

A 3D rendering of a metal chain with a circular logo in the center containing the letters 'TM'.

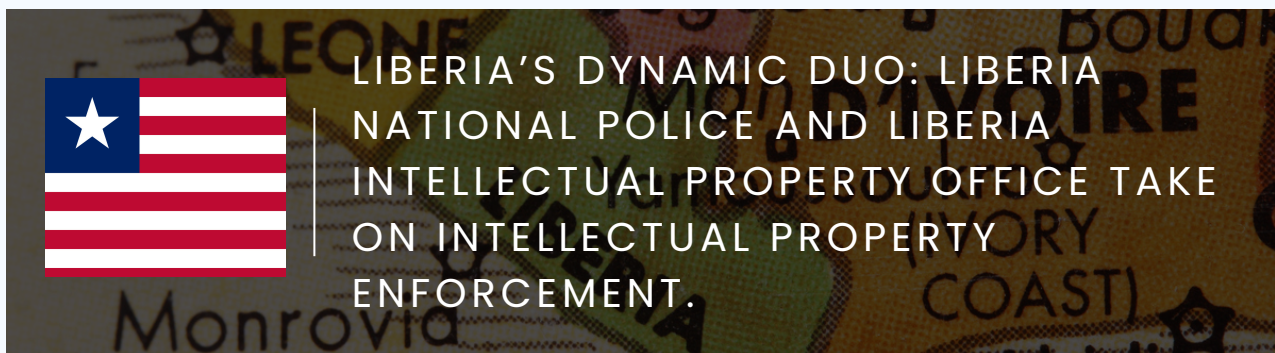
IP AFRICA NEWS



AFRICA INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS

- The African intellectual property (IP) landscape has been abuzz with groundbreaking developments this October, reflecting a collective drive to modernize systems, enhance enforcement, and foster international cooperation in the IP Space.
- From Ethiopia's strategic accession to major IP treaties, signaling its alignment with global standards, to Namibia's automation of trade mark processes under the Madrid Protocol, countries are taking bold steps to bolster IP frameworks.
- In South Africa, legislative deliberations are underway to reshape the nation's IP laws, while the Alliance Francophone pour la Propriété Intellectuelle, recently launched in France to unify French-speaking nations in leveraging IP as a tool for innovation. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's accession to the Paris Convention and the Madrid Protocol marks a significant stride towards integrating with international IP systems.
- These developments underscore a shared commitment to protecting creators, encouraging innovation, and building robust IP ecosystems across African countries.

LIBERIA



Counterfeit goods are running riot across Africa, flourishing in a marketplace where low prices often overshadow authenticity. The unchecked spread of fake products and rampant intellectual property (IP) piracy isn't just an economic nuisance—it's a direct threat to innovation, creativity, and foreign investment. But Liberia has had enough.

In a groundbreaking move, the Liberia Intellectual Property Office (LIPO) has joined forces with the Liberia National Police (LNP) to rewrite the country's approach to IP crime. Central to this bold partnership is the introduction of IP training at the Police Academy, equipping officers with the skills to enforce intellectual property laws effectively and decisively.

"The establishment of a specialized IP unit within the Liberia National Police will not only curb IP crimes but also foster an environment where innovation and creativity can flourish without fear of infringement," said Hon. Koboi, Director General of LIPO. This forward-thinking collaboration is also aligned with President Joseph Boakai's vision of a thriving knowledge-based economy, unshackled from the constraints of piracy and counterfeiting.

LIPO, Liberia's trusted guardian of trademarks, patents, copyrights, and industrial designs, is at the helm of this initiative. Dedicated to protecting creators and innovators, LIPO aims to foster an environment where ideas can flourish and industries thrive.

"The fight against intellectual property crimes requires a multi-faceted approach, and this partnership is exactly what Liberia needs" said Jamus Bannah, LIPO's Program and Outreach Manager. "By integrating IP education into the Police Academy's curriculum, a foundation for a future where our law

enforcement officers are equipped to combat these crimes proactively and effectively is being laid. This is a significant milestone for the country.”

Still in its early stages, the partnership is already shaping up to be a game-changer. Plans include establishing a dedicated IP crime unit and launching Liberia’s first-ever IP curriculum for law enforcement. The government has set its sights on 2025 as the year for rigorous enforcement, promising a crackdown on piracy and counterfeit goods across sectors from entertainment and pharmaceuticals to consumer goods and technology.

Liberia’s creators and innovators can finally look forward to a future where their work is protected, their industries grow, and their economy flourishes. This initiative isn’t just a step forward—it’s a giant leap toward a brighter, more innovative Liberia.

SOUTH AFRICA



On October 22, 2024, the Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry, and Competition of South Africa's National Assembly convened to discuss legislative developments, with a particular focus on intellectual property (IP) laws. The discussions ranged from protecting Indigenous Knowledge (IK) to reforming the patent system and advancing trade mark registration on a global scale.

The Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act No. 28 of 2013 (IPLAA) was designed to protect Indigenous Knowledge by amending existing IP legislation. However, its implementation has been stalled for over a decade due to the introduction of a competing Indigenous Knowledge law by another department, which was subsequently enacted. Regulations to finalize the IPLAA were paused to align with the new legislation and have now been picked up.

- **Development on Patent:** South Africa is transitioning from a depository patent system to a substantive examination process. In October 2024, a proposed Patents Bill was submitted to the Executive Authority, aiming to repeal the Patents Act No. 57 of 1978 and align South Africa’s system with international best practices. The bill introduces “utility model patents” for minor innovations, which overlap with provisions under the current design laws. As a result, the Designs Act No. 195 of 1993 is also set to be amended, and a Designs Bill with the necessary updates has been submitted to the Executive Authority.
- **Development on Trade Mark:** Despite its extensive trade connections, South Africa has not yet acceded to the Madrid Protocol, an international treaty that simplifies trade mark registration across multiple jurisdictions. Joining this system is viewed as a critical step for modernizing IP frameworks and strengthening trade relations. To prepare for accession, the government is planning amendments to the Trade Marks Act No. 194 of 1993, with submissions to the Executive Authority scheduled for February 2025.

Through these legislative efforts, South Africa is striving to modernize its IP framework to support local innovation, align with global standards, and enhance its international competitiveness.

From resolving the IPLAA impasse to embracing substantive patent examinations and preparing for the Madrid Protocol, the country is laying the groundwork for a robust and future-focused IP system.

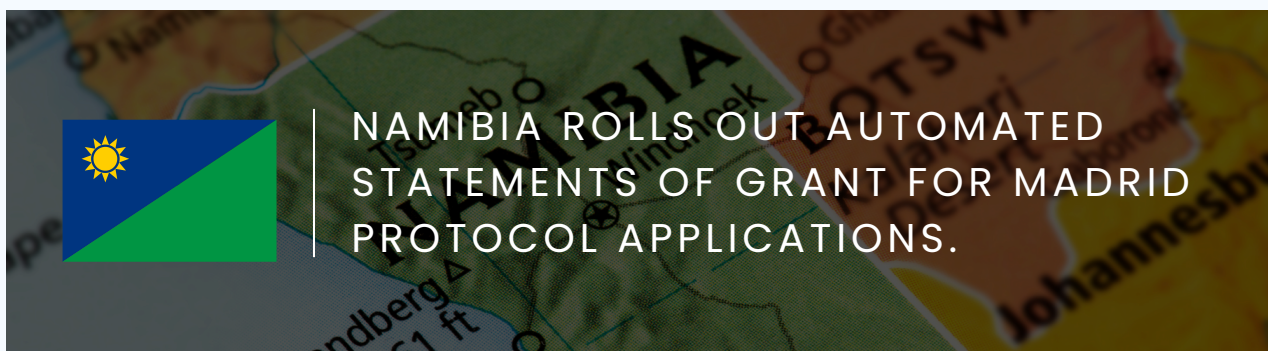
LAUNCH OF THE ALLIANCE FRANCOPHONE POUR LA PROPRIÉTÉ INTELLECTUELLE

On October 2, 2024, during the Francophonie Summit, the Alliance Francophone pour la Propriété Intellectuelle was officially launched in France. The event brought together numerous institutions, including the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI). The Alliance aims to elevate the French language as a key tool in innovation ecosystems by uniting stakeholders such as IP professionals, universities, research institutions, and IP offices within the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

As one of its inaugural actions, the Alliance entered into a partnership with the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), a global network of French-speaking higher education and research institutions. This collaboration seeks to combine their extensive networks to promote intellectual property awareness and provide training for students and aspiring entrepreneurs across Francophone countries.



NAMIBIA



The Business and Intellectual Property Authority (BIPA) of Namibia has announced a new automation initiative for Madrid Protocol applications designating Namibia. Under this system, applications will automatically receive Statements of Grant as outlined in Section 200 (11) of the Industrial Property Act 1 of 2012. This development aims to enhance the efficiency and predictability of the trademark registration process, making Namibia a more appealing destination for international trademark protection. The automated Statements of Grant will apply only to newly filed Madrid Protocol applications designating Namibia, provided no objections are raised during the statutory opposition period.

For Madrid applications filed before the introduction of this automated system, BIPA has requested stakeholders to submit additional supporting documents to facilitate the issuance of Statements of Grant. Since these applications fall outside the automated workflow, the submission of these documents is essential for compliance and formal recognition in Namibia.

Namibia's move to automate the issuance of Statements of Grant underscores BIPA's commitment to the Madrid Protocol and its efforts to create a more reliable framework for protecting intellectual property rights.



ETHIOPIA



On October 1, 2024, Ethiopia's Council of Ministers approved the country's decision to join two significant international agreements:

- The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property
- The Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks (the Madrid Protocol)

These agreements now await ratification by the Ethiopian Federal Parliamentary Assembly, which will require legislative reforms. The Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority is already working on updating the country's current intellectual property (IP) laws, in collaboration with local experts.

Ethiopia's decision to accede to two major IP treaties and update its intellectual property laws marks a significant step forward. This move, along with ongoing legal reforms, brings Ethiopia closer to aligning with global IP standards and will foster greater integration into the international IP landscape. The Madrid System filing system offers a streamlined, cost-effective process to register trademarks in multiple countries through a single application. It provides access to registration in over 130 member states. It is an attractive filing system for businesses seeking international trademark protection across several regions of the world.

A significant number of African countries are already members of the Madrid Protocol, including Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Egypt, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, OAPI (covering most of French-speaking Africa), Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. However, several of Africa's major economies, such as Angola, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda, have not yet acceded to the Madrid Protocol.

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