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The COPYRIGHT SECTOR –A Valuable Asset to Jamaica’s Economy

Jamaica abounds in natural creative talent that finds its expression through such forms as art, dance, music, the spoken word, drama and fashion to name a few.

The inherent value of this creative expression has been and is treasured the world over and now, fresh statistics have been provided to support this sentiment. Empirical data on the value of and contribution of copyright-related sectors to the Jamaican economy has been documented and analysed in a recent study commissioned by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nation agency with responsibility for Intellectual Property, at the request of the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO). The study, which was prepared by Dr. Vanus James of the Mona School of Business, University of the West Indies, found that 4.8% or over J\$605 million of our national earnings in 2005, was contributed by the Copyright Sector.

Why a link between copyright and Jamaican creative expressions? It is simply that the creative works for which Jamaica is renowned, fall mainly within the domain of Copyright, the field of intellectual property rights that protects literary, musical, dramatic and artistic expressions of the human mind.

Furthermore, as contemporary society increasingly recognizes human innovation and the resulting intellectual property as wealth-creating intangible assets, the need for clear indicators and quantitative economic data are critical for designing and implementing targeted policy responses.

According to WIPO definitions, copyright-based industries are those in which ‘copyright plays an identifiable role in creating tradable private economic (property) rights and income from use of these economic rights.’ For the purposes of the statistical measurements in the study, the copyright sector was sub-divided into 4 groups of activities:

1. **‘Core Copyright Industries’** comprising:

- press and literature,

- music, theatrical productions, and opera
- motion picture, video and sound,
- radio and television,
- photography, visual and graphic arts, related professional and technical services.
Software databases and new media,
- Advertising services,
- Copyright Collective Management Societies.

2. **‘Interdependent Copyright Industries’** engaged in the production, manufacture and sale of equipment that facilitate copyright activity such as TV sets, radios, DVD players, computers, musical instruments, blank recording material and paper.

3. **‘Partial Copyright activities’** which include products and services that have a significant components based on copyright, for example, museums, jewellery, architecture, furniture design,

4. **Non-dedicated Support Industries** which facilitate the communication and distribution of copyright-based activities such as general wholesale and retail, transportation, telephony, the Internet. These industries facilitate the communication and distribution of copyright-based activities.

These categories were found to have contributed **J\$605,030 million or 4.8 % to the GDP in 2005** with Core Copyright Activities accounting for 1.7% of the 4.8 %. Interdependent and Partial each shared 1.2%, and the Non-Dedicated Support sectors holding 1.9 %. Compared to other sectors, the copyright sectors contributed more than electricity and water which measured at 4.1% of GDP, and was followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing at 5.2 %. Comparatively, in a similar study done in the USA, it was found that copyright based industries contributed 11.12% to their GDP, in Mexico it was 4.77%, in Canada 4.50% and in Russia 6.06%.

In addition to measuring the contribution of all four groups of activities to GDP, employment and trade, the study identifies what it considers structural weaknesses in current educational, financing and investment arrangements. The study argues that certain positive changes in these areas would so boost the productivity and profitability of the copyright sector that it could

become ‘the main sector leading the Jamaican economy to sustainable reintegration into the rapidly changing world economy.’

In this vein, the study posits that ‘the activities in which a country is most creative and, hence, most capable of developing new domestic capital and the skills to use it, are ultimately those that offer the best opportunities for exploiting available externalities and developing a distinct comparative advantage.’ Such an advantage is crucial in a globalised age where ‘every nation must improve its capacity to compete’ in order to create wealth and experience sustained growth.

Officially launched by JIPO in collaboration with WIPO in March 2008, the Jamaican study is one of thirteen (13) completed studies to date by WIPO and the first to be done within the Caribbean region. Some of the other completed country studies include Singapore, Canada, Croatia, Mexico, Russia and the United States of America. Work is currently ongoing in eleven (11) countries, including Brazil, Tanzania, Pakistan and China. Pursuing this policy-focused research forms part of WIPO’s Agenda on the Creative Industries. The international agency advocates that:

- Economic development is positively influenced by the ability to economically exploit creative assets, and
- Development strategies should build on a comprehensive analysis of the relations of the creative sector with other sectors of the economy.

Once the national study is completed, WIPO then works with the member state in implementing a strategic plan for the development of the local creative industry.

Creative industries are without a doubt, of great value to any nation and Jamaica is no exception. This fact is well understood by JIPO. As such, in fulfilling its role to contribute to national economic growth and development, and provide comprehensive procedures and facilities for the protection and promotion of Intellectual Property rights, JIPO will be exploring and developing, with its public and private sector partners, focused strategies and policies that bring to life, the wealth-creating economic assets that are assuredly resident in the dynamic, creative Jamaican people.

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