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Department:
Trade, Industry and Competition
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO. 1818

Mr T M Langa (IFP) to ask the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition:

Following the Intellectual Property (IP) and Technology Commercialisation Session, (a) how does his department plan to expand IP education to ensure that local entrepreneurs understand how to protect and monetise their innovations and (b) were there any proposals to integrate IP education into the school and university curricula to foster a culture of innovation from an early stage? NW2035E

REPLY:

I have been advised by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission as follows:

- (a) The purpose of the Intellectual Property and Technology Commercialization Colloquium was to provide a platform to exchange ideas and experiences in addressing challenges inhibiting successful technology commercialization. Following the Colloquium and a need to expand IP education to ensure local entrepreneurs understand how to protect and monetize their innovations; the CIPC has a series of ongoing interventions. The CIPC developed an IP Reference Guide tailored for entrepreneurs, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMMs) and small law firms aimed at demystifying intellectual property (IP) concepts and providing practical guidance on protecting, managing, and leveraging IP assets. This guide forms part of CIPC's broader effort to build national IP capacity and ensure more equitable participation in the IP system by smaller players who often lack access to specialist IP advice. In collaboration with the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property and SECO, South Africa also customized the IP Panorama, a user-friendly, multimedia e-learning tool designed to educate entrepreneurs and innovators about the strategic value of IP. The customized version reflects local legislative contexts and industry examples, making it highly relevant for South African users.

The recently launched CIPC IP Youth Awards hosted by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), recognize and reward youth who have inspirational ideas that could be grown into prosperous businesses. This initiative aims to inspire innovation, highlight the importance of IP protection, and empower young creators to commercialize their ideas. The awards added tangible value by recognizing and celebrating innovative youth across the country, thus inspiring a culture of creativity and protection of ideas. These awards not only raised awareness of IP among young people but also provided them with mentoring, exposure, and in some cases, pathways to commercialize their ideas. The initiative has proven instrumental in empowering youth to see IP as a tool for economic participation, job creation, and entrepreneurship, aligning with national priorities for inclusive growth and development.

- (b) Yes, there was support for integration of IP in the schools' curriculum. The CIPC had already reached out to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to start discussions about introducing the IP in the School Curriculum as the key stakeholder and role player for the incorporation of IP Education in the national school curriculum. The response received after engagement with DBE officials as of October 2024 was that the DBE Minister was planning on hosting consultative forums on curriculum developments/ amendments in 2025. The CIPC requested to be part of the stakeholders for engagement during the envisaged consultative process for curriculum enhancement. We are hopefully waiting for the DBE to revert to us to resume the discussion on implementation of the IP in Schools Curriculum.

The CIPC acknowledges the need to foster a culture of innovation at an early age, hence it implements numerous interventions for IP Education and Awareness on an ongoing and Ad Hoc (dependent on the availability of the different schools). The CIPC annually implements an international Summer School on Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer, the hosting of the Summer School is rotational amongst the provinces, in this financial year, the Summer School will be hosted by the Mangosuthu University of Technology in KwaZulu-Natal, some of the activities in the buildup of the implementation of the Summer School entails IP Education and Awareness at local high schools in the Province where the Summer School is implemented. A number of High Schools have been identified from the following KZN regions to be visited for IP Education and Awareness and participation in the Summer School Program as of April until December 2025: Umlazi, Mbumbulu, Inanda, Umhlanga, Zimbali, Magabeni and Ndwedwe.

Albeit having these interventions; the CIPC acknowledges that the current interventions and resources are not adequate to ensure the sufficient IP knowledge for the whole of South Africa to foster a culture of innovation from an early stage, hence the engagement with the

Department of Basic Education for the introduction of IP as part of the national school curriculum.

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