

PCT REFORM: SIXTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP

The sixth session of the Working Group on Reform of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), held in Geneva from May 3 to 7, agreed to propose amendments of the Regulations under the PCT to the PCT Assembly in September, which relate mainly to the simplification of the protest procedure and changes relating to the furnishing of sequence listings for the purposes of international search and examination. If adopted, it is likely that these amendments will enter into force on January 1, 2005.

The Working Group also considered a variety of ways in which the PCT system might be changed to provide a better service to applicants, national offices and third parties. These included changes which concern the restoration of the right of priority; the rectification of obvious mistakes; "missing part" provisions, which pertain to the introduction of parts of international applications which were omitted on filing; signature requirements; international publication in multiple languages; improving the quality of international searches; permitting a single, central, request for the recording of changes during the national phase; and declaration of the source of genetic resources and traditional knowledge in patent applications.

All of these issues are expected to be considered further at future sessions of the Working Group. For more information, see the documents that were prepared for discussion at the meeting, as well as the session's Summary by the Chair at www.wipo.int/pct/en/meetings.

Retirement of a Founding Father of the PCT

The sixth session of the Working Group on Reform of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) marked the last WIPO meeting for Mr. Siep de Vries, Head, Chemical Division, Netherlands Industrial Property Office.

Mr. De Vries is one of the founding fathers of the PCT system, having worked extensively to make it into what it is today. The first PCT meeting he attended was the PCT Working Group on Guidelines for International Search and for International Preliminary Examination, held in Geneva in February, 1977 – over 27 years ago, before the system came into operation. In the years since then, the Organization has benefited enormously from his comprehensive knowledge of the PCT and from his ability to find creative solutions to complex matters. It is therefore fitting that in his final meeting he acted as Chair of the Working Group, presiding over a session which considered a variety of ways in which the system might be changed to provide a better service to applicants, national offices and third parties. In this role he provided valuable guidance in the continuation of the work to which he has devoted so much effort in his usual role as the delegate of the Netherlands.

Mr. De Vries plans to retire on September 1 this year. He will be missed by the International Bureau and the PCT community as a whole, both personally as well as for his immense contribution to the functioning and improvement of the system.



Photo: Mercedes Martinez Dozal

Mr. François Curchod, Mr. Siep de Vries, Mr. Heinz Bardehle, Mr. Busso Bartels at the 2003 Working Group meeting. All four were instrumental in shaping the PCT system.

The seventh session of the Working Group is tentatively scheduled for either the week of November 22 to 26, 2004, or that of November 29 to December 3, 2004.

