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A ground-breaking Intellectual Property Seminar to Support Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa

Pretoria, 16 May 2023: The European Union funded Africa IP SME Helpdesk and the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) are hosting the **seminar ‘The practical intellectual property support programme for SMMEs’** at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) International Convention Centre in **Pretoria, South Africa**.

Supported by the European Union (EU) Delegation to the Republic of South Africa and the EU Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Southern Africa, the seminar is dedicated to Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) seeking to maximise their competitive edge in the green economy through intellectual property (IP). It provides both South African and EU-based SMMEs with practical IP information on compliance, commercialisation strategies, support services, and navigating the green economy.

Throughout the seminar, participants have the opportunity to engage with leading experts and practitioners on a range of topics key to their successful transition to the green economy, such as: ‘IP and Entrepreneurship’, ‘Commercialising IP: lessons from green tech’, and ‘Launch of the upcycling project for counterfeit goods’. Attendees will also be introduced to the Africa IP Helpdesk: a free IP assistance services part of the AfrIPI project, designed to support EU SMEs in protecting and enforcing their IP rights throughout Africa. At the end of the day, the seminar will conclude with a roundtable discussion to support the coordination of Government offerings in the SMME space.

The seminar will feature opening remarks from Her Excellency Mrs Sandra Kramer, European Union Ambassador to South Africa, and Adv. Rory Voller, Commissioner, Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

According to the CIPC Commissioner, Adv. Rory Voller, the CIPC is pleased to partner in hosting this seminar and thereby providing a platform to exchange ideas and experiences in stimulating innovation; and in IP commercialisation and protection.

“The intellectual property system is one of the cornerstones of economic activity and growth. It is increasingly becoming an important tool for sustainable development in the country and it is therefore imperative that it is protected and commercialised to accelerate economic growth and increase investment opportunities,” states Adv. Voller.

“Intellectual property rights play an important role in promoting innovation and protecting investment, in particular in the digital and green economy. That is why the European Commission works to harmonise and enhance laws relating to intellectual property rights in the EU, and to ensure that a level playing field is available at global level. Through our Strategic Partnership with South Africa, we intend to cooperate further in this area to better support SMEs in the area of Intellectual Property,” said Ambassador Kramer.

“Raising awareness of Intellectual Property Rights in the African society for SMMEs is one of AfrIPI’s main objectives. As African economies continue to grow and evolve, there are significant opportunities for SMMEs to expand their businesses and reach new markets. In this process, it is essential that SMMEs prioritise the protection of their intellectual property to safeguard their innovations and competitive advantage. By sharing best practices and insights from experienced professionals, AfrIPI aims to help SMMEs secure their sustainable future and unlock the full potential of the African market,” added Aida Galindo, AfrIPI Project Leader.

Background

1. About Africa IP SME Helpdesk

The Africa IP SME Helpdesk is an EU-funded project implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) under the AfrIPI project. 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 Africa IP SME Helpdesk at www.africaiphelpdesk.eu

2. 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

3. About the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC)

The Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) is a national public entity, established by the Companies Act 71 of 2008, amended. The CIPC is mandated to register companies, co-operatives, intellectual property rights (trade marks, patents, designs and copyright), business rescue practitioners and corporate names; maintain data; regulate governance of and disclosure by companies; accredit dispute resolution agents; educate and inform about all laws.

The CIPC makes continuous efforts to improve the ease of doing business through relentless innovation. The CIPC continues to simplify its transactional services, introduces additional channels and modernises its platforms to give effect to seamless, one-stop shop, paperless transacting.

Functions of the CIPC:

- The CIPC is responsible for the registration of companies, co-operatives and intellectual property rights (trade marks, patents, designs and copyright) and maintenance thereof.
- Disclosure of information on its business registers.
- Promotion of education and awareness of Company and Intellectual Property Law.
- Promotion of compliance with relevant legislation.
- Efficient and effective enforcement of relevant legislation.
- Monitoring compliance with and contraventions of financial reporting standards, and making recommendations thereto to Financial Reporting Standards Council (FRSC).
- Licensing of Business rescue practitioners.
- Report, research and advise Minister on matters of national policy relating to company and intellectual property law.

4. About the EU Delegation to South Africa

The EU Delegation to South Africa works in partnership with South Africa on mutual political, trade, economic and development interests.

For more information, please visit our website:
<https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south-africa>



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