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IPOFFICE AUTOMATIONACTIVITIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Information technology plays a critical role in the development of skills and competence to manage the generation, valuation, protection, dissemination and exploitation of intellectual property. To harness the use of this technology, the World Intellectual Property Organization provides automation assistance to Member States and relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

2. Automation assistance has been handled in WIPO across several main Programs, in particular, the Cooperation for Development Sector and the Division for Cooperation with certain Countries in Europe and Asia.

3. In the past, automation assistance in most regions had been mainly in the form of,

(a) Provision of equipment, software, and technical training to the Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs);

(b) Technical assistance to societies for collective management of copyright and related rights (Societies).

4. The nature and complexity of IPO automation activities have evolved and grown with the rapid and wide-ranging developments in information and communication technologies. Requests for assistance from Member States now go beyond the simple provision of stand-alone workstation to the need for broader automation solutions for their core business processes, that are in line with related international developments.

5. With the deployment of WIPO's own major IT initiatives like the WIPO NET, IMPACT, PCT-SAFE (E-Filing), Intellectual Property Digital Libraries (IPDL) and Distance Learning, there is a growing need to closely coordinate and align IPO automation activities with these developments to enable Member States to benefit from common strategies, standards and interfaces.

6. In recognition of this, the IPO Office Automation Division was established to strengthen and further improve the automation assistance that WIPO provides to Member States.

7. This document presents an overview of the automation assistance provided by WIPO since the establishment of this new Division by the nature of its activity.

II. IPO OFFICE AUTOMATION DIVISION OVERVIEW

8. The role of the IPO Office Automation Division is to provide a policy framework, coordination and guidance to the automation activities and execute the mandate of the newly created Sub-Program 12.4 of the Program and Budget 2002-2003. Its activities include:

- (a) Development of a policy framework for automation assistance;
- (b) Coordination and harmonization of automation activities across all regions;
- (c) Assessment, planning, deployment and follow-up of automation activities;

- (d) Provision of training and technical support structures for sustainability;
- (e) Automation advice and guidance;
- (f) Coordination and alignment of automation activities with WIPO's IT projects;
- (g) Development of an automation database and website.

III. IPO OFFICE AUTOMATION ACTIVITIES

A. Policy Framework Development

9. Working jointly with the Cooperation for Development Sector, an initial policy framework for carrying out automation activities has been developed and implemented. This framework builds upon WIPO's collective experience in delivering automation assistance to the countries, drawing on the successes and the lessons learned and takes into consideration the existing situation, the challenges faced and the increasing demand for more comprehensive automation solutions.

B. Coordination and Harmonization

10. Mechanisms have been established within the International Bureau to facilitate coordination of automation related activities for IPOs. This has helped in getting a global perspective of WIPO's efforts in this area and in taking a holistic organization-wide approach for IPO automation solutions.

11. WIPO automation activities for IPOs are carried out with the help of local technical consultants based in the regions. Currently, consultants are based in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Arab Countries. These consultants are coordinated by the IPO Office Automation Division. This has facilitated the sharing of experiences and skills in developing better automation solutions for IPOs.

12. Information on best practices, relating to IPO business processes or to automation deployment, are being coordinated and shared for the benefit of the IPOs.

13. Proven automation systems developed by WIPO in one region are being tested for deployment in other regions in terms of functionality, adaptability and language support. This would potentially lead to significant savings in costs and deployment time as well as to ensure the expected benefits that come from a tried-and-tested automation solution. Such options will be further explored in the future.

14. Initiatives have been taken on possible use of the WIPO NET Kit computers for IPO Office automation projects and use of the WIPO NET Data Center for providing automation related services to IPO Offices including distribution of software upgrades, online technical support and access to IPO Office Automation database and website. In some IPO Offices visited by the IPO Automation Division, where the deployment of WIPO NET Kit had taken place, steps were taken to relocate the Kit to make them more accessible to staff.

15. Discussions are in progress with the PCT -SAFE (E -Filing) project to study the interfacing of the IPO automation systems with the PCT -SAFE software being developed.

C. Automation Activities

16. Successful deployment of automation projects has a significant impact on the modernization of intellectual property offices, many of which are paper based and do not have adequate technical tools and infrastructure. However, there are certain constraints and limitations faced in deploying these projects. Though these vary from region to region and from country to country, efforts are being made to ensure that these considerations are addressed adequately to realize the full potential of such assistance.

17. In the Arab Countries region, automation projects are being implemented in several IPOs. The automation solution is based on a standard software model, developed in the region, that can be easily customized to meet specific requirements of individual IPOs. To strengthen these ongoing automation projects, a decision was taken to employ one of the developers of the standard software being used, as a full -time technical consultant to be based in the region. This has significantly helped in speeding up the automation deployment at the IPOs and in providing the training and subsequent technical support to them. Four IPOs in the region (Algeria, Egypt, Oman and Syrian Arab Republic) have acknowledged completion of the automation projects and a few more are expected to be completed in the near future.

18. In the Africa region, automation projects have been launched in IPO Offices of six pilot countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe). Most of these Offices are for Patents, Trademarks and Industrial Designs and their sizes vary from about 20 to 100 staff. Preparatory planning missions were undertaken between April and May 2002 to these Offices. Deployment of automation projects for these IPO Offices will follow the general strategy and will be based on appropriate technologies and a basic software model that can be customized for each IPO to incorporate its legislation, rules and procedures, workflow, official documents and publication requirements. The software functionality will initially include processing of Trademarks, which constitute the main workload in small to medium sized IPO Offices. Automation of processing the Patents and Industrial Designs will be included in the next phase. Besides the software component, the projects will cover the IT infrastructure requirements, the data capture of active archival records, training and technical support. The projects are currently in early planning stages.

19. In the Latin American Countries, the main cooperation activities on IPO Office automation included, *inter alia*, assessing the needs and preparing proposals for the development and the upgrading of automated systems, in particular, the storage, retrieval and search of graphic information; advising on the upgrading of current computer networks; drafting technical specifications; supporting the interested IPO Offices on the elaboration and production of IP information products; formulating recommendations on the elaboration of home sites and web pages in Internet, and on the use of Internet and/or private virtual networks, for the exchange of information among such Offices and for on -line access to information contained in their databases; advising on the preparation and standardization of IP data collections and on -line information services to be made accessible through WIPO NET. As a result, seven missions on automation were organized in this period to the following countries: Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Paraguay.

20. Following the Ministerial Resolution adopted by the Ministers responsible for Intellectual Property at the Ministerial -Level Meeting on Intellectual Property for Caribbean countries, held in Saint Lucia, from October 12 to 13, 2000, WIPO continued the development and execution of the WIPO Regional Information System Development Project for Caribbean countries. As a result, in December 2001 and March 2002, the first version of the Trademarks System developed by a WIPO consultant was installed and configured according to the needs of the IPO offices of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively. In addition, a CD-ROM demo version of the Trademark System, together with a sample database and extensive help, was made available to the Caribbean IPO offices to allow their staff to perform all main data entry and search functions. The installation of the System in other Caribbean countries will continue during the second half of 2002 (IPO Office of Jamaica in August), as soon as the conditions for its installation and testing are met by the concerned Offices with the assistance of the International Bureau. Finally, it is expected that in the fourth quarter of 2002, the design and development of components of an automation system for patents and the development of tools allowing to perform searches on the trademarks and patents databases via the Internet will start.

21. In the Asia and the Pacific region industrial property automation projects involving integrated solutions are being implemented in order to enhance efficiency of internal operations as well as facilitate and promote use of the industrial property system by the user community. These projects which are under implementation have been recently completed in Bangladesh, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In addition, Nationally Focused Action Plans (NFAPs) with a broader objective of strengthening and modernizing intellectual property systems and enhancing public outreach invariably include automation components as an essential component of the project. Such is the case in the NFAPs of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore and the Regionally Focused Action Plan (RFAP) of the South Pacific Forum countries.

22. An assessment and deployment planning of the automation system for collective management of copyright and related rights is in progress, in particular the one used in the African region, known as AFRICOS. It is currently deployed in a few collective management societies in Africa and several more in the region have requested it. The Russian Authors Society has also requested it for possible use by its neighboring countries and other regions have also expressed interest. The system is currently being assessed for stability, scalability, language adaptability, compatibility with international systems, training, support and resource requirements to sustain further deployments.

23. A review of existing automation activities was done and initiatives were taken in several countries across the region to coordinate, consolidate and improve them. The nature of these initiatives included deployment of automation projects, evaluation of proposals, technical advice and oversight, assessment and analysis of IPO office needs, incorporation of proven systems and best practices and addressing of sustainability issues.

D. IPO Office Automation Database and Web Site

24. Work is in progress for the development of an IPO automation database and website that will serve as a repository for institutional experience and knowledge relating to automation activities and aid in their improved planning and execution. At this stage, some testing and data capture is in progress. One service for online updating of the Annual Technical Reports (ATRs) by IPO is completed and was demonstrated recently at the

Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) Seventh Plenary Session held on June 10 to 14, 2002. Some of the information contained in the database include:

- (a) Country profiles ;
- (b) Automation activity details;
- (c) Common processes and best practices across regions;
- (d) Standards system design specifications and functionality for IPO automation;
- (e) Reference material (WIPO standards, IP documentation, etc.).

E. Activities under the Framework Agreements with IPO Offices

25. Assistance was provided in the development of the Questionnaire on IP Administration by IP Australia for the Regionally Focused Action Plan (RFAP) for Pacific Forum Island Countries under the framework of WIPO - Australia Joint Statement on Cooperation for IP Technical Assistance in Asia and the Pacific region. Under the same framework, recommendations were proposed as a follow - up to the report of the IP Australia consultant used by WIPO for the modernization of the Indian Trademarks Registry.

26. Under the recent Framework Agreement of Cooperation between WIPO and the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) of the Government of the Republic of Korea, one of the priority areas of cooperation is to support activities to assist the automation of IPOs in developing countries. Discussions are in progress to explore possible joint activities in this area.

27. The Permanent Committee is invited to comment on, and note, the information contained in this document.

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