Opening Remarks

"Integrating Intellectual Property into Innovation Policy Formulation – Presentation of Report"
Kigali, Rwanda
May 5, 2015

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the hard work and efforts by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, and related parties who have greatly contributed to the implementation of this project. It is also my great pleasure to note that the project, including the report and the present meeting, is to be organized under the framework of Japan Funds-In-Trust arrangement.

In 2008, the Japanese government established a new Funds-in-Trust in WIPO in order to support capacity building in the field of IPRs in Africa and least developed countries by increasing the existing amount of contribution of Funds-in-Trust of Japan.

The three main objectives of the Funds-in-Trust are:

(i) To promote the awareness of the importance of industrial property system for economic and technological development and of the benefits to be derived from the effective use of the system;
(ii) To assist the developing countries in establishing or strengthening their industrial property laws and institutions; and
(iii) To facilitate the human resource development in administration and utilization of the industrial property system in close cooperation with the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI).

The activities under this Funds-in-Trust are conducted by cooperation between WIPO and Japan Patent Office (JPO).

Intellectual property plays a vital role in Japan where natural resources are scarce and labor costs remain very high. In 2002, the then Prime Minister made a declaration that Japan would become the leading nation based on intellectual property. He stated, "Japan has set a goal to more strategically protect and make use of the achievements of its research and creative activities as intellectual property, in order to strengthen the global competitiveness of Japanese industries."

To achieve this goal, the Japanese government has focused on a variety of initiatives. In fact, in 2012, Japan's technological trade surplus, including revenues from patents and technical expertise, increased to more than 2 trillion yen (about 17 billion dollars), an increase that was 3 times more compared to that of 2002.

Along with other contries of Africa, which is seen as the 'last frontier' offering countless business opportunities, Rwanda has been gathering increasing attention from the world market in terms of its rapid economic growth and the ease of doing business, as well as being an example of countries developing independent of their natural resources.

The intellectual property system not only plays an important role by fostering innovation but forms an indispensable element in the commercial environment by protecting valuable business assets. I am sure that the officials and professionals

from various segments of government and industry gathered here today will also take a firm leadership in implementing reforms recommended in the Report to be presented in the following sessions.

I wish to close my opening remarks by expressing my sincere hope that, through the discussions in this meeting, our Funds-in-trust arrangement will contribute to further economic development in Rwanda.

Thank you for your kind attention.