

CONCEPT NOTE: **AFRICA DAY 2021**

**AfCFTA IMPLEMENTATION: LEVERAGING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR) FOR DEEPER ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN AFRICA, Friday, 21st May 2021, 3pm to 5:00pm, Zoom**

The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations in 2015, now operational since January this year, was distinctive in that AU Heads of State and Government agreed that negotiations on trade in goods and in services would be conducted simultaneously. Until then, the practice generally has been to negotiate trade in goods first, and services subsequently. From this perspective, the conclusion of the negotiations within just three years, and the official launch of the AfCFTA in July 2019 is all the more remarkable. However, the negotiations do not stop here — for, at the start of the process in 2015, the AU had set the tone for a deeper level of integration by committing to take up some so-called ‘WTO-plus issues’ in a second phase of the negotiations. These issues include, but are not limited to, investment, competition policy and **intellectual property rights (IPR)**. E-commerce and digital trade could be another issue.

Phase II negotiations were initially scheduled to be concluded by December 2020 and Phase III negotiations to commence immediately after the conclusion of Phase II. This deadline was missed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The AU Assembly has set 31 December 2021 as the deadline for the conclusion of Phase II and III negotiations (tralac.org).

Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as technological inventions, literary and artistic works and symbols, and names and images used in commerce. IP rights (IPR) are meant to prevent others from using, making or selling the item on which the rights are conferred. They include patents, trademarks, copyright, industrial designs, geographical indications (GI), plant breeder rights, and utility models (ECA et al., 2019). IPR serve as a policy tool to promote private investment and entrepreneurship, innovation and competition. As such, they are crucial to realizing the objectives of the AU’s Agenda 2063, which prioritizes science and innovation as drivers of structural transformation and value addition in Africa. The AfCFTA provides an opportunity to advance an IP rights system that corresponds to the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

IP rights are territorial, that is, they apply and are enforced only within the country in which they are granted. This has inspired international cooperation to harmonize the laws and administration of IP rights beginning in the nineteenth century and leading on to the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) in 1994. The TRIPs Agreement signals the multilateralization of IP rights. It sets an ‘international minimum standard’ with which every WTO member should comply. The Agreement incorporates substantive provisions of several WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) treaties and, unlike GATT and GATS, it does not exempt RTAs established after it had come into force from providing better treatment to countries that are party to those agreements. This means that an IP protocol reached in the context of the AfCFTA must be extended to all WTO member-states (ECA et al, 2019).

This conversation which is part of the **Diaspora Engagement Dialogue Series** will focus and enlighten on the AfCFTA IPR Protocol provisions that will feature in Phases II legal instrument. The background, rationale, objectives and possible approaches of AfCFTA IPR Protocol, creation of IP Innovation Ecosystems of the real development of Africa will be discussed. It provides a platform to share and exchange on the role of the Diaspora in the development of Intellectual Property in Africa as well as in the host countries, thus making their contributions to the ongoing negotiations. The webinar equally provides an opportunity to strengthen and extend the network of the Diaspora and other stakeholders both in countries of origin and residence.

Participation is open to the diaspora communities, sixth region of Africa, business community, policy makers, academia, CSOs as well as other major stakeholders.

The official languages of the conference are English and French with simultaneous translation.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AFRICAN DAY 2021</b></p> <p><b>ACFTA Implementation: Leveraging Intellectual Property for Deeper Economic Integration in Africa</b>  <b>Friday, 21st May 2021, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Geneva time, Zoom webinar</b>                      DRAFT PROGRAM</p>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">   <i>African Diaspora Council of Switzerland</i> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div>		
3:00-3:10pm	Welcome Remark	<p><b>Dozie Celeste Ugochukwu</b>  <b>Pat Santschi</b>                      AFMD / African Diaspora Council of Switzerland, Host</p>
3:10-3:25pm	Opening Remark	<p><b>Representative of</b>                      AfCFTA Secretariat, Accra, Ghana</p> 
3:25-3:55pm	Keynote Presentation AfCFTA IPR Protocol: Background, Rationale, Objectives and possible approaches	<p><b>Dr. Fikremarkos Merso</b>                      Senior Expert on IPR                      African Union, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia</p> 
3:55-4:20pm	The Necessity to create IP Innovation Ecosystems for the Real Development of Africa and her Diaspora	<p><b>Dr. iur. Ituku Elangi Botoy</b>                      Industrial Property Information Officer, Technology and Innovation Support Division, IP and Innovation Ecosystems, World Intellectual Property Organization WIPO, Geneva</p> 
4:20-4:40pm	Role of the Diaspora in Technology Transfer and IP development in Africa: Interview with Diaspora entrepreneurs	<p>- <b>Dr. Abake Adenle</b>, CEO &amp; Founder, AJA.LA Studios, A London-based AI startup working on speech and NLU applications for under-resourced languages. London, UK  </p> <p>- <b>Neema Nyerere Drago</b>                      MD, NND Consulting                      IP &amp; Brands “Authenticity 4 Growth”, Butiama, Tanzania / Geneva  </p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anchor</b></p> <p>- <b>Neo Theodore Tlhaselo</b>                      Founding Director, Conversation with Africa, CWA Gaborone, Botswana  </p>
	Input & Contributions, Q & R	Participants
5:05pm	Closing Remark	<p>- <b>Alexis Nshimiyimana Neuberg</b>                      President, Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform, ADEPT Brussels, Belgium  </p>