



Keynote Address

By

**Hon. LUCIA IIPUMBU**

Deputy Minister of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development

at the occasion of the

**LAUNCH OF THE IP POLICY**

held at the Safari Hotel Convention Centre

on 23 October 2019 at 07h30

Chairperson and members of the Board

Acting Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Vivienne Katjuongua

Management and staff of BIPA

Esteemed partners and stakeholders

Members of the media

Director of Proceedings,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In few weeks-time, five weeks to be exact, all eligible Namibians from all works of life, will gather at the electoral polls, to register their vote and make their voices heard. It is those Namibians that wield the power to define the future; and that is a sign of hope, a sign of new beginnings, a sign of possibilities.

Even during challenging times, Namibians have not stopped hoping, they have not stopped imagining their future; they have not stopped creating their world.

This morning, I stand together with all Namibians, to deliver the fulfilment of the promise Government made on creating an enabling environment for creativity and innovation.

Indeed, history will record that on this day of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the Month of October in the year 2019, Namibia defined the role of intellectual property within its socio-economic agenda for the next five years; because we are committed to our future.

As I present to you the National Intellectual Property Policy, which defines the space for intellectual property in Namibia, and the role that IP will play as we advance the prosperity dream of all; allow me to make few reflections on this subject matter that affects us all, yet quite unfamiliar grounds.

Intellectual property, refers to the product of the mind, and is expressed in creativity and innovation.

It is the ability to create and innovate that result into new products and markets that did not exist before. Protection of Intellectual property rights,

Provides creators and innovators of new inventions, books, music, clothes and products, the opportunity to be rewarded for their ideas and efforts. These laws stimulate innovation and creative work.

Intellectual property is indeed a gift to all humankind; irrespective of color, gender, race, tribe or even generation. The power to create and innovate is a gift to us all; and while in some it remains dormant and potential, there are those who have optimized this ability to advance and enrich their socio-economic development agenda.

The question then is, why is it dormant in some and evident in others? How have other countries been able to utilize intellectual property to create an advantage and accelerate their growth? Those are a noble question and I will you to ponder on that.

As you ponder on that,  
distinguished stakeholder, ladies and gentlemen,

let me remind you that it is important to understand the times we are in. Economists have identified at least 4 revolutions, namely agricultural, industrial, information and

then the emerging 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.

Needless to say, bricks and mortar no longer hold the economic power. We are in an era of dynamic transformation, where creativity, innovation, technology, digitization, robotics and knowledge are fast becoming credible means of fostering prosperity. As a responsible steward, it is imperative that we formulate equally dynamic policies which, create a dynamic environment for sustainable development. Those who have then understood the times and have created the space to imagine, invent, create and innovate; have never ceased to grow and advance.

It is with this understanding that the Government of Namibia has identified intellectual property as a stimulus for economic growth through the protection of intellectual property rights.

In the Fifth National Development Plan, Namibia has identified creativity and innovation; and protection of intellectual property as key elements to accelerate socio-economic growth. Furthermore, Government has committed to increase the contribution of creative industry to employment from 0.65% to 2% by 2022.

To this end, Government has prioritized the establishment of intellectual property institutional, legal and policy frameworks.

In 2016, Parliament passed the Business and Intellectual Property Authority Act, which creates the institutional framework for the protection and promotion of intellectual property.

In 2017, BIPA Act entered into force, and the BIPA office was established.

In 2018, the Industrial Property Act entered into force, introducing modern legal framework for the protection of industrial property rights; which experts have hailed as a model for developing countries.

In 2019, Government commenced with the review of the Copyright Act, with the aim of developing a new and responsive Copyright Law.

With those few highlights, I am pleased to note that Government continues to improve the landscape for entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation; which commitment has resulted into the first National IP Policy.

Distinguished stakeholders,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Intellectual Property Policy establishes the framework conducive for innovation and competitiveness through Intellectual Property education, protection and commercialisation. The Policy defines the parameters of the use of Intellectual Property as a strategic catalyst to accelerate transformational growth at home. It also sets Namibia's vision for Intellectual Property, identifies objectives and key strategies and establishes an institutional framework to serve as the coordinating body in IP related policy and strategic matters.

Given the cross-cutting nature and scope of Intellectual Property, the Policy responds to the linkages between Intellectual Property and other areas, such as: industrialization, trade, investment, innovation, science, technology, agriculture,

education traditional knowledge and genetic resources. It addresses the relationship of Intellectual Property to communication polices, universities & research and development institutions & SMEs.

As a member of global community, driven by the benefits of international trade, rules on how to protect intellectual property rights have become key elements of international trade agreements. Intellectual Property today serves as an effective policy tool to unlock local creative, inventive and innovative potential, stimulate the transfer and use of technologies and creative works, and to encourage fair competition. This promotes the creation of wealth, and fosters national social, cultural and economic development

The launch of this Policy and Strategy, therefore, is a timely development that must be embraced by all Namibians in both the public and private sectors in order for the country to ensure the effective use of IP as a tool for development and improvement of the welfare of Namibians.

Namibia, like many parts of the world, is currently experiencing financial turndown, which has escalated triple challenge of high poverty, inequality and unemployment. it is during such trying times, that humanity makes its greatest creations, discoveries and inventions. This is the natural response of the human-race to any occurrence which threatens its existence or progress. It is therefore not a secret, that the solution to our prevailing economic difficulty, lies with the people and is a product of the intellect of people.

In the words of his Excellency, the President: *“The war against poverty and the quest for economic emancipation must be a multifaceted war which we will fight on many fronts, using a myriad of methods at our disposal.”*

This policy is designed to ensure that intellectual property is fully integrated into the national development policies and strategies; and that supports and promotes the generation, protection and commercialisation of IP assets. It furthermore aims to stimulate the transfer of technology, ensure adequate enforcement of intellectual Property rights and increase IP awareness. Finally, it strengthens the creative industry and promotes the use of intellectual property in areas where Namibia has comparative and competitive advantages.

Distinguished stakeholders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The future holds a degree of uncertainty, but when it comes, we will be ready for it. We have our policy, institutional and legal framework in place.

On that note, allow me thank all our stakeholders and partners who have made various investments into the Policy. I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to WIPO and ARIPO for their support.

I also extend my best wishes to BIPA, who will serve as the custodian of the policy, as well as the coordinating authority that will oversee its successful implementation.

With those few words, it is my distinct privilege and honor, to launch the first National Intellectual Property Policy. It is ours. Let's own it. Let's work it!

Thank you.