

Heads of Intellectual Property (IP) offices in Africa have convened in Kigali, Rwanda, for the second edition of the Heads of IP Offices Conference (HIPOC). The annual conference, taking place from 6-8 June 2023, has been organised by the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and hosted by the Rwanda Development Board.

The conference, being held for the second time, has become an annual event that provides a platform for heads of IP offices to discuss IP-related developments in the ARIPO Member States and adopt a coherent and efficient approach in implementing technical assistance offered by WIPO and other partners.

It also aims to promote cooperation and dialogue among member states in the spirit of sharing best practices and experiences in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) administration and management in the region.

Speaking while sharing remarks during the opening ceremony, the Chairman of the ARIPO Administrative Council, Zimbabwe Chief Registrar Willie Mushayi said:

“ARIPO plays an important role in the discharge of its mandate to promote creativity and innovation through the protection of Intellectual Property rights in Africa. As Heads of IP Offices of ARIPO Members States, it is our mammoth obligation to not only ensure that ARIPO delivers on this mandate but to also be the face of Intellectual Property in our respective Member States. As we move forward in keeping with the objective of this Conference, it is so critical that we are alive to this background because we are the pivot at which the Organization and the State’s respective goals converge.”

On his part, the ARIPO Director General, Bemanya Twebaze, challenged the leaders to bring forward all the discussions necessary to raise the bar in IP for Member States.

“Contemporary issues, as well as those that are unsettling the IP landscape, will mark the essence of our discussions. Essentially, it is more profound that this engagement is directed to us as leaders with a mandate to implement interventions and changes relevant to Intellectual Property and innovation to ensure that at every level we inspire, engage, and influence our colleagues and stakeholders; and more importantly galvanize the support required to deliver on the important mandate we hold,” he noted.

While presiding over the opening ceremony, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Development Board, Nelly Mukazayire said:

“We are gathered here today to discuss and explore the critical role of intellectual property in shaping Africa’s future. This conference provides a platform for ARIPO Member States IP Offices to come together, share best practices, and strengthen cooperation in intellectual property management and enforcement. By aligning our strategies, harmonizing our policies, and building robust intellectual property ecosystems, we can effectively maximize the potential of our intellectual assets, foster innovation-driven entrepreneurship, and create an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth.”

A well-designed intellectual property system can be a powerful vehicle for economic growth and human development. Many sectors and industries rely on regulation that properly enforces IP rights such as patents, trademarks, copyright, among others.

The Heads of IP offices are responsible for driving the IP mandate therefore, the decisions they take on IP impact lives in many ways.

Member States represented at the 2023 HIPOC are: Botswana, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Kingdom of Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.