, usually 20 years. In return for this limited monopoly, the patent owner must disclose the invention to the public in the patent application. A patent is a territorial right and takes effect within the national boundaries of the country for which it was granted.

In order to get patent protection, inventors must file a patent application.

Patents at ARIPO

A patent protection application can be filed for in the following 19 ARIPO Member States: Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Kingdom of Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

ARIPO is mandated to grant patents on behalf of the Harare Protocol Contracting States under the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs provisions. The Harare Protocol was adopted on 10 December 1982 in Harare, Zimbabwe, and entered into force in 1984.

2. 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 at www.afripi.org.

3. About ARIPO

ARIPO is an intergovernmental organisation that facilitates cooperation among its Member States on 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 bodies for IP coordination, development and harmonisation. The 21 ARIPO Member States are Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, 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.

The Observer States are Angola, Burundi, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, South Africa and South Sudan.

4. 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.

5. About Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA)

The Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA) is an Executive Agency under the Ministry of Industry and Trade responsible for business administration and regulation of the laws; namely Companies Registration, Business Names Registration, Trade and Service Marks Registration, granting of Patents and issuing of Industrial License. It was established under the Government Executive Agencies Act No. 30 of 1997 and formally launched on 3rd December 1999. You can read more about BRELA at www.brela.go.tz

6. About Zanzibar Business and Property Registration Agency (BPRA)

Zanzibar Business and Property Registration Agency (BPRA) is a Government Institution based in Zanzibar. BPRA was established under Act No. 13 of 2012 in order to replace the functions of The Registrar General's Office (RGO).

The Business and Property Registration Agency (BPRA) headed by Ms Mariam Mliwa Jecha, this office works under Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development. BPRA Office is responsible for registration activities ranging from registration of commercial/business entities as well as property registrations. All registrations are done under the provision of their respective legislations You can read more about BPRA at www.bptra.go.tz



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