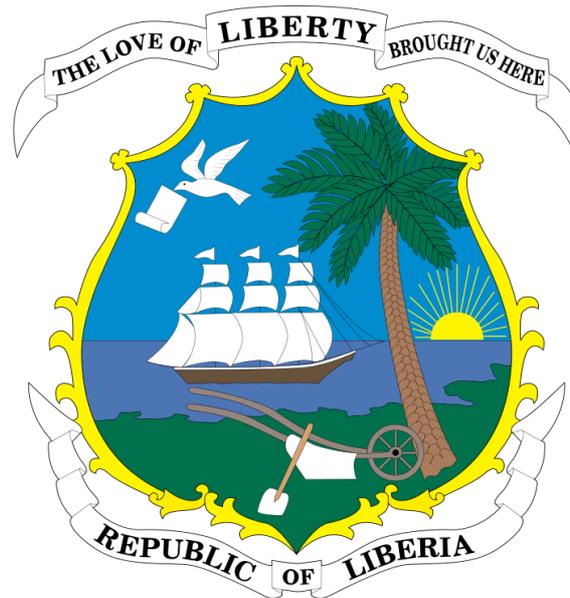


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**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
SIXTEENTH SESSION  
AFRICAN REGIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**



**WELCOME ADDRESS**

**HARARE, ZIMBABWE  
23-24 NOVEMBER 2017**

**H.E. FRANTZ CHE SAWYER  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR ADMINISTRATION  
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

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Excellencies,

Representative of the Director General of WIPO and Director of the Regional Bureau of Africa, Mr. Marc Séry-Koré,

Director General, Mr. Fernando dos Santos, African Regional Intellectual Property Organization,

Guest of Honor \_\_\_\_\_

Honorable Ministers,

Heads of Delegation,

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

1. On behalf of the people of Liberia and H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, let me express my warm greetings and gratitude for the honor of welcoming you to today's sixteenth session of the Council of Ministers of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization.
2. I am also excited by the warm hospitality given my delegation and me by the Government and People of Malawi.
3. It is a great pleasure for me to join the Director General and Director of the Regional Bureau of Africa in extending a warm welcome to all delegations to today's discussions on IP and Innovation and how they can be harnessed to shape Africa's future. I thank the Member States and the ARIPO office for their support for the Organization.
4. Last year, Liberia ratified the Swakormund Protocol, signaling to member states that Liberia stands ready to contribute to the Intellectual System of Africa. With the help of WIPO and ARIPO, we were also able to pass a new Intellectual Property Law in 2016 that effectively protects Copyright and Related Rights and Industrial Property.
5. This year, Liberia has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening Africa's Intellectual Property system by establishing the Liberian Intellectual Property Office in a physical structure with a director general and two deputy director generals for Intellectual Property and Copyrights. While the construction for our new office remains ongoing, I want to



thank all parties involved for their support to the development of the Intellectual Property System of Liberia.

6. If we seek to create meaningful jobs for our youthful population, we need to protect our innovations and creativities to spur economic growth and development. IP rights establish a secure legal framework for investment and commercialization of innovation and creativity.
7. Since the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization embarked on its journey on 9 December 1976 under the Lusaka Agreement, we have come a long way. With a mandate to develop, harmonize and promote intellectual property in the Member States of and Africa, we have achieved many milestones and advanced the role of Intellectual Property on our continent.
8. Our founders understood the importance of Intellectual Property in economic and technological development and laid the ground for our successes. By now, we have 19 members and signed four major protocols. The Harare Protocol, concluded in 1982, empowers the ARIPO Office to grant patents and register industrial designs as well as utility models on behalf of the contracting states. It also incorporates other international treaties of relevance, such as the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) and therefore enables applicants from the African region and elsewhere to file international applications and obtain protection of their intellectual property rights abroad.
9. The Banjul Protocol, concluded in 1993, empowers the ARIPO Office to register marks for goods and services in respect of and on behalf of the contracting states. It provides a centralized system of registration and provides a mechanism for the ARIPO system to co-exist with the national systems of the contracting states. It also reduces the administrative burden for member countries, as applicants can choose to register directly with ARIPO.
10. To protect holders of traditional knowledge, the Swakopmund Protocol, adopted in 2010, protects their ideas, know-how and folklore of Africa and ensures that it is properly utilized for the welfare of her people. Indigenous people view the extraction of their traditional knowledge from its broader cultural context as a form of theft and, have therefore been reluctant to share in the outside knowledge pool. For this reason, the Swakopmund protocol addresses their challenges and grants them protection via various legal concepts, such as prior informed consent, equitable benefit sharing, patents, prevention of unfair competition and protection of distinctive signs.
11. Lastly, The Arusha Protocol, adopted in 2015, will, when it becomes operational, provide Member States with a regional plant variety protection system. It will help our member countries achieve their agricultural and economic aims, as it will strengthen plant



breeders' rights in the region and therefore allow farmers access to a wide range of improved varieties.

12. At this time last year, ARIPO celebrated its 40th Anniversary at a colourful ceremony held concurrently with the inauguration of the new ARIPO headquarters building. The Guest of Honour Vice-President Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe officially launched the Anniversary celebrations. The 40-year celebrations provided a good foundation to set our eyes on the horizon and plan ahead.
13. Over the last four decades since the foundation of ARIPO, the main IP focus in Africa has been to establish and develop basic IP infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, capacity-building, and human capital. The goal now is to put these IP tools to work in support of their economic objectives in Africa. And this is only possible if there is an IP system that is based on an appropriate policy mix that balances the often-competing interests of producers on the one hand and consumers on the other hand.
14. The numbers show that ARIPO is playing an increasingly important role in using the established IP tools for the economic growth of our continent. For example, from January 1 to October 31, 2017, the number of patents granted increased from 378 in 2016 to 393 in 2017 representing a growth of 4%.
15. To enable our young innovators in Africa to enjoy the economic benefits of their creations, we must work with universities and other educational institutions across Africa to produce and learn IP related resources, provide several online learning modules that provide general introduction to IP and innovation. In this regard, I commend that with the graduation of the ninth cohort, the Masters in Intellectual Property has produced over 240 students since its beginning to strengthen our capacity to create and enforce Intellectual Property in Africa. And for the year 2017, ARIPO is sponsoring 10 of these students for their Masters of Intellectual Property at Africa University. In 2017, the ARIPO Academy has also initiated partnership agreements with the University of Alicante, Spain; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana and University of Cape Town, South Africa to further develop our human capacity with regards to Intellectual Property.
16. In conclusion, Mr Chairman, please join me in welcoming all of you to this year's sixteenth session of the Council of Ministers of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization. I invite you all to take an active part in today's discussions, but also conversations among the delegations here present today. I wish all panellists and speakers enriching discussions. May our efforts today bring us one step closer to finding the necessary answers to Africa's IP-related challenges.



17. I wish all delegations a successful second day of the conference and an enjoyable stay in Harare.
18. Thank you all.