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ICT

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Pre-ARIPO Systems For Protection Of Industrial Property

The Two Pre-ARIPO Systems

As will be elaborated later, the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) was established on 9 December, 1976. Before then, countries which today form up the membership body of ARIPO had one of two types of systems providing for protection of industrial property rights. While one was a dependent system, the other was known as an independent system.

Dependent System

In the dependent system, national industrial property laws were linked to corresponding laws of former colonial powers. In this way, for instance, a patent grant could not be obtained directly under the national law of an African state. Since those patents were extensions of ones obtained in the colonial power, a patent with effect in the particular African state was obtainable only by having an invention protected in, say, the United Kingdom first and having the effect of that patent extended to that African state concerned.

Similarly, the country’s legislation on industrial designs and trade marks would also be linked, respectively, to the British legislation on industrial designs and trade marks.

Independent System

Those African states which were self-sufficient in their industrial property laws provided for a complete industrial property right (IPR) granting, or registration, procedure with no need for authentication of the local procedure at a registry of a foreign state. In these countries, an IPR could be obtained under the country’s jurisdiction provided that requirements for grant, or registration, of the IPR had been positively satisfied.

Although these countries had the facilities of industrial property offices, they granted weak patents due to an absence of a facility for substantive search and examination for testing the patentability of inventions tendered by patent applicants.

Problems and Solution of the Pre-ARIPO Systems

Same Practice Shared by Many Countries of the Region

The fact that countries of the region variously offered two systems for IPR protection presented a huge challenge to any person seeking protection. Besides the shortcomings specifically associated with each of these systems as mentioned earlier, many African countries duplicated efforts of administration and use of national systems for protection of IPRs. Procedural requirements which the law required as input from both the applicant and the industrial property office were basically the same from one country to another.

For instance, a patent applicant who sought a patent grant in Uganda needed to file an application at the Ugandan patent office and prosecute it to satisfy requirements for such grant under the Ugandan Patents Act. If not resident in Uganda, the applicant was required by law to appoint a patent attorney to prosecute the matter on his (or her) behalf. That attorney must, by Ugandan laws, be a person admitted to the bench in the country and therefore must have a licence to practise law in that country. This was applicable as well to all Commonwealth African countries.

If the applicant, additionally, required a patent for the same invention in seven additional countries of this region, for instance, that person needed to prosecute an application for each such state in the same, or similar way, as he (or she) did in Uganda.

Another instance of duplication of resources was where every national office was compelled by law to advertise a trade mark application for purposes of opposition after or before the application has been substantively examined.

Shared Lack of Capability to Meet Statutory Needs

These countries shared some problems common to all. One of these related to the process for grant of patents particularly in the countries of the independent system. The national law on patents in each one of these countries compelled the patent office to undertake a substantive search and examination on every patent application to determine whether an invention is patentable or not.

Due to many reasons, including their incapacity to attract and retain qualified engineers as patent examiners, majority of the countries did not implement the requirement of substantive search and examination of patent applications although formality examination was always instituted. In fact, many of the factors that incapacitated these offices arose from staff insufficiency either in number or in skills. Because industrial property was a backyard issue which all governments relegated to the bottom of their sacs of national priorities (such as medicines, food security, etc.), important needs by industrial property offices were often neglected. Those offices were kept only as earners of foreign currency for the central treasury. Local training in industrial property was unknown as each country depended on very limited foreign assistance.

Advantages of Pooled Resources

In essence, the foregoing explanation goes to show that all countries that make up ARIPO’s membership today were being dogged by the same problems which in the process dwarfed their national industrial property systems. They were wasting same resources on same processes: activities which unfortunately were being undertaken in each one of the states. Therefore, each state of the region was performing operations in its industrial property office that were duplicates of identical operations undertaken by all the other states of the region. Such duplication of procedures and efforts was extensively costly not only to the one seeker of legal protection for an industrial property but also to the industrial property offices involved.

Therefore, fore-parents involved in industrial property administration in Africa reasoned that if a central office were established and to which each of these countries assigned some of the responsibilities and powers of its patent office, the huge problem of costly duplication would be solved. There would also be many more advantages accrued. At the time, the region was competing with the rest of the world for resources available at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for training of its personnel and the creation of a regional central place would ensure a self-tailored system for such training. Such a central facility would also act as a standard bearer for efforts of harmonization and development of laws and practices in the field.

Creation of ARIPO

Historical Foundation

The history of ARIPO goes back to the early seventies when a regional seminar on patents and copyright for English-speaking African countries was held in Naorbi. That seminar recommended that a regional industrial property organization be set up.

In 1973, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization responded to a request by these English-speaking African countries for assistance in pooling their resources together in industrial property matters by establishing a regional organization.

Following a number of meetings at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and at WIPO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, a draft Agreement on the Creation of an Industrial Property Organization for English-speaking Africa (ESARIPO) was prepared. This agreement, now known as the Lusaka Agreement, was adopted by a Diplomatic Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 9 December, 1976.

Birth of ESARIPO

ESARIPO was therefore born on 9 December, 1976. The Lusaka Agreement came into force on 15 February, 1978, following the deposit of instruments of ratification (or accession as the case may be) by the first five African countries. These were The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. From that date, the ECA and WIPO acted as an interim joint Secretariat of ESARIPO until 1 June, 1981, when the Organization established its own Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya. After a little while, the Organization shifted its headquarters to Harare, Zimbabwe, where it still sits to this day.

First Change of Name: “ESARIPO” to “ARlPO”

As the name ESARIPO entails, membership of the Organization was limited to English-speaking African countries only. But then, what if other African states outside this category were interested in joining? In December 1985, therefore, the Lusaka Agreement was amended in order to open up the Organization’s membership to all African states members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa or of the African Union (or the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as it was then known). This led to the need to a name change and, in order to reflect its new pan-African outlook, the Organization became known as the African Regional Industrial Property Organization (ARIPO).
Second Name Change: “Industrial” to “Intellectual”

Industrial Property and Intellectual Property

Before explaining the Organization’s second change of name, it is essential that the terms “Industrial Property” and “Intellectual Property” are defined and understood. The latter refers to any product of the human intellect and constitutes traditionally two main components. While one of these components is “Industrial Property”, the other component is copyright and related rights. In recent decades, however, the world has seen the rise of other subjects which, though neither copyright nor industrial property purely, are considered to belong to the realm of emerging issues of intellectual property. Examples of these are plant varieties and traditional knowledge. Intellectual property can therefore be structurally presented as follows:

- **Industrial Property**: Patents; utility models; inventions; trademarks and all their varieties; and industrial designs.
- **Copyright and Related Rights**: Literary works; paintings; music; performances including dances; adaptations of these; etc.
- **Emerging Issues of Intellectual Property**: Plant varieties and traditional knowledge; Access and benefit sharing arising from use of genetic resources; etc.

The Name Change

In order that the Organization’s name could encompass copyright and related rights which formed up an additional mandate given by the Council of Ministers to the Organization’s functions, it was found necessary to replace the word “Industrial” with “Intellectual” in the Organization’s name.

This change emanated from a decision of the Administrative Council (at its Twenty-seventh Session held in 2003) following instruction from the Council of Ministers.

Therefore, the Organization underwent a second change of name from “African Regional Industrial Property Organization” to “African Regional Intellectual Property Organization” but retaining the same acronym “ARIPO”.

Since then, the Organization has been known by the name African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO).

ARIPO’s Objectives

ARIPO was established mainly to pool together resources of its member countries in industrial property matters in order to avoid duplication of material and human resources. Thus, the preamble to the Lusaka Agreement clearly states that member states are:

“...aware of the advantage to be derived by them from the effective and continuous exchange of information and harmonization and co-ordination of their laws and activities in industrial property matters”.

Member states also recognized that the “creation of an African regional industrial property organization for the study and promotion of and co-operation in industrial property matters would best serve” that purpose.

The pursuance of this goal is secured in ten objectives outlined under Article III of the Lusaka Agreement.

That Article states as follows:

“...the objectives of the Organization shall be:

(a) to promote the harmonization and development of the intellectual property laws, and matters related thereto, appropriate to the needs of its members and of the region as a whole;
(b) to foster the establishment of a close relationship between its members in matters relating to intellectual property;
(c) to establish such common services or organs as may be necessary or desirable for the co-ordination, harmonization and development of the intellectual property activities affecting its members;
(d) to establish schemes for the training of staff in the administration of intellectual property laws;
(e) to organize conferences, seminars and other meetings on intellectual property matters;
(f) to promote the exchange of ideas and experience, research and studies relating to intellectual property matters;
(g) to promote and evolve a common view and approach of its members on intellectual property matters;
(h) to assist its members, as appropriate, in the acquisition and development of technology relating to intellectual property matters;
(i) to promote, in its members, the development of copyright and related rights and ensure that copyright and related rights contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of members and of the region as a whole; and
(j) to do all such other things as may be necessary or desirable for the achievement of these objectives.”
 Eligibility For Membership

According to Article IV of the Lusaka Agreement, “Membership of the Organization shall be open to the States members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa or the African Union.” This in practice means that all African states are eligible to become members of ARIPO. Any of these states can become a member by completing one of two processes.

In one way, the state can become a member by depositing an instrument of ratification or accession to the Lusaka Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Zambia according to Article XVI (2).

Alternatively, the state can join ARIPO by depositing an instrument of ratification or accession (as the case may be) to the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs or to the Banjul Protocol on Marks or to the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore. In the case of the Harare Protocol and the Swakopmund Protocol, the instrument should be deposited with the government of Zimbabwe. As for the Banjul Protocol, the instrument should be deposited with the Director General of ARIPO.

Member States

As at 29 February 2016, ARIPO was comprised of 19 African Member States. These are: Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A brief profile of these members is as follows:

Botswana, Republic of

- National Flag
- Registrar General, Companies and Intellectual Property Authority (CIPA) Ministry of Trade and Industry
  P.O. Box 102, Plot 181, Kgale Mews
  GABORONE - http://www.mti.gov.bw
  Tel: 267-395 386 / 3673702
cpmasena@cipa.co.bw

The Gambia, Republic of

- National Flag
- Registrar General, Attorney General’s Chambers, Ministry of Justice
  4 Marina Parade, BANJUL
  cmarenah@hotmail.com
  Tel: (220) 4229541 / 4222468

Ghana, Republic of

- National Flag
- Registrar General, Registrar General’s Department
  P.O. Box 118
  ACCRA
  Tel: (233 302) 664 279 / 664 691-93

Kenya, Republic of

- National Flag
- Managing Director, Kenya Industrial Property Institute, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Weights & Measures, Kapiti Road – off Mombasa Road, South C, P.O. Box 51684-00200- NAIROBI
  Tel: (254-20) 602210/11, info@kipi.go.ke

Lesotho, Kingdom of

- National Flag
- Registrar General, Registrar General’s Office and Master of the High Court, 2nd Floor, Africa House, Government Complex, Phase 2, High Court Road, P.O. Box 33
  MASERU 100
  Tel: (266 22) 311 251
  sentsuemosohau@yahoo.co.uk

Liberia, Republic of

- National Flag
- Liberia Industrial Property Office (LIPO)
  Beauty Building, Carey & Mechlin Streets
  Monrovia, Liberia P.O. Box 9031, MONROVIA
  Tel: (231) 223 011 / 6525562
  liberiaindustrialproperty@gmail.com

Malawi, Republic of

- National Flag
- Registrar General
  Department of the Registrar General
  Ministry of Justice
  P.O. Box 100
  BLANTYRE
  Tel: (265) 01788 411
  reg@malawi.net

Copyright Administrator
Copyright Society of Malawi (COSOMA), P.O. Box 30784
LILONGWE 3
Tel: (265) 175 1148
Cell: (265) 999918502
cosoma@cosoma.org

Copyright Administrator, Execution Director,
Copyright Society of Malawi (COSOMA), P.O. Box 30784
LILONGWE 3
Tel: (265) 175 1148
Cell: (265) 999918502
cosoma@cosoma.org

Executive Director, Kenya
Copyright Board, Attorney General’s Chambers P.O. Box 40112-00100, NHIP Building
Ragari Road, 5th Floor.
Nairobi
info@copyright.go.ke
Tel: (254-20) 253 3869

Managing Director, Kenya Industrial Property Institute, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Weights & Measures, Kapiti Road – off Mombasa Road, South C, P.O. Box 51684-00200- NAIROBI
Tel: (254-20) 602210/11, info@kipi.go.ke

Registrar General, Registrar General’s Office and Master of the High Court, 2nd Floor, Africa House, Government Complex, Phase 2, High Court Road, P.O. Box 33
MASERU 100
Tel: (266 22) 311 251
sentsuemosohau@yahoo.co.uk

Liberia Copyright Office
Copyright Society of Liberia (COSLIB), Capitol Hill, MONROVIA
Tel: (231) 8865 76051
liberiacopyright@gmail.com

Liberia Copyright Office
Copyright Society of Liberia (COSLIB), Capitol Hill, MONROVIA
Tel: (231) 8865 76051
liberiacopyright@gmail.com

Copyright Administrator
Copyright Society of Malawi (COSOMA), P.O. Box 30784
LILONGWE 3
Tel: (265) 175 1148
Cell: (265) 999918502
cosoma@cosoma.org

Copyright Administrator, Execution Director,
Copyright Society of Malawi (COSOMA), P.O. Box 30784
LILONGWE 3
Tel: (265) 175 1148
Cell: (265) 999918502
cosoma@cosoma.org
### Mozambique, Republic of

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<th>Industrial Property Office</th>
<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Director General, Industrial Property Institute of Mozambique, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Rua Consigliere Pedroso No. 165, P.O. Box 1072, MAPUTO  
ipi@ipi.gov.mz  
Tel: (258 21) 354 900/10 | Director, National Institute of Books and Records, Ministry of Culture and Education, Av. Ho Chi Minh, No. 1136, 1o Andar, P.O. Box 4030, MAPUTO  
Tel: (258 21) 314 397  
ungulani@yahoo.com.br |

### Namibia, Republic of

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| ![Flag](image) | Chief Executive Office  
Business and Intellectual Property Authority  
7 Gold Street, Prosperitas Industrial Park, P.O.Box 185, WINDHOEK  
info@bipa.no  
Tel: (264 61) 2994400 | Copyright Services, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government Offices, Provos Building, WINDHOEK  
rpenda@mict.gov.na, Tel: (264 61) 2839111 / 2700 |

### Rwanda, Republic of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Registrar General, Rwanda Development Board (RDB), Office of the Registrar General, KN 5 Road, KG 9 Avenue, P.O. Box 6239 KIGALI  
Tel: (250) 786 679086  
info@rdb.rw | Same as for industrial property |

### São Tomé and Príncipe, Democratic Republic of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Director National Office of Industrial Property (SENAPI), Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industries, Rua Viriato da Cruz 1º Andar DTO, P.O. Box 198, SÃO TOMÉ  
Tel: 2226810  
domingosilvatr@yahoo.com.br | Directorate General of Culture, Arts and Entertainment Promotion Center, Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, Avenida Marginal 12 de Junho, B.P. 87, SÃO TOMÉ |

### Sierra Leone, Republic of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Administrator & Registrar General, Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Roxy Building, Walpole Street  
FREETOWN  
Tel: (232 22) 26815 / 22854  
maseekay@yahoo.com, arg@oarg.gov.sl | Same as for industrial property |

### Somalia, Republic of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Vice Minister of Industry  
Ministry of Industry  
P.O. Box 928  
MOGADISCIO  
Tel: (2521) 526312 / 272775 / 216460  
ugaaszm@hotmail.com | Same as for industrial property |

### Sudan, Republic of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Registrar General of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Justice, P.O. Box 744  
KHARTOUM  
http://www.ipsudan.gov.sd  
ipsudan@ipsudan.gov.sd  
Tel: (249) 183780580 | Secretary General, Artistic and Literary Works Council, Ministry of Culture and Information, Federal Council of Artistic and Literary Works, P.O. Box 291, KHARTOUM  
Tel: (249) 157898190 |

### Swaziland, Kingdom of

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<th>Copyright Office</th>
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| ![Flag](image) | Registrar Intellectual Property Office, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade  
Intelectual Property Office, P.O. Box 451  
MBABANE H100  
stephen@realnet.co.sz, mict@gov.sz  
Tel: (268) 24042336 / 2372 | Registrar General, Registrar General’s Office, 3rd Floor, Justice House, MBABANE |
Tanzania, United Republic of

National Flag

Industrial Property Office

Copyright Office

Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of Patents and Trade Marks, Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA), Co-operative Building, Kijitonyama Street, P.O. Box 9393, DAR-ES-SALAAM, http://www.brela-tz.org/index.php, info@bre-la-tz.org, Tel: (255-22) 2180048 / 2180141

Copyright Administrator and Chief Executive Officer, The Office of the Copyright Society of Zanzibar, P.O. Box 260, ZANZIBAR.

Copyright Administrator and Chief Executive Officer, Copyright Society of Tanzania, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Marketing, P.O. Box 6388, DAR-ES-SALAAM, www.cosota-tz.org, cosota@mail.intafrica.com

Uganda, Republic of

National Flag

Industrial Property Office

Copyright Office

Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), Plot No. 5, George Street, Amamu House, P.O. Box 6848, KAMPALA

Tel: (256-41) 4235915 / 233219 bemanya.twebaze@ursb.gov.ug

Same as for industrial property

Zambia, Republic of

National Flag

Industrial Property Office

Copyright Office

Registrar, Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA), Mwayi House, Longacres, Selassie Avenue, P.O. Box 32020 LUSAKA

Tel: (260-211) 255127 / 51 www.pacra.org.zm pro@pacra.org.zm

Registrar of Copyright, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, Copyright Administration, P.O. Box 51025 LUSAKA

Tel: (260-211) 237165 kmasamu@yahoo.com

Zimbabwe, Republic of

National Flag

Industrial Property Office

Copyright Office

Controller of Patents, Trade Marks and Industrial Designs, Ministry of Justice 4th Floor, Century House East Cnr. N. Mandela Ave/Angwa Str, P.O. Box CY7704, Causeway, HARARE, www.dcip.gov.zw, Tel: (263) 4 775 162 / (263) 4 775 544/6, fmaredza@justice.gov.zw

Same as for industrial property
Membership Advantages To Member States

Membership to the Organization brings several advantages to Member States. The Organization was formed as an effective and efficient podium on which cooperating states can pool their resources for development of intellectual property and use of intellectual property in developing their socio-technological capacities.

Member States have the advantage of economies of scale. This in turn releases scarce resources for the Member States to spend on more pressing needs of their citizens. The following are some of the advantages open to any state becoming member of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization:

(i) the country is enabled to avoid wasteful duplication of use of material, financial and human resources which it can otherwise access at very little cost from the centre where other countries have pooled these resources,

(ii) the ARIPO regional industrial property system covers a total area of nearly 6.5 million square kilometers with a population of over 166 million. Membership to ARIPO therefore opens up new markets for its Member States, improves their investment climate and encourages access to technical information, particularly that contained in patent documents,

(iii) the ARIPO regional system compliments the national industrial property system of each one of its Member States. The sovereignty of Member States is therefore preserved but applicants are given more choice as to the route of filing their applications and where to obtain protection,

(iv) access to increased use of the local industrial property system by foreign applicants,

(v) participation in the established regional services and systems thereby resulting into improvement in the management of national industrial property systems,

(vi) support in the development of IP laws and policies,

(vii) infrastructural and IP-related technological support services,

(viii) institutional support for IP-related bodies in the country, realization of financial benefits through operation of the ARIPO protocols [namely the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs, the Banjul Protocol on Marks and the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore],

(ix) participation in ARIPO committees and in meetings of organs of the Organization,

(x) participation in development cooperation activities with ARIPO’s strategic partners, development of a regional framework for protection of traditional knowledge, genetic resources and expressions of folklore.

Further benefits are those arising, otherwise, out of ARIPO’s robust institutional capacity.
The Headquarters

Foundations in Kenya

Once the fifth State ratified the Lusaka Agreement, as previously mentioned in this booklet, the Organization came into being. Between this time and the inception of ARIPO’s own Secretariat, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa played the role of the Organization’s Interim Secretariat.

Then Interim Secretariat was overtaken by a permanent Secretariat which was established in Nairobi, Kenya, at the kind invitation of that country’s government which the First Session of the Administrative Council (meeting in Nairobi from 2 to 5 May 1978) accepted. Later, due to difficulty of logistical issues emanating then, the Secretariat shifted to Harare, in Zimbabwe, where it has remained to this day.

Arrival in Zimbabwe

On arrival in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1982, the Organization’s headquarters was housed in Electra House where it shared spacious offices, courtesy of the government of Zimbabwe, with the Zimbabwe Intellectual Property Office. This building is situated along Samora Machel Avenue.

As the Secretariat expanded with the recruitment of more staff, the Zimbabwean government again very graciously provided more spacious accommodation to the nascent Organization in Bryanston House along First Street in Harare.

Old Stable House

Yet again, in keeping with its promise, the government of Zimbabwe offered the Secretariat more spacious office accommodation in Old Stable House, a property wholly owned by the government along Fourth Street. This was necessitated by growth in work and staff size due to increased work-flow brought about by the commencement of the Harare Protocol and the Banjul Protocol. It was from here that the Organization finally moved to the present premises, at 11 Natal Road in Belgravia, Harare.

The Current Headquarters Premises, Belgravia Suburb

First Inauguration

With facilitation from the host government, the Organization purchased a residential property at Stand No. 3200 (11 Natal Road, Belgravia) in 1999. In 2000, the Organization shifted into the property following completion of renovations. At the time, the premises were comprised only of a bungalow building close to the front of the premises and a small building at the back.

The premises were inaugurated in 2001 at which His Honour the Late Vice President of the host government, Dr. S. Muzenda, was the guest of honour. This event was attended by members of ARIPO’s Council of Ministers and Administrative Council, ambassadors accredited to Zimbabwe, and representatives of cooperating partners. Other dignitaries included former holders of the office of ARIPO Director General. Cooperating institutions and countries as well as many diplomatic missions sent their congratulations to ARIPO on the occasion of the inauguration and the celebration of 25 years of existence. These included member countries and other African countries not members of ARIPO.

Many of the well-wishers delivered their messages and presented valuable gifts which currently don various places of the Secretariat. His Honour the Vice President of Zimbabwe, Dr Muzenda, viewed the gifts when he toured the premises during the inauguration ceremony.

Second Inauguration

After the first inauguration of the premises, the Organization embarked on working out its newly added mandates by not only cooperating with its stakeholders but also changing its internal structure at the Secretariat through recruitment of additional staff. This entailed a need for more office floor. Therefore, plans for putting up a new block behind the bungalow block of offices were underway as in 2003 construction work began to build a double storey block of offices and other function areas. Once completed, the new building was inaugurated in February 2006 as the Kamil Idris Building by Her Honour the Vice President of the host government, Mrs. J. Mujuru. This comprises offices but largely houses the ARIPO Academy consisting of the Anderson Ray Zikonda Library, Jeremiah Herbert Ntabgoba Conference Room and the Ulrich Walter Uchtenhagen Training Room.
ARIPO’s Secretariat is currently situated at No 11 Natal Road, opposite the Indian Embassy, in Belgravia, Harare. The suburb of Belgravia lies on the eastern border of Avondale and hosts premises of a good number of diplomatic missions and international organizations accredited to Zimbabwe.

Diplomatic missions available in the area are the Embassies of Botswana, India, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Sudan, and Ghana while premises of other inter-governmental organizations include the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

**Current Work on ARIPO Headquarters Extension**

As the organization continues to grow in its mandates and personnel, the current headquarters building is no longer adequate to house all the activities of the secretariat. Construction work to extend the ARIPO headquarters is currently underway. The new headquarters building is expected to be inaugurated at a special ceremony that will coincide with the celebrations marking 40 years of ARIPO’s existence in December 2016.

**Is ARIPO an IGO or NGO?**

The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization is an inter-governmental organization (IGO). It is not an NGO (meaning non-governmental organization) because it has multiple governmental representation (see chapter on membership) and enjoys diplomatic status in Zimbabwe under a headquarters agreement maintained with the government of the host country, Zimbabwe.

Whereas an IGO has control from more than one government, and usually works under a diplomatic arrangement in the country of base, an NGO as the name implies has in most cases no government presence. Where an NGO has a government influence, it is the government of the country where the headquarters of the NGO are based.
Governance Of ARIPO

Overview

Article II of the Lusaka Agreement established three organs of the Organization. These are the Council of Ministers, the Administrative Council and the Secretariat. Since 1993, the Administrative Council has established, as its subsidiary bodies, the Finance Committee, Audit Committee, Staff Affairs Committee and two Technical Committees. In 1997, the Council amended the Harare Protocol to create the Board of Appeal as an independent organ.

Council of Ministers

Article IVbis of the Lusaka Agreement provides for the composition and functions of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers consists of ministers of the governments of Member States of the Organization who are responsible for the administration of intellectual property laws in their countries.

The Council of Ministers is the supreme organ of the Organization and, in that capacity, it is responsible for the policy orientation of the Organization. It is also responsible for solving problems which, because of their nature, cannot be resolved by the Administrative Council. The Council of Ministers meets once every two years. It may delegate any of its powers and functions to the Administrative Council.

Administrative Council

The Council

According to Article VII of the Lusaka Agreement, the Administrative Council consists of heads of offices dealing with the administration of intellectual property laws in Member States of the Organization. The Administrative Council is subordinate, and reports, to the Council of Ministers. It is responsible for, inter alia, the supervision of the execution of policies of the Organization as set down by the Council of Ministers, the approval of programmes of activities and budget of the Organization as well as (subject to the Council of Ministers’ approval) appointment of the Organization’s Director General.

The Administrative Council meets once every year in ordinary session, normally during the last week of November. Where the need arises, this Council can meet in an extra-ordinary session. As at 31 December 2015, the Administrative Council has met 39 times in ordinary sessions and nine times in extra-ordinary sessions. Majority of these extra-ordinary sessions are convened to precede a session of the Council of Ministers for which it acts as a preparatory meeting.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee was established by the Administrative Council at its Seventeenth Session held in Banjul, The Gambia, in November 1993 to review the Organization’s financial statements, programme of activities and budget as well as advise the Director General in the preparation of these before they are considered by the Administrative Council.

The committee meets once every year.

This committee consists of five members of the Administrative Council who are elected for a period of two years. Zimbabwe is an ex-officio member of the committee as long as the headquarters of ARIPO is located in that country.

Audit Committee

The Administrative Council established a separate Committee for Audit from the then Finance and Audit Committee at its Thirty-eighth Session, which was held in November 2014, in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The function of the Audit Committee as established by the Administrative Council is to consider audit issues and to provide assurance that the oversight function is in place at the Organization. The Committee meets four times a year.

Staff Affairs Committee

A second committee constituted by the Administrative Council was the Staff Affairs Committee which is comprised of members of the Administrative Council elected for two years. Zimbabwe is an ex-officio member. This committee advises the Administrative Council on matters relating to staff such as recruitment, conditions of service, separation and benefits.

As at 31 December 2015, the Staff Affairs Committee has met 14 times. It meets concurrently with the session of the Finance Committee so as to mutually and concurrently conclude with the latter any agenda items brought to it which
have financial implications that require input from the Finance Committee.

Technical Committee on Industrial Property

In order to enable it speedily hear and consider issues concerning a technical nature of operations of the ARIPO Office, the Committee is entrusted to consider them before they come up for consideration at the Administrative Council. Some instances of these issues are any proposed changes to an ARIPO treaty or promulgation of a new treaty altogether.

Zimbabwe is an ex officio member of this committee which, by the end of 2012, has met only two times.

Technical Committee on Copyright and Related Rights

In view of the importance of copyright and related rights and this subject’s role in the mission of ARIPO, the Thirty-seventh Session of the Administrative Council, which met in November 2013, established a Technical Committee on Copyright and Related Rights.

The Board of Appeal

At its Twenty-first session, the Administrative Council established the Board of Appeal to hear appeals against decisions of the ARIPO Office made under the ARIPO protocols. In 2006, thus, the Board heard two appeals in which it accepted appeals and decided for the appellants.

In accordance with the Harare Protocol, the Board consists of five persons experienced in industrial property matters, two of whom are examiners. At least one examiner is present at all sittings of the Board.

Although the Board is appointed by the Administrative Council, it is independent of all other organs of the Organization. Members of the Board are appointed for a period of two years. The Board went into operation on 1 January, 2000.

Secretariat

The Secretariat (also known as the ARIPO Office) is headed by a Director General who is the principal executive officer of the Organization. He/she is appointed by the Administrative Council (which appointment must be approved by the Council of Ministers) for an initial period of four years renewable once for another four years. Each holder of the office must be a citizen of a Member State.

The Secretariat is responsible for implementing the programme of activities of the Organization in accordance with the established objectives entrusted to it by both Councils. Currently, the ARIPO Office is staffed by 45 personnel most of whom are citizens of the host country. The rest are citizens of other Member States (i.e. currently from Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Kingdom of Lesotho, United Republic of Tanzania (both mainland and Zanzibar), Sudan, Namibia and Malawi).
Current Functions Of ARIPO

Overview
Aspirations of the Lusaka Agreement have since its signing been expounded into practical implementation by additional treaties each focusing on a specific subject of intellectual property. These treaties are:

(a) the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs,
(b) the Banjul Protocol on Marks,
(c) the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore and
(d) the Arusha Protocol for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants.

Harare Protocol

Signing
On 10 December 1982, ARIPO’s Member States signed a Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs within the Framework of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization. It entered into force on 25 April 1984. This protocol is now known as the Harare Protocol on Patents and Industrial Designs. All Member States of ARIPO (see chapter on “Membership and its advantages to member states”), with the exception of Somalia, are party to this treaty and are therefore herein known as Harare Protocol contracting states.

Purpose of the Protocol
The Harare Protocol empowers the ARIPO Office to grant patents and register industrial designs as well as utility models on behalf of the treaty’s 18 contracting states. Furthermore, it empowers the Office to manage any other matter related to these functions and in pursuance of relevant objectives of the Lusaka Agreement. In respect of the latter, the Office, for instance, disseminates (under agreements) patent information pooled from its database and its Member States to WIPO and the European Patent Office (EPO).

Co-existence of the National Route and ARIPO Route
Although the Harare Protocol has empowered the Organization to manage patent and other industrial property systems of Member States, those participating Member States have retained powers of some of the functions. For instance, majority of the Harare Protocol contracting states still have the national route in addition to the ARIPO route for marshalling of applications and granting of rights ultimately. Those national routes provide that applications should be filed with the national industrial property office for grant or registration of a right there-under by those offices.

Secondly, every contracting state designated in an application marshalled through the ARIPO route for the purpose of according protection in its territory has the right to refuse to accord such protection if the application for grant of a patent or for registration of an industrial design or utility model does not comply with the provisions of the protocol or with the national laws of such state.

Procedure Under the ARIPO Route
Under the protocol, an application for the grant of a patent or the registration of an industrial design can, by filing only one application, designate any of the contracting states in which the applicant wishes an invention or industrial design to be accorded protection. This application can be filed through an industrial property office of a Harare Protocol contracting state (in this case known as “receiving office”) or directly with the ARIPO Office in Harare.

On receipt of the patent application (either directly or through a receiving office), the ARIPO Office will verify that the application complies with formal requirements before according a filing date. This is followed in due course by a substantive examination to ensure that the invention is patentable (in other words, that it is new, involves an inventive step and is capable of being applied in industry). Should the application comply with the substantive requirements, copies thereof are sent to each designated contracting state which may, within six months, indicate to the ARIPO Office that, according to grounds specified in the protocol or its laws, the intended patent grant once made will not have effect in its territory. The substantive examination of ARIPO patent applications makes an ARIPO patent a particularly strong one since such an examination raises its presumption of validity.

For industrial design applications, only a formality examination is performed. If the application fulfills the formal requirements, the ARIPO Office will register the industrial design and this registration has simultaneous effect in the designated states. However, as for patents, designated states reserve the right to communicate to the ARIPO Office within 6 months before the registration that the registration will not have effect in the designated state concerned.

Link with the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)
At its Second Extra-ordinary Session held in April 1994, the Administrative Council adopted amendments to the Harare Protocol and its Implementing Regulations to create a link between the protocol and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). This link took effect on 1 July 1994 and has the following effects:

(a) any applicant filing a PCT application may designate ARIPO which in turn means a designation of all states party to both the Harare Protocol and the PCT;
(b) the ARIPO Office acts as a receiving office under the PCT, and
(c) the ARIPO Office may be elected in any PCT application.

All the 18 Harare Protocol contracting states are also signatory to the PCT. The linkage of the Harare Protocol to the PCT finally created a bond between the ARIPO regional patent system and the international patent system, particularly as far as filing, search and examination were concerned. By virtue of having signed the Harare Protocol which itself is linked to the PCT, Harare Protocol contracting states are open to a worldwide inflow of patent applications which is a much wider volume of patent applications than available in their national routes. This has entailed more income as well as more employment opportunities as their governments require to hire more staff to handle the higher volume of applications brought about. With more income generated this way, all the ARIPO Member States, except Somalia, no longer send membership contributions from their national treasuries as Harare Protocol earnings alone settle these.

In November 1999, the Council further adopted amendments to provide for choice of office of filing application, period of protection for patents and industrial designs and protection for utility models.

Advantages of the Harare Protocol
The Harare Protocol offers distinct advantages to both industrial property offices of ARIPO Member States and users of the ARIPO system.

(a) Advantages to the industrial property offices.
(i) The Harare Protocol ensures that industrial property offices handle more applications and therefore receive more revenue than would otherwise be the case under the national route.
(ii) Industrial property offices save some of the costs of processing applications, particularly publication, grant/registration and renewals since this is done by the ARIPO Office on their behalf.
(iii) The quality of examination, particularly with regard to patents, ensures that the rights granted have a strong presumption of validity.
(iv) Industrial property offices with weak infrastructure, shortage of human and financial resources still offer a high standard of industrial property protection.

(b) Advantages to users of the ARIPO system.
(i) The system offers choice of where to file the application in that any person can file the application either with a national office of a contracting state (which will transmit the application to the ARIPO Office on the applicant’s behalf) or directly with the ARIPO Office.
(ii) One application has effect in all designated Member States which are the Harare Protocol contracting states.
(iii) The applicant uses only one language – English – and pays fees in one currency – US Dollars – and employs only one agent. These benefits save costs.
(iv) The user has multiple benefits of centralized processing, grant and renewal which continue to save costs.
(v) The system is simple, cost effective and user-friendly.
Banjul Protocol

Signing
The Banjul Protocol on Marks was concluded on 19 November 1993 in Banjul, capital of The Gambia. Contracting states under this protocol are Botswana, Kingdom of Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Kingdom of Swaziland, Uganda, The United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Purpose and Procedure
It empowers the Organization to register marks for goods and services in respect of and on behalf of the nine Banjul Protocol contracting states. Similar to the Harare Protocol, the Banjul Protocol provides a central channel in the ARIPPO route which co-exists with a national route in majority of the Banjul Protocol contracting states. Thus, an applicant can choose to register a mark with a national office for protection limited to that country or may elect to use the ARIPPO route in which case the application should designate at least one contracting state up to the nine.

Every application under the ARIPPO route may be filed with the national office or directly with the ARIPPO Office. If filed with the national office, that office will without delay forward the application to the ARIPPO Office. Upon receipt of an application, from a receiving office or beyond, the ARIPPO Office will determine the filing date thereof and proceed to examination for compliance to formality requirements. Thereafter, the application will be transmitted to designated states for substantive examination.

A designated state has, as under the Harare Protocol, a right to communicate to the ARIPPO Office its refusal for extension to it of a registration of a mark once made by the ARIPPO Office but the national office is required to state reasons for the refusal. These are forwarded to the applicant for appeal accordingly. The registration of a mark, once given, will be entered on the register and the fact published in the ARIPPO Journal.

Areas of Future Development on the Banjul Protocol
Although the Banjul Protocol has not been as very popular and successful as the Harare Protocol, it was intended to offer the same benefits to stakeholders as the Harare Protocol.

This lukewarm performance is now the focus of many studies made or being made internally at the ARIPPO Office and with stakeholders notably the International Trademark Association (INTA) and WIPO, the latter with consideration of better functionality in relation to the Madrid system.

Swakopmund Protocol

Signing
The Swakopmund Protocol for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore was concluded on 9 August 2010 in Swakopmund, Namibia, by a diplomatic conference held there. Contracting states under this protocol are: Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, The Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

Purpose
Acknowledging that traditional and local communities have for long utilized their traditional knowledge and culture for their survival and livelihood, that there is a gradual disappearance, erosion, misuse, unlawful exploitation and misappropriation of traditional knowledge and folklore as well as the fact that no international normative framework has been concluded for the protection of traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore, the conference concluded that the treaty was the first huge step towards prevention of this unlawful exploitation.

Thus, delegates of the conference were convinced that the empowerment and enhanced capacity of custodians of traditional knowledge and folklore are critical to the realization of aspirations and prosperity of the traditional and local communities. It was felt that effective protection of traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore will create a conducive environment for the respect, recognition, development and promotion of true and authentic narratives and expressions of folklore and its continued use, transmission and development. The delegates therefore strongly urged Member States to domesticate the protocol into their laws and institute appropriate institutional structures for the implementation and enforcement of the protocol.

Availability and Other Literature
With WIPO’s assistance, the ARIPPO Office produced a Guide to the Swakopmund Protocol which explains its provisions. The World Intellectual Property Organization further offered assistance to the ARIPPO Office for translation of the protocol into French, Arabic and Portuguese languages.

Copyright and Related Rights
Administration of the subject of copyright and related rights arose as a direct result of a decision of the Eighth Session of the Council of Ministers held in Mangochi, Malawi, from 29 to 30 August, 2002, at which the Organization was mandated to include in its functions the regional spearheading of development of copyright and related rights.

The Organization has since achieved many goals that laid a bedrock foundation for implementation of this additional mandate. These goals included creation of a Copyright Directorate at the ARIPPO Secretariat and the resultant employment of a Copyright Officer. Thus, the past three years have seen a quicker momentum in the process of implementing the mandate.

This positive development has, nevertheless, been overshadowed by one of the biggest challenges facing implementation of the mandate today. This obstacle is the continued prevailing condition in which only heads of industrial property offices, in exclusion of their counterparts in copyright offices, of the Organization’s Member States still practically constitute the Administrative Council. This is as a result of the seemingly splintered nature of those offices under separate authorities of the Member States. It is therefore necessary for the Organization to make appropriate strategic and policy decisions on how best to include heads of copyright offices in decision making processes of the Administrative Council, particularly in those Member States where industrial property offices and copyright offices are under separate ministries and separate departments.

In partnership with cooperating partners, the Organization has been actively involved in enhancing capacities for copyright management organizations in Member States, the emancipation of copyright from all forms of piracy and strengthening infrastructure used for enforcement of copyright laws. In view of the important place in the Organization’s mission occupied by this mandate, the Administrative Council recently created a Technical Committee for Copyright and Related Rights which will review copyright issues before they are seen by the Administrative Council itself.

The Arusha Protocol for The Protection of New Varieties of Plants

The Arusha Protocol for The Protection of New Varieties of Plants was concluded by a Diplomatic Conference that was held in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania on July 6, 2015.

The Protocol will enter into force only when four States have deposited their instruments of ratification or accession. The Protocol will provide Member States with a regional plant variety protection system that recognizes the need to provide growers and farmers with improved varieties of plants in order to ensure sustainable agricultural production.

The provision for plant breeders’ rights in the region will allow farmers access to a wide range of improved varieties to contribute to the attainment of the regional goal of economic development and food security. Under the Protocol, ARIPPO will enhance capacity building and help to develop effective national plant variety protection systems for the Member States.

Convinced of the importance of providing an effective system for the protection of new varieties of plants with the aim of encouraging the development of new varieties of plants for the benefit of the society, the Diplomatic Conference called on the Member States to take the necessary steps to ensure a rapid ratification or accession to the Protocol. The Conference also called on the Administrative Council of ARIPPO to make the necessary implementing regulations in order to ensure a prompt and efficient implementation of
the Protocol.

Five Member States have signed the Protocol namely, The Gambia, Ghana, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and The United Republic of Tanzania.

**Future Legal Instruments**

**Protection of Geographical Indications**

Following a decision of the Thirteenth Session of the Council of Ministers held in Accra, Ghana, in 2011 and having made wide consultation by participation in national, regional and international workshops on geographical indications (GIs), the Organization developed a Draft Policy and Legal Framework for the Protection of Geographical Indications with the collaboration of stakeholders. For the purpose of concluding this as a protocol to govern regional protection of GIs, a road map has been designed which will entail undertaking the following activities:

(a) circulation of the Draft Policy and Legal Framework to ARIPO Member States, through their national intellectual property offices, and to regional economic blocs in Africa for their comments and suggestions (by end of March 2014),

(b) comments and views are received from the national intellectual property offices of ARIPO Member States and the regional economic blocs (by end of June 2014),

(c) ARIPO Secretariat compiles these comments and views and submits them together with the document to an Expert Review Meeting of July 2014,

(d) by the end of August 2014, the ARIPO Secretariat to submit output of the Expert Review Meeting to the Fourth Session of the Technical Committee of the Administrative Council,

(e) the ARIPO Secretariat to submit the Draft Policy and Legal Framework, taking aboard the Technical Committee’s input and recommendations, to the Thirty-eighth Session of the Administrative Council by November 2014 for review,

(f) the ARIPO Secretariat to organize national and regional consultative meetings to discuss the Draft Policy and Legal Framework by the end of June 2015,

(g) the Fifth Session of the Technical Committee reviews the final version of the Draft Policy and Legal Framework for further consideration by the Administrative Council before submitting it to the Council of Ministers,

(h) in November 2015, the Fifteenth Session of the Council of Ministers to consider and endorse the document and determine a date and venue of a diplomatic conference at which a regional Protocol on the Protection of Geographical Indications will be adopted,

(i) the document to be reformulated into a draft protocol and draft regulations prepared by a draftsman (January to March 2016),

(j) convening of the diplomatic conference in 2016.
The ARIPO Academy

Training: The Organization’s Noble Dream

When established, the Organization was tasked under Article III (d) of the Lusaka Agreement “to establish schemes for the training of staff in the administration of intellectual property laws”. From that time to 2004, the Organization depended heavily on cooperating partners, and sometimes on facilities in some Member States, for the training of staff in the ARIPO region.

The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization took steps to build the first African Regional Training Centre on Intellectual Property on the premises of its new headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe. The need for capacity building in Africa has been widely expressed by stakeholders in ARIPO Member States. It was anticipated that the proposed regional training centre would provide training on drafting of intellectual property laws and patent specifications as well as negotiation skills taking into account the specific needs of Africa. Basic introductory courses on intellectual property would also be taught. It is planned that in the long run the centre would offer a programme of study leading to an award of a degree in intellectual property.

Construction of the Training Centre

Following a decision of the Administrative Council, construction of an extension block at the ARIPO headquarters commenced in 2003 and this was completed in 2004 in good time for its inauguration in 2006 as the Kamil Idris Building. WIPO donated a 75 KMW generator that ensured all-time supply of reliable electricity.

Besides containing new offices for the Industrial Property Directorate, the building houses the ARIPO Academy comprising a conference room, library and training room. At its inauguration in 2006, the three rooms were, respectively, named as Jeremiah Herbert Ntabgoba Conference Room, Anderson Ray Zikonda Library and Ulrich Walter Uchtenhagen Training Room.

Name Change

After its inauguration in 2006, the ARIPO IP Training Centre was renamed as the ARIPO Academy for its significance not only as a proposed centre of learning excellence in the study of emerging issues of intellectual property in this region but also for its anticipated function as the first institution in the region purely for the teaching and learning of intellectual property.

An engineer inspecting the site of the building to house the training centre. Behind him are columns of the corridor of the room later inaugurated as the Jeremiah Herbert Ntabgoba Conference Room. (2003)

The Jeremiah Herbert Ntabgoba Conference Room with simultaneous interpretation booths and a sound control booth at the back.

Part of the Kamil Idris Building showing the tower in which is housed the Jeremiah Herbert Ntabgoba Conference Room (ground floor) and the Anderson Ray Zikonda Library (first floor).
Academy & ICT

A partial view of the Anderson Ray Zikonda Library. Both the Anderson Ray Zikonda Library and the Jeremiah Herbert Nabagda Conference Room are part of the ARIPO Academy. When it is not hosting a training session, the conference room is open for hire to the public at reasonable rates.

Functions of the ARIPO Academy

The ARIPO Academy is mandated to carry out the following functions:

1. To promote the understanding and development of intellectual property system in the member states and Africa as a whole;
2. To train intellectual property experts and promote the development of human resources in the field of intellectual property;
3. To conduct research and make available information on IP for the general public; and
4. To foster partnerships and cooperation with other IP institutions world wide.

The Academy conducts short-term courses, many of which have been done jointly with cooperating partners. In 2008, the ARIPO Academy expanded its activities to include a Master of Intellectual Property (MIP) degree program which is offered in partnership with the WIPO and Africa University at the latter’s campus in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

ICT

Information: The newest Capital

In meeting with expectations required of it, the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization always makes use of information as an important input in the quest for achieving its objectives entrusted to it by the Lusaka Agreement and the attendant protocols. This has required input of information both in electronic form and otherwise but also information falling outside both these sources. Information in the former type comprises facility for accessing the Internet and access to the ARIPO Office’s local area network whose centre is the POLite+ industrial property database.

Development of ARIPO ICT Systems

The onslaught of fast changes in the world of information and communication technology meant that the Organization must upgrade its capacity to catch up with the world, particularly the world with which it was exchanging information. Having introduced the local area network, it next was considering a larger picture in which the ICT facility of the Organization’s headquarters and those of each one of the Member State offices should be upgraded. The upgrading aimed to establish good communication of electronic information between the ARIPO Office and the Member States or among the Member States themselves as well as with the world beyond the ARIPO region.

This aspiration became true when WIPO and the Korean government very kindly evolved the KOICA Project which resulted in a new-look ICT structure in the ARIPO region.
POLite+

Motivated by the quest to improve and provide better services to the users, the ARIPO Office on April 25, 2015 inaugurated a state-of-the-art automated IP administration system known as POLite+. The system features Online Public Services like the e-service (e-filing, e-notification and history check), IP digital library (search facility for patent, utility model, design and trademark data published by ARIPO) and access to online publications (ARIPO Journal and eForms) by the public.

POLite+ is web-based and provides a modern technological environment for IP administration including online filing, online file inspection, online payment and receipting, e-notification, access to downloadable online journals, forms and fees information. The inauguration marked the conclusion of the ARIPO/WIPO/KOICA Project to Upgrade and Modernize the ARIPO ICT Infrastructure and those of its Member States funded and implemented with the kind assistance of KOICA and WIPO.

With this new system, ARIPO has become one of the few offices in Africa that provide e-filing systems. The system through the Member States Module will allow online data communication and document exchange between ARIPO and the Member States. This will include electronic communication of applications and notifications between ARIPO and the Member States.

Advantages of POLite+

The advantages of the system to ARIPO include:

a) Improved efficiency and accuracy of IP administration;
b) Reduction of paper use, handling, mailing and other operational costs;
c) Accurate and faster IP examination; and
d) Strengthened competency in the global IP field.

Advantages of the system to the Member States include:

a) Time saving and reduced communication costs; and
b) Faster transaction with the ARIPO Office; and
c) Improved efficiency in IP administration of the ARIPO protocols.

Advantages of the system to the public are:

a) Reduction in IP application and transmittal time;
b) Better access to ARIPO published IP information; and
 c) Increased research and business opportunities.