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“The Role of Intellectual Property and Innovation in Development and Economic Diversification, and WIPO’s Development Cooperation Activities”

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The Role of Intellectual Property in Development and Economic Diversification

- Economic diversification is essential for building a sound base for a sustained growth and helps structural transformation. Economic analysis of experiences of developing countries have shown that low-income countries with the highest economic diversification have experienced much faster growth than the least-diversified low-income countries within the same period between the early 1960s and 2010. This is especially relevant to mineral-exporting LLDCs and LDCs, whose economies are too much dependent on mining and extractive industry, and consequently are subject to volatile global commodity markets.
- LLDCs are faced with multiple challenges that limit their competitiveness in terms of trade and investment such as weak productive capacity, low technological base, higher transaction and transportation costs, limited opportunity for value-addition of exports and economic diversification.
- Intellectual property (IP) in itself has always been part and parcel of economic, social and cultural development worldwide. It has a great potential to facilitate economic diversification and structural transformation by fostering innovation and creativity, raising productivity, technological upgrading, stimulating commercial activities in science, art and culture.

WIPO’s development cooperation activities and tools

- Facilitating the use of intellectual property for social, cultural and economic development has been the primary goal of WIPO’s technical assistance and capacity building activities.
- WIPO has over 30 years of experience in development cooperation and technical assistance, and has been adapting it to the needs and priorities of Member States. The main areas have been intellectual property policy and strategy, skills development and capacity building, appropriate technology, establishment of Technology and Innovation Support Centres (TISCs), automation and modernisation of national IP offices, patent, trademark, branding, copyright, traditional knowledge and geographical indication.

- Today, in view of the time available I will briefly introduce some of the relevant development tools and activities conducted by WIPO. I will also provide some figures on how many LLDCs benefited from its development cooperation programs between 2009 and 2017.

Technology and access to scientific, technical information to build technological capacity and knowledge base

- WIPO provides access to scientific and technical information to all developing countries to assist in building technological capacity and knowledge base for using intellectual property as a tool for development. This will be increasingly useful in today's era of technology and in the years to come.
- For instance, WIPO is contributing to building the national capacity of the beneficiary countries on management, administration and utilization of technical and scientific information for developing their appropriate technology base and attaining national growth and development goals through knowledge transfer and capacity building. So far, the project on appropriate technology has been successfully carried out in six countries in Africa and Asia, out of which four are landlocked LDCs.
- By 2017, over 600 Technology and Innovation Support Centres (TISCs) - which provide access to locally-based, high quality technology information and related services to serve the needs of researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs - have been established and deployed with the assistance of WIPO in 72 developing and least-developed countries. According to the latest survey, these centres were responding to around 600,000 inquiries annually. To date, TISCs have been set up in 13 LLDCs.
- WIPO's Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI) program - a public-private partnership with some of the world's leading publishers - continues to provide free or low-cost access to around 7,500 subscription-based scientific and technical journals, and 22,000 e-books and reference works to over 1,000 registered institutions in 85 developing countries and LDCs, including 23 LLDCs.
- In addition, WIPO's Access to Specialized Patent Information (ASPI) program provides free or low-cost access to commercial patent search and analytical services to over 80 registered institutions in 30 developing countries and LDCs through a public-private partnership with leading patent database providers. To date, 31, or almost all LLDCs, are receiving access to patent search services under this program.

Branding

- WIPO continues to deliver technical assistance activities to contribute to the business development of local communities, medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and public institutions by building product brands through the strategic use of IP rights; to improve the capacities of national institutions to handle the procedures for registration of trademarks and geographical indications; and to raise awareness on the impact of product branding on the business development of local communities and SMEs. Until present, 10 LLDCs have received technical assistance from WIPO on branding and designs.

Genetic resources (GRs), traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs)

- With regard to genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, WIPO offers a background brief summarizing the legal policy and operational issues in developing a national strategy for protecting these assets. Six LLDCs have received assistance from WIPO in these areas.

Capacity-building

- WIPO assists in training human resources to enable the effective use of IP for development. Education programs are delivered by the WIPO Academy. WIPO's capacity building activities include trainings in legal, technical and practical aspects of IP, covering subjects such as copyright, patents, trademarks, industrial designs, geographical indications, genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, building respect for intellectual property, innovation support, SMEs, the use of intellectual property systems, and WIPO's alternative dispute resolution services.
- All capacity building activities are developed at the request of, and in consultation with, Member States, reflecting and adapting to the needs of beneficiary countries.
- Until present, most of LLDCs have been included in the skills development and capacity building programs of WIPO.

National and regional IP system

- Today, the importance of intellectual property to economic, social and cultural development is on the rise. In this context, beyond their traditional functions of administering intellectual property laws, regulations and registration, national intellectual property offices (IP offices) can play an important role in making the best of use of IP system for addressing developmental challenges, promoting innovation, technology transfer and disseminating knowledge.
- Thus, to meet the needs and expectations, it is essential for national intellectual property offices to attain higher operating efficiency and stronger capabilities to deliver wide range of services.
- Technical advice and support of WIPO to intellectual property offices is aimed at enabling them to deliver more efficient and user-friendly services. For instance, WIPO has provided software, tools and free services to help improve the operations of IP offices on filing, administration, examination, registration, publication/dissemination of IP information. These systems are being used in 81 IP offices in all regions. So far, 17 LLDCs have received assistance from WIPO on IP office automation and modernization.

Conclusion

- WIPO's technical assistance, especially on technological capacity building, branding design, innovation support and technology transfer, would be instrumental for achieving structural transformation and economic diversification in LLDCs and landlocked LDCs.
 - Given an emphasis placed on the issue of innovation in the recent Resolution 72/232, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 2017, on Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, and that an enhanced attention is being given to the role of science, technology and innovation in achieving structural economic transformation, productive capacity development and value addition in LLDCs, as indicated in the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries, WIPO's technical assistance programs and activities are becoming increasingly relevant to LLDCs as well.
 - Given the increasing demands from Member States and other relevant IP stakeholders, WIPO's development assistance programs and activities will be further strengthened and expanded, thus contributing to the use of IP for development.
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