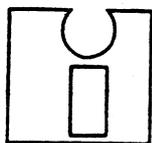


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PATENT INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF INVENTIVE AND INNOVATIVE
ACTIVITIES: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

1. Economic progress requires a constant stream of new ideas and products to improve quality of life, regardless of whether the innovation is a simple gadget or a sophisticated invention. Today it has become evident that innovation and creativity bring competitive advantage to companies and nations. *Per capita* economic growth of countries is driven increasingly by innovation.
2. At the same time we are witnessing the information revolution penetrating every single aspect of private and professional life. Information, which always has been a very important basis for any decision making process, today has become also a marketable product.
3. Technology and inventions are important parts of the innovation process, which transforms inventions into marketable products. This process is most complex and as such requires much specialized professional expertise and expert knowledge. The marketing and commercialization phase of the innovation process is crucial for the success of any invention and innovation. Knowledge and information (not to say intelligence) are crucial for the whole innovation process. Finding, identifying and using relevant information is very important for inventors and innovators, since the success of their invention on the market will depend to a very large extent on their capacity to handle information.
4. Today, the World Wide Web, or Internet, as it is more commonly known, offers extraordinary opportunities for the dissemination and distribution of information and, what is more important, almost unlimited access to information.
5. This document is not intended as an instruction on how to search and find relevant information, but is intended to present some practical ideas that could serve as a basis for discussions in this Symposium.

GROWING ROLE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

6. Intellectual capital is often of considerable value because it is unique. It comprises, *inter alia*, patents for inventions, trademarks, industrial designs, utility models, integrated circuits topographies, copyrights, but also know-how, trade secrets, proprietary technology, talents, skill and knowledge of the work force, training systems and methods, customer lists, distribution networks, quality management systems, etc.
7. Intellectual property represents the result of the creations of the human intellect and it basically relates to information which can be incorporated in tangible objects and reproduced in different locations and can be used by several persons at the same time, unlike immovable or movable tangible (material) property.
8. The role of intellectual property rights (IPR) is significantly increasing in the new international economic and commercial set up. Intellectual capital is increasingly being recognized as one of the most important assets of many of the world's largest and most powerful companies. At the corporate level there is an increasing awareness that active and

full control over technology, new products and processes secure the way to competitive advantage.

9. The classical economic theory assumed the technology progress essentially to be an exogenous phenomenon and technology was considered as a “free product.” Current understanding of economic growth is at variance with this view. It is now widely acknowledged that technological progress occurs precisely as a result of entrepreneurial activities in anticipation of profits from innovations. A sound patent system contributes to the practical use of technology and research results by providing a legal environment which is conducive to encouragement of innovation and technology transfer.

10. According to recent WIPO statistics, the number of patent applications filed each year in the world is well over one and a half million. Those applications result in the grant of more than half a million patents. The number of inventions which are covered by those patent applications and grants is much smaller since each invention gives rise to an average of two to three patent applications in different countries. The number of patent documents published each year, both applications and granted patents, is over two million, in many different languages.

11. There are no exact statistics on the number of patent documents published so far from the beginning of the time when patents were first published. They can, however, be estimated at over 36 million. Generally, only the recent ones are of practical importance for those searching technological information; the older ones are frequently only of historical interest. Nevertheless, access to the older ones is an absolute necessity for any industrial property office where the law requires it to pass a judgement on the question of whether a given patent application related to an invention is new, since such a judgement requires looking at all the existing patent documents likely to disclose a similar invention.

INVENTORS, INVENTIONS, INFORMATION AND THE REAL WORLD

12. Successful marketing of inventions and technology means to marry a new invention to a real existing need. It demands an extensive and very close collaboration and cooperation between three groups of people: those who create inventions and technology, those who explore and create markets and those who use inventions and technology. Such cooperation depends to a very large extent on their capacity actively to collect, select, analyze and exchange information.

13. The crucial point in the innovation process is the production, marketing and commercialization stage, when the invention or the new product or process based on it is to meet the test of the market. It is only when it is accepted on the market by the consumers and users, that the invention or new product will begin to generate income which will compensate inventors and manufacturers for the investment made and eventually generate also some profit. One should never forget, that an invention has more chances of success if it has been developed in response to real needs.

14. Patent documents contain descriptions of scientific and technical concepts as well as practical details of processes and apparatus. Before the full technological value of patent documents can be appreciated, it is necessary to understand why patent documents are published and the role they play in the economic and technical development of a country.
15. Inventions have an economic value when they are used in industry. Inventions enable industry to make new products, or make products more economically (faster, more cheaply), or to improve existing products (by making them more precise, yielding better or faster results when they are used).
16. Inventions are rarely the result of an accidental or an instantaneous stroke of genius. Most inventions are usually the result of methodical research, comprising long and hard thinking, detailed analyses, combined with experimentation with the precise aim and hope of arriving at a new solution amounting to an invention.
17. If everybody is free to use newly created technology and inventions, who will be willing to bear the cost associated with their creation? One of the basic rationales of the patent system is to provide such an incentive for the creation of new technology and inventions. It does this by offering to inventors exclusive rights to commercially exploit patented inventions for a limited time in return for the disclosure of the inventions to the public.
18. Patents are granted on technical criteria and not on the basis of commercial or market criteria. The exclusive rights which are conferred by the patent relate to the commercial exploitation of the invention, and do not preclude another person from experimental work using the technological information contained in the patent specification. In other words, while the patent owner can prevent others from using, for commercial purposes, the same technology as is revealed in the disclosure of his invention, he is not protected against those who (subject to the generally accepted criteria of patentability and the rights conferred by a patent) derive from his disclosed invention a perception of a market need which may be satisfied by the legitimate adaptation or improvement of his technology, or through the use of a different technical solution to satisfy the same market need.

INFORMATION ASPECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY SYSTEM

19. The patent system always had and still has two functions: the so called “protection-function,” and “the information-function.” The fact that a patent gives an inventor exclusive rights on a special field and by doing so limits the possibilities of access to this special technology for other enterprises is compensated by the information about the newly developed technology which is to be laid open by the inventor. This second function of the patent is not only the main impetus for the continuous development of the technology but is also of increasing importance for Industrial property offices.
20. The publication of each patent document could be the basis for new technical developments by other inventors. Without publication there would be no chance at all for the public to obtain information about new technical developments. It is therefore not surprising that providing information for the public is now recognized as part of the task of an industrial property office. In the last 30 years a change has taken place: with the growing awareness of the importance of technological information, many industrial property offices realized that

providing information to the public is of equal importance to the granting or registration of patents, trademarks and designs. Thus most industrial property offices have decided to build up greater information capacities for the public.

21. The patent system contributes to economic growth and development by creating the conditions for the marketing and commercialization of inventions in several ways:

(a) it gives an incentive to the creation of new technology which will result in, *inter alia*, new products, inventions and commercial opportunities;

(b) it contributes to the creation of an environment which facilitates the successful industrial application of inventions and new technology, and the legal framework which encourages investment, including foreign investment;

(c) by publishing the information on new inventions, it acts as a catalyst for the commercialization of inventions and their transfer to productive use;

(d) it is an instrument of commercial and industrial planning and strategy.

22. High quality information systems are being created and continuously upgraded and have become one of the main tasks of a national industrial property organization. For research and development activities this new task might be of more importance than the original main function of a patent office, namely the granting of patents. Information is now one of the main products of many national economies. A growing number of IP offices and organizations are using the Internet to offer access to their patent documentation databases.

23. The patent system plays an important role in the process of matching technology suppliers and recipients. In addition to the valuable technological information, a published patent document contains details of the names and addresses of the applicant, patentee or inventor, and thus provides a means whereby the owners of rights in relation to technology may be located; finally patent documents contain information on the legal status of rights in the invention, to which they relate.

24. The patent system stimulates invention and innovation through the accumulated pool of technological information contained in patent documents. The information which is contained and classified in patent documentation constitutes the single most valuable and comprehensive source of technological information available in the world today: the technology disclosed in patent documentation may serve to stimulate ideas for further invention and innovation.

25. The effective searching of patent documentation can indicate the state-of-the-art which exists in relation to any particular field of technology, which will be of particular importance to the individual enterprise. Awareness of the state-of-the-art in a particular technical field can avoid duplication in research work by indicating that the desired technology already exists. Also it can provide ideas for further improvements or can give an insight into the technological activities of competitors and, by reference to the countries in which patents have been applied for, the marketing strategies of competitors. A state-of-the-art search can also identify newly developing areas of technology in which future R&D activity should be monitored.

26. The aforementioned advantages characterize the patent system as an extremely valuable and comprehensive source of commercial and technological information, which can be used directly for scientific and experimental purposes and as a basis for stimulating the adaptation and improvement of the technology described in patent documents.

27. It should be noted that in order to be used for production purposes, the information contained in patent documentation sometimes needs to be supplemented by know-how derived from the accumulated experience of the use of the invention.

THE INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY SYSTEM AS A POLICY INSTRUMENT

28. As a tool for industrial planning and strategic decision making, the industrial property system may be very useful through analyses of the statistical aggregation of patenting activity as revealed through published patent documents. Since the degree of patenting activity provides an index of the degree of technological activity in a given technical field, the statistical analysis of patent documentation can indicate which countries or companies are active in various fields, in which industries technology is moving at a rapid pace and in which the technology is stable, and which are the enterprises active in a particular sector. Registered trademarks indicate a clear commercial interest in the market of a country or group of countries. Analyses of IPR and their presence in different countries provide a means of forecasting future industrial developments, identifying areas in which market demand is increasing, monitoring general technological progress, and testing the soundness of policy and investment decisions.

29. The patent system must be understood as a policy instrument which encourages developing indigenous technological capabilities by providing an incentive to local inventors, research and development organizations and industry, rather than a policy instrument which, if adopted, will immediately effect a transformation in the level of technological sophistication in the relevant country. In fact, it represents a strong shield for the development of innovative domestic industry however small it may be at the moment.

30. The patent system does not constitute an instant remedy, but rather a long-term infrastructure investment in development of the national market. Without any patent system, inventors, entrepreneurs and companies would have no effective protection against the imitation of their inventions, and less incentive to invest in the development and strengthening of their technological capacities. It might therefore be expected that the number of inventions produced by local inventors would be even less in the absence of a patent system.

ADVANTAGES OF PATENT DOCUMENTS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR INVENTORS

31. Patents generally disclose technological information by describing the inventions in accordance with the requirements of the applicable patent law and by indicating the claimed novelty and inventiveness by reference to the existing state-of-the-art. They are thus sources of information, and in many cases furnish a history, in summary form, of the technological progress in the field of technology to which they relate.

32. Patent documents generally convey the most recent information, which, generally speaking, is not divulged in any other form of literature. Thus it is wrong to consider that relevant information contained in patent documents will come to one's notice by other means. An investigation made by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office shows that as much as 70% of the technology disclosed in U.S. patent documents from 1967 to 1972 had not been found in non-patent literature.

33. The main user groups of patent information are:

- industry, and in particular R&D intensive industry
- research and development institutions,
- governmental authorities,
- small and medium-size enterprises,
- individual inventors,
- professionals in the field of industrial property, e.g. administrators of technical libraries, patent agents, researchers, producers of data banks
- educational institutions and university students

34. The practice has shown that information contained in patent documents can be very useful to:

- avoid duplication of R&D work,
- identify specific new ideas and technical solutions, products or processes,
- identify the state-of-the-art in a specific technological field in order to be aware of the latest development,
- assess and evaluate specific technology and identify possible licensors,
- identify alternative technology and its sources,
- locate sources of know-how in a specific field of technology or in a given country,
- improve an existing product or process,
- develop new technical solutions, products or processes,
- identify existing or prospective industrial property rights (validity, ownership, ...), particularly to avoid infringement actions,
- assess novelty and patentability of one's own developments with a view to applying for a domestic or foreign industrial property right,

- monitor activities of competitors both within the country and abroad, and
- identify a market niche or discover new trends in technology or product development at an early stage.

35. Patent information can also be exploited to monitor technology trends as well as competitor's R&D activities. Since patents must be applied for before any public disclosure and are normally published after 18 months, patent information are potentially an early indication of future trends in an organization's activities. While the publication of an individual patent does not in itself tell us much about a competitor's intentions, taken together with several similar patents, however, provide a strong indicator of that company's likely intention to commercialize a product or process. For example, for a particular company and new technology area, a patent analysis may give results suggesting that the company has a continuing and firm interest in this area, likely to be leading to marketable products.

36. Patents represent not only an incomparable source of the history of technology, but also a mirror, less of the technology of a given era than of the generation of technology for the following era; at any given time, it reflects the direction taken by researchers' endeavors at all levels, from the ingenious craftsman to the advanced laboratory. However, it should not be forgotten that it takes time to push inventions to the market.

37. Since the technological information contained in patent documents is not secret, it can be freely used to support research and development activities.

38. The cost of obtaining protection varies, but is never negligible. This means that a patent is only requested for a given country if there is an economic interest in doing so.

39. The first reason for a patent application for a given country is that the invention could be used by the industry of that country. This means that the nature of the invention will determine whether protection will be sought in some countries and not in others. The number of applications for patents in a specific branch of industry and for a given country is therefore an indicator of the level of technological development of that country in such field.

40. The second reason for applying for a patent in a given country is that the country constitutes an important market for the subject matter of the patent, even if it is not in a position to produce it itself.

41. The capacity for innovation may be studied either in respect of a company or in respect of a field of industry or a country. In the first case, the number of patents filed by a company and the development of those patents over time will show the innovative capacity of the company. The same applies to the overall innovative capacity of a country. However, it is only the number of domestic applications that will indicate the inventive possibilities of the country concerned.

42. Hereafter are given brief descriptions of specific characteristics of patent documents which make them extremely useful sources of technological information, with some clear advantages over other sources of information.

Description, Claims, Drawings

43. Patent documents generally have a fairly uniform structure that facilitates the extracting of information: the claims give the essence of what is new; the description gives the background to the invention (what was known before the invention, i.e., the “prior art”), and defines the difference between the pre-existent technology and what the invention contributes, as a new matter, as a step forward, to technology development; often patent documents contain also drawings, that illustrate the invention that is claimed.

44. Technological information is disclosed by describing the inventions in accordance with the requirements of the applicable patent law and by indicating the claimed novelty and inventiveness by reference to the existing state-of-the-art. Certain patent documents are published together with a search report showing a series of references found at the occasion of a documentary search made to establish, in a first instance, the level of novelty of the claimed invention.

Abstracts

45. Many patent documents contain an abstract. Abstracts allow a general idea to be formed of the contents of the document within a few minutes, and in any case a much shorter time than would be required to read the full text of the patent document.

Classification

46. Patent documents bear “classification symbols” which facilitate very much finding and extracting relevant information from them. For the purposes of maintaining search files and performing searches for the state-of-the-art, patent offices classify patent documents according to the field or fields of technology to which their contents relate. Although several classification systems exist, over the last 10 - 15 years the International Patent Classification (IPC), which was established by an intergovernmental agreement, is now most widely applied by at least 50 industrial property offices.

47. The main part of the high cost of processing and classifying patent documents for building up search files, and of keeping the classification system up to date, is borne directly by the patent offices which publish large numbers of patent documents; users other than the Patent Office itself thus have access to patent documentation without incurring, in addition to their costs as users, the cost of maintaining, developing and classifying their own patent documentation collections.

48. Patent documents belonging to a given classification subdivision contain a highly concentrated supply of usually technically advanced information on a given technological field.

Date

49. Patent documents bear several dates (date of application, priority date, date of grant) from which conclusions can be drawn as to the age of an invention and to the question of whether the inventions they describe are still under legal protection. If they are no longer legally protected, they can be used without the consent of the patentee.

Inventor, Applicant, Owner

50. Most patent documents indicate the name of the inventor, applicant, the patentee (the owner), or at least one or two of those persons. The information contains also the legal address of at least the owner and/or the applicant. These indications allow any potential licensee to contact the persons concerned in order to find out under what conditions the technology may be transferred.

INSUFFICIENT USE OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN PATENT DOCUMENTS

51. Irrespective of the advantages and possibilities of patent documents as a source of technological information, its use is unexpectedly low. A 1985 survey dealing with the problem of technology and innovation in Austria found that only 4% of the enterprises used patent literature as an innovative instrument. It is interesting to note that the influence and use of patent information increases in relation to the size of the research and development institution or the enterprise; 18.5% of companies with more than 100 staff reported to actively use patent literature. Only 2-3% of enterprises with less than 100 staff use patent literature in the first stage of a R&D project. This result correlates with a much more intensive patent activity in larger enterprises. Only 5% of the enterprises of this study had 500 and more employees but 55% of the patent applications originated from this group.

52. The low utilization of patent information is regrettable, because it is a fact that in the EC countries billions per year—the UK Patent Office spoke of about 20 billion Pounds—are wasted to develop things that are already developed and documented in the description of patent specifications. Another study confirmed that a large amount of redundant research takes place, since it was found that 30% of all R&D in Europe duplicates work already done.

53. Many users of patent information are not informed about patent literature. It is a general misunderstanding that only basic inventions are protected. This is also one of the reasons why some people believe they have no chance of receiving a patent for their new development.

54. People are not aware that also small improvements are disclosed in the patent documents. Even when people know patents as industrial property rights, there seems to be no logical connection between the function of protection and information.

55. Without information about the state-of-the-art the risk is extremely high that the same product is developed a second time. It is a special task of the national industrial property offices to assist small and medium size enterprises and to guide them to more intensive use of patent documentation for information purposes. The question therefore arises what kind of services should be offered by industrial property offices.

56. Industrial property offices offering information services have to actively publicize their existing services and to introduce new ones, based on the latest achievements of information technology. They should also actively promote knowledge about the usefulness of technical information and about the importance of information concerning trademarks, designs and patents on the market. There is no use in having an excellent service nobody knows about and which therefore nobody can demand.

VARIOUS TYPES OF SEARCHES USING PATENT DOCUMENTATION

57. In practice, there are various reasons for performing searches in collections of patent documents, each of them requiring a slightly different approach in the search method used. Some of the search types are basically concerned with technological information as such, while others are directed towards the processing of patent applications, or relevant to the legal state of a new technology. In the following subparagraphs the individual types of searches are listed separately, whereas it is a well-known fact that many items of bibliographic information may be combined in searching.

58. In general, searches performed by inventors are usually not as exhaustive as the searches done by professionals at patent offices. However, insights into patent documents are often very useful for the inventor to determine whether someone has already patented a similar invention, or to obtain relevant information about other patents in the same category as his invention.

(i) Pre-Application Searches (PAS)

59. At first, an invention is just an idea. Many details are not even known or recognized as relevant parts. A novelty search based on a vague idea can only result in a vague picture of the prior art.

60. The patent application process is difficult, time consuming and expensive; therefore, the inventor should conduct a “Pre-Application Search” (PAS) before filling a patent application. In this search, the inventor should look for any printed publications, public knowledge, or patents already issued in his country or a foreign country that may relate to the particular invention.

(ii) State-of-the-Art Searches

61. This kind of search, also referred to as “Informative Search,” is made to determine the general state-of-the-art for the solution of a given technical problem as background information for R & D activities and in order to know what patent publications already exist in the field of the technology or research. Further reasons for undertaking this kind of search could be the wish to identify alternative technologies which may replace known technology or to evaluate a specific technology which is being offered for licensing or which is being considered for acquisition.

62. State-of-the-art searches are especially useful for technology development or technology transfer purposes.

(ii) Novelty Searches

63. The objective of a “Novelty Search” is to determine the novelty or lack of novelty of the invention claimed in a patent application or a patent already granted, or of an invention for which no application has yet been filed. The aim of the search is to discover relevant prior art.

64. An early novelty patent search is usually discouraging. Normally, the basic inventive ideas are formulated in such an unspecified way that many publications will be relevant to this broad description.

65. Dependent on the outcome of the novelty search, the next decision will be whether to stop or to go ahead in developing the invention. If nothing of relevance was found, clearly one should go ahead. The decision becomes more difficult when one or several pertinent documents have been found.

66. It is most important to restrict the search to the appropriate area. If an invention can be used in a different field, the patent office will classify it in various classes. It is, however, more important to study the patents classified in the most relevant area.

(iii) Patentability or Validity Searches

67. A "Patentability or Validity Search" is made to locate documents relevant to the determination not only of novelty but also of other criteria of patentability, for example, the presence or absence of an inventive step (i.e., the alleged invention is or is not obvious) or the achievement of useful results or technical progress. This type of search should cover all the technical fields which may contain material pertinent to the invention.

68. Novelty and patentability searches are mainly being carried out by industrial property offices in the course of the examination of patent applications.

(iv) Name Searches

69. These are searches for locating information about published patent documents involving specific companies or individuals, as applicants, assignees, patentees or inventors.

(v) Technological Activity Searches

70. They are to be understood as searches for identifying companies and/or inventors who are active in a specific field of technology. These searches are also suitable for identifying countries in which a certain technology is being patented, so as to know where to turn to for obtaining particular information in a given field of technology. The technological activity searches are carried out by company (or with respect to a specific territory).

(vi) Infringement Searches

71. The objective of an "Infringement Search" is to locate patents and published patent applications which might be infringed by a given industrial activity. In this type of search the aim is to determine whether an existing patent gives exclusive rights covering that industrial activity or any part of it.

(vii) Patent Family Searches

72. This kind of search is carried out to identify a member of a “patent family.” Patent family searches are used in order to:

- find the countries in which a given patent application has been filed (if published);
- find a “patent family member” that is written in a desired language;
- obtain a list of prior art documents or “References Cited”;
- estimate the importance of the invention (by number of patent documents relating to the same invention and being published in different countries or by industrial property organizations).

(viii) Legal Status Searches

73. A search for this type of investigation is made to obtain information on the validity (status) of a patent or a published patent application, on a given date, under the applicable patent legislation in one or more countries. Such information can assist in making decisions on, for example, exporting, or in the negotiation of license agreements. It can also give guidance on the value attached to a particular patent by the patentee.

WIPO PATENT INFORMATION SERVICES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (WPIS)

74. One of the principal functions of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is to offer technical assistance to developing countries. This also includes the access to and use of technological information contained in patent documents in order to accelerate their economic, social and cultural development. The following paragraphs give a brief presentation of the WIPO Patent Information Services for Developing Countries (WPIS).

75. Since 1975, WIPO has been operating a program for providing free of charge state-of-the-art searches to governmental institutions and individuals in developing countries.

76. The WPIS are offered free of charge on the basis of contributions made by some 15 industrial property offices in industrialized countries, as well the European Patent Office and the International Bureau of WIPO itself, and include the provision of:

- reports on searches and investigations carried out in patent document collections and on-line databases to establish the state-of-the-art in a specific technology;
- information on equivalent patent documents and patent literature cited in earlier examination procedures or identified in documentary searches carried out by other patent offices;
- information on the legal status of published patent applications and granted patents;
- search and examination reports of applications for patents of the African Regional Industrial Property Organization (ARIPO) under the Harare Protocol;

- search and examination reports of applications for patents under the International Cooperation in Search and Examination of Inventions (ICSEI);
- copies of individual patent documents.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED FOR SUBMITTING A REQUEST UNDER THE WPIS

77. All requests should be submitted to the International Bureau of WIPO in Geneva and should comply with a certain number of requirements which are to be found in the WIPO Information Brochure “WIPO Patent Information Services for Developing Countries WPIS.”

78. In order to facilitate compliance with the said requirements, a printed form is to be used as the first page of the request. Search requests can be submitted in English, French, German, Russian or Spanish.

79. It must be borne in mind that to a large extent the quality and clarity of the description, the summary, the drawings (if applicable), as well as the correct spelling of names and the completeness of bibliographical data, determine whether a search can be carried out and whether satisfactory results can be expected within a reasonable period of time or only after time-consuming investigations.

80. The search is carried out by a competent technical expert, mostly a patent examiner in one of the contributing patent offices. As a rule, this examiner uses the search files of his special field and other documentation available at the patent office library. The search is normally carried out without undue delay. Copies of relevant documents found in the course of the search are annexed to the search report. Samples search requests, and the corresponding search reports, are given in the WIPO Information Brochure “WPIS,” which contains further guidelines on the formulation of search requests, sample requests which have been properly formulated as well as the forms to be used when submitting requests to the International Bureau of WIPO.

THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY INFORMATION SERVICES

81. The Twenty-First Session of the WIPO General Assembly requested the Director General to prepare a proposal addressing the requirements for the implementation of a WIPO global information network and effective use of information technology in WIPO activities.

82. In his first speech, following his election, the Director General emphasized the importance of intellectual property to public policy, coupled with the new demands being placed on WIPO by the rapid speed of technological change. In particular, he viewed it as indispensable that WIPO keep pace with the developments in, and potential of, information technology, both in its internal operations and in the delivery of the intellectual property services that it renders. He stressed that WIPO’s information technology initiatives should enhance the capabilities of all member States.

83. WIPO is preparing a proposal concerning its global information network, which should

- ◆ provide fast and cost effective communications for the intellectual property community worldwide, and taking advantage of available public networks,
- ◆ promote the use of intellectual property information by the intellectual property community and the public at large,
- ◆ facilitate access to intellectual property information by developing countries, thereby providing a tool for technology transfer and economic development to the benefit of these countries and their inventors, industry, universities, research and development institutions.

84. The WIPO global information network will be based on the existing public Internet, which provides at least basic levels of connectivity to most countries.

85. The information to be made available on the WIPO global information network will be developed from collections of intellectual property information to be created by joint efforts of intellectual property offices in member States and the International Bureau of WIPO. The collections will be published through Internet (defined as the WIPO Intellectual Property Digital Library (WIPO IPDL) or other Digital Libraries run by national and regional intellectual property offices. For example, in view of the growing importance of PCT data, WIPO will make available the PCT Gazette data.

86. The development of the WIPO global information network will enable WIPO to enhance technical cooperation through the modernization of intellectual property offices in many countries. The provision of organized, maintained network connectivity presents a valuable tool for human resources development in all Offices.

87. The exchange of intellectual property information in a networked environment will save duplicative investment and provide member states with powerful information search and publication tools suitable for many purposes.

88. Access to intellectual property information represents an effective means of technology transfer between countries, within the framework of intellectual property rights protection. There is a growing need to provide a form of public access to published intellectual property data. The WIPO global information network and the WIPO IPDL can become a vehicle for the improved dissemination of intellectual property information to previously unserved communities, such as universities, research and development institutions, and copyright users.

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