

Remarks at Opening Session

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High-Level Event on IDDA III Strengthening Africa's Pharmaceutical Industry- learning the lessons from COVID-19

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This reality check leads to one clear conclusion: the development of Africa's own pharmaceutical industry is the only way forward to ensure the continent's resilience and achieve sustainable development.

The pandemic has also shed light on certain Intellectual Property related challenges with regard to improving access to technology and knowhow, which are the basis for industrialization through promotion of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).

It is, therefore, an opportune moment for African countries to carefully examine IP policy spaces to create conducive innovation ecosystems to promote industrialization in general, and with regard to the pharmaceutical industry, in particular.

For instance, last June, the deadline for least developed countries (LDCs), to protect intellectual property under the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), has been extended until 1 July 2034. There is a further LDC special transition period related on pharmaceutical products which is valid until 1 January 2033³.

However, many countries have not yet leveraged these transition periods to secure time to address their public health needs.⁴ While the TRIPS faces some limitations when applied under the current pandemic, it also provides exceptions and flexibility such as exceptions to patent rights and compulsory licensing for members to adapt the applicable rules and regulations to erer and r66 0.3 r66 0.3 2 (a)

For example, the 2017 regional averages for the share of GDP devoted to Research and Development (R&D) activities of sub-Saharan Africa was 0.6% compared to the world average of 1.7%, despite the AU target of allocating at least 1% of GDP to R&D.⁶

By increasing human and institutional capacity and capabilities particularly in STI, IPRs regimes including patent registrations could be further leveraged in accelerating creativity, innovation and industrialization “made in Africa”⁷.

This endeavor should be anchored by multi-stakeholder partnerships including the Government,