

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Support to NEPAD

Period of Report: July 2006 to June 2007

The World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) commitment to African Member States focuses on assisting them in their efforts to build national capacities to take full advantage of their intellectual property systems. The expected outcome is that each African country will have in place a strong, inclusive and comprehensive national intellectual property system that will allow its citizens to successfully create, protect, promote, and commercialize its intellectual property assets. WIPO is working hand-in-hand with its Member States to promote intellectual property as a strategic tool for economic growth and national development and to implement NEPAD's priorities.

The assessment of Intellectual Property Systems in selected countries and Member States of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Member Countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)

The major challenge for African countries is to develop carefully designed strategies, based on empirical data, to integrate intellectual property into their national development goals.

- A methodology was designed to comprehensively assess the situation of intellectual property in selected African countries.
- The result was a user-friendly questionnaire for the main intellectual property stakeholders, namely, government entities, such as the patent and copyright offices, research and development institutions, universities and small and medium-sized enterprises.
- The following pilot countries were selected: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.
- The outcome of this assessment has been instrumental in the development of National Intellectual Property Strategies in those countries.

Geographical Indications

- WIPO continued implementing the Pilot Project for the Promotion and Protection of Geographical Indications in Africa in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

- The objectives of the project are: (a) commercialization of traditional agricultural produce; (b) promotion of national produce through marketing and branding; (c) development of strong professional groups/associations for the promotion and defense of their collective interests; and (d) seeking of investment in the promotion and commercialization of produce with added value as a result of intellectual property protection.
- The following activities have been completed: (a) training of a team of experts from the Ministries of Agriculture and Industry; (b) elaboration of the technical criteria for the selection of the produce; (c) selection by four countries of two products each, in cooperation with the professionals in the field and the authorities. Some of the countries and products they have selected are: Burkina Faso (French bean of Sourou and shea butter of Sissili); Cameroon (white honey of Oku and pepper of Penja); Côte d'Ivoire (Attiéké of Côte d'Ivoire and fabric of Korogho); Guinea (Queen Tahiti pineapple of Maférenyah and Ziama, and local coffee).
- A guide on the methodology of filing a geographical indication was prepared for the applicants, and training programmes will be conducted this year for officials in charge of production, product conversion and commercialization in the four countries.

Traditional knowledge: the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI) and African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO)

OAPI and ARIPO requested WIPO's assistance in drafting a harmonized regional instrument for the protection of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, the first draft of which has been submitted to the ARIPO Administrative Council and Council of Ministers and to the OAPI Administrative Council.

In 2006, a joint meeting of ARIPO and OAPI experts approved the final draft text which, following its endorsement by their respective governing councils, will be submitted to the competent national authorities for adoption in compliance with their constitutional arrangements.

African Summit on Science and Technology

(a) Workshop on Intellectual Property for African Ambassadors

WIPO and the Permanent Delegation of the African Union (AU) in Geneva organized for African Ambassadors, in Montreux Switzerland, on May 19 and 20, 2006, a brainstorming workshop on Intellectual Property. The meeting was attended by African Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives accompanied by their experts on intellectual property matters, as well as by the AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology.

- (b) Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), Cairo, Egypt, November 23 and 24, 2006 and the Congress of African Scientists and Policy Makers Alexandria, Egypt.

In preparation for the Summit, WIPO participated in the above two meetings and contributed to the debate on Science and Technology and Intellectual Property.

United Nations agencies consultation

- (a) WIPO, as a member of the Cluster on Science and Technology, attended the meeting convened by UNESCO in Paris on 9 June 2006 and participated in the debate on the Consolidated NEPAD Plan of Action on Science and Technology. The AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, and the Science and Technology Advisor to NEPAD attended the meeting.
- (b) WIPO also participated in the Seventh Annual Regional Consultation Meeting of United Nations Agencies in Africa, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 14 and 15, 2006. The meeting assessed the effectiveness of UN support to NEPAD through the current thematic cluster arrangement.

Other activities

Building the capacity of national intellectual property offices remains a priority. In this respect, on-the-job training and other training programmes on various aspects of intellectual property, such as licensing, branding, international classification, use of patent information, enforcement, valorization of medicine and traditional pharmacopoeia and transfer of technology offices in tertiary and research and development institutions, have been organized at the request of Member States.