

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### First-ever Communication Training on the ARIPO Regional Intellectual Property Rights System

**Harare, 8 November 2022:** The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and the Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project in Africa (AfrIPI) are hosting a **Communication Training on the ARIPO Regional Intellectual Property Rights System** from 8 to 10 November 2022 at the ARIPO Secretariat in Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Representatives from ARIPO Member and Observer States** are attending the event presentially. Among others, participants include members of the National IP Offices, Government communicators, and the media from Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, The Kingdom of Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The Communication Training is the first of its kind at ARIPO and the region. It has been positively welcomed by the participants, who feel it is important for communicators to learn the technical side of Intellectual Property (IP) and how to demystify it to the general public. The general public needs to understand the importance and impact of intellectual property in their daily lives.

Additionally, there is a need for government communicators and the media to be equipped to effectively communicate the ARIPO Regional Intellectual Property Rights System and the positive effects of the AfrIPI project to their audiences which can be used for awareness creation at a national, regional, and global level. Many people are unaware and misinformed about Intellectual Property. For example, Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the creative sector are losing out on the benefits of intellectual property.

“Communication plays a significant role in building respect and awareness of intellectual property rights. Without effective communication, the business sector, including SMEs, innovation hubs, and Research & Development institutions, will not readily be aware of intellectual property rights and how these rights can benefit their businesses and sustainably sustain their national economies. At AfrIPI, we are committed to help the Africa communication community to make the most of IP promotion,” said Aida Galindo, AfrIPI Project Leader.

“Counterfeit products, which don’t comply with intellectual property rules, can threaten consumers’ health and, in some cases, lives. Serious dangers have been linked to counterfeit products ingested by consumers (food, drink, medicines) or put directly on the skin (cosmetics, fragrances). People in the creative sector, such as artists and designers, are also affected by infringers who claim ownership of their work that is not protected, for instance. Subsequently, intellectual property is a subject that matters to everyone, and it is in your hands, as communicators, to share this message,” added Aida Galindo.

“In Africa, IP awareness can transform lives by helping reduce poverty, creating employment, and accelerating economic growth. For this reason, we are intentionally conducting this training to ensure that, ultimately, we are all well-versed with the mandate of ARIPO, as well as the IP system and its potential benefits,” stated Mr. Bemanya Twebaze, Director General of ARIPO.

“As will be demonstrated in this training, IP can be leveraged as a tool to facilitate Africa’s development. This is made possible by providing incentives to inventors and creators and facilitating the disclosure of knowledge and the transfer of technology and know-how,” added Mr. Bemanya Twebaze.

This Communication Training on the ARIPO Regional Intellectual Property Rights System will review those rights, including patents, trademarks, copyright and related rights, utility models, industrial designs, geographical indications, plant varieties, and trade secrets, and how to communicate them to the public. The training will also cover the ARIPO protocols and their respective scopes. Moreover, two seasoned trainers in the field of communication from Ghana and Uganda will also share best practices on how to communicate IP effectively.

The objective of this training is to build the capacity of the participants to understand intellectual property issues and raise IP awareness among various stakeholders. It will also help promote respect for IP rights and encourage intellectual property protection.

## 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 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](http://www.aripo.org)

## 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 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](http://www.afripi.org)

## 4. About 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 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 States authorities and agencies, IP experts, business representatives, and chambers of commerce in Africa.

You can read more about AfrIPI at [www.africaiphelpdesk.eu](http://www.africaiphelpdesk.eu)

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Funded by the European Union



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