



Light Years IP

Engaging Intellectual Property to Increase
Poverty Alleviating Trade

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Rt. Hon. Lord Paul Boateng, former U.K. cabinet minister and Ambassador to South Africa, announced today that he is co-chairing the African IP Trust - an important new initiative in Africa that will have a significant impact on countless millions of African lives. The African IP Trust will be co-chaired with US Congresswoman Diane Watson (ret), sharing their long-time commitment to advancing Africans out of poverty with focused, viable and sustainable solutions.

The African IP Trust is based on the fact that African Intellectual Property is a key to addressing poverty in Africa. This is because Africa is rich in IP assets. Its distinctive products are exported from African shores and sell for billions of dollars in importing countries' retail markets, while pennies on the dollar are returned to the African producers, farmers, and artisans. According to the NGO Light Years IP, which formulated the African IP Trust concept, Africans lose approximately \$1.4 billion in IP assets annually, across just 14 products analyzed. The better news is African producers are now learning the same IP business strategies long-utilized by Western corporations to capture these gains from their own Intellectual Property assets. This will change the economic imbalance in African trade and will change Africa.

As just one example, Ethiopian fine coffee farmers were receiving 5% of the retail value of their fine coffee from retail markets. (Just three of their fine coffee brands were generating about \$2 billion in retail markets and returning just \$100m to Ethiopia).

The NGO Light Years IP developed a solution for Ethiopia, involving IP business strategies of trademarks and setting up licensed distributors which enabled the Ethiopians to receive \$101m more export income in one year and take back some control of their IP assets for the future. Ethiopia was then challenged by big coffee, such as Starbucks, which objected to Ethiopia acquiring trademarks for Harar, Yirgacheffe and Sidamo (even though these are regions in Ethiopia). Congresswoman Watson and other supporters worked alongside Light Years IP to insist upon Ethiopian ownership of its IP rights to return the income to Ethiopian coffee farmers, who number about 4 million. The outcome was an increase in Ethiopian export of \$101million.

The value of organized support toward a smart and viable solution spurred Light Years IP to create the African IP Trust, an entity wherein high-profile, committed human rights advocates will be prepared to act to support the rights of Africans to exercise the same control over their valuable IP assets as Western corporations have long assumed.

The African IP Trust works in concert with Light Years and IP Value Capture solutions to advocate, strategically intervene, campaign and sustain the rights of Africans to their own Intellectual Property,

much as corporations would naturally insist upon rights to their own products and secure that ownership – and challenge those who tried to steal it.

“I, Paul Boateng, am co-chairing the African IP Trust with Congresswoman Diane Watson because we believe the time is long overdue for African producers to have the same rights and income returns afforded to Western corporations. A key to poverty alleviation in Africa is for Africans to better utilize the assets already present and achieve better control over those assets. The African IP Trust will bridge the divide between what is assumed about African ownership of their brands and other IP and what is true.”

The method of IP Value Capture, supported by high-level committed advocates is exemplified in the Ethiopian success, but is applicable to a wide range of African products that hold distinctive, intangible value and high prices in retail markets. Light Years IP has calculated an annual return potential to African producers of approximately \$1.4 billion/year across just 14 products.

From this success, other African country producers, farmers and owners of cultural brands have sought the assistance of Light Years IP and the African IP Trust. The time is right for the world to recognize a new solution for Africa, based on assets already present in Africa and effective strategies realized.