

## Need to build on African innovation, rankings show promise

The Global Innovation Index 2015 (GII), co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) a specialised agency of the UN, has released the 2015 rankings. These indicate that Mauritius (49), South Africa (60) and Senegal (84) are the three most innovative nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, while Kenya (92), Mozambique (95) and Uganda (111) top the rankings of low-income countries in the region.

The Index surveys 141 economies around the world, using 79 indicators to gauge both innovative capabilities and measurable results.

A number of low-income economies are innovation achievers - economies that outperform their peers for their level of gross domestic product - and performed increasingly well at levels previously reserved for the lower-middle-income group. Sub-Saharan Africa stands out, with Rwanda (94), Mozambique and Malawi (95) now performing as middle-income economies and Kenya (92), Mali (105), Burkina Faso (102) and Uganda (111) are generally outperforming other economies at their level of development.

An underexplored area in many developing countries is steering innovation and research to context-specific solutions, which may not produce frontier technologies or comprise part of existing global value chains, but offer solutions to local challenges. Finding innovative ways to overcome developing country challenges in the area of energy, transportation, sanitation and getting a greater return on local artisanship and creative industries is a priority.

### Key African IP conference later in 2015

Establishing regulatory, legal and business structures that effectively promote innovation is crucial to economic growth in Africa.



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That's why later this year African heads of state, government ministers and top officials from the United Nations, African Union and private sector groups will gather to chart a plan for boosting the uptake of

intellectual property tools to help stimulate economic and social development across Africa. The African Ministerial Conference 2015: Intellectual Property for an Emerging Africa will take place 3-5 November 2015 in Dakar, Senegal.

"Africa has a great tradition of innovation and creativity...and innovation is a central driver of economic growth, development and better jobs," said WIPO Director General Francis Gurry. "It is the key for firms to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

"Intellectual property is an indispensable mechanism for translating knowledge into commercial assets - IP rights create a secure environment for investment in innovation and provide a legal framework for trading in intellectual assets."

Macky Sall, President of Senegal; Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius; Francis Gurry and other senior UN officials; African Union (AU) Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and other regional officials will attend the conference. Some 60 government ministers are expected to attend.

The GII 2015 looked at "Effective Innovation Policies for Development" indicating new ways that emerging economy policymakers could boost innovation and spur growth by building on local strengths and ensuring the development of a sound national innovation environment.

"Innovation holds far-reaching promise for spurring economic growth in countries at all stages of development. However, realizing this promise is not automatic. Each nation must find the right mix of policies to mobilise the innate innovative and creative potential in their economies," concludes Gurry.

## International rankings

Switzerland, the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands and the US are the world's five most innovative nations, while China (42), Malaysia (32), Vietnam (52), India, (81) Jordan (75), along with Kenya, and Uganda are among a group of countries outperforming their economic peers.

As a whole, the group of top 25 performers - all high-income economies - remained largely unchanged from past editions, illustrating that the leaders' performance is hard to challenge for those that follow.

The GII 2015 found that a well-coordinated innovation policy plan with clear targets and a matching institutional set-up had proven to be a tool for success. GII analysis showed that increasing business sophistication, business linkages to science and its institutions, foreign subsidiaries and the recruitment of scientists is often the single biggest challenge in developing economies. While significant resources are often devoted to attracting foreign multinationals and investment, developing country policymakers should consider how to capture and maximize positive spillovers to the local economy.

## Top rankings - world

1	Switzerland (1)	6	Finland (4)
2	United Kingdom (2)	7	Singapore (7)
3	Sweden (3)	8	Ireland (11)
4	Netherlands (5)	9	Luxembourg (9)
5	United States of America (6)	10	Denmark (8)

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