

## **Special Union for the International Patent Classification (IPC Union) Committee of Experts**

**Forty-Ninth Session  
Geneva, February 22 and 23, 2017**

### REPORT

*adopted by the Committee of Experts*

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) held its forty-ninth session in Geneva on February 22 and 23, 2017. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America (28). The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) were also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. Y. Takagi, Assistant Director General, who welcomed the participants. Mr. Takagi stressed the importance of the IPC as a language-independent and worldwide-used search tool for patent information, and in particular in the coming era when the number of patent applications would increase rapidly. He further emphasized the work of the Committee for the revision of the IPC in the framework of the IPC Revision Roadmap, as well as the importance of the development of IPC-related IT systems.

## OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mr. Anders Bruun (Sweden) as Chair and Ms. Natalie Schlaf (Norway) and Mr. Pablo Zenteno Márquez (Mexico) as Vice-Chairs.
4. Ms. XU Ning (Mrs.) (WIPO) acted as Secretary of the session.

## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Committee unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.
6. As decided by the Governing Bodies of WIPO at their tenth series of meetings held from September 24 to October 2, 1979 (see document AB/X/32, paragraphs 51 and 52), the report of this session reflects only the conclusions of the Committee (decisions, recommendations, opinions, etc.) and does not, in particular, reflect the statements made by any participant, except where a reservation in relation to any specific conclusion of the Committee was expressed or repeated after the conclusion was reached.

## REPORT ON THE PROGRESS ON THE IPC REVISION PROGRAM

7. Discussions were based on Annex 8 to project file [CE 462](#) prepared by the International Bureau, containing a status report on the activities of the IPC Revision Working Group (hereinafter referred to as the “Working Group”), in particular on the IPC Revision Program.
8. The Committee noted an increase in the number of revision projects in the chemical field in IPC-2016.01 and 2017.01. The total number of revision projects decreased since IPC-2016.01, particularly in the electrical field.
9. The Committee also noted that the number of C projects increased, while the number of F projects decreased since IPC-2016.01; however, a high number of new F projects would be expected in the future. The number of new entries which entered into force in IPC-2017.01 was lower than that in IPC-2016.01, but higher than in versions IPC-2013.01 to IPC-2015.01. The Committee further noted a decrease of the duration of the IPC-phase period since IPC-2016.01.
10. The International Bureau was invited to prepare a more detailed overview of maintenance projects in the status report to the Committee at its next session, to make a distinction between *ad hoc* and systematic maintenance projects.
11. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the work done by the Working Group and wished the Working Group to continue its work in this momentum. The Committee also agreed on the need to consider future working forms of the Working Group regarding the increased number of projects (see Annex III to this report).
12. The Committee also encouraged all offices to actively participate in the development of the IPC Revision Program, in particular, by submitting revision requests under the framework of the renewed IPC Revision Roadmap adopted by the Committee (see paragraphs 16 and 17, below).

## **REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CPC AND FI REVISION PROGRAMS**

13. The United States of America and the EPO gave a joint oral presentation on the recent developments concerning the CPC. Japan presented a brief oral report on the progress of FI/F-Term.

14. The Committee was informed that the frequency of CPC releases was four to five times per year, and that there would be four releases for 2017, namely January, February, May and August 2017. The Committee also noted a scenario by end of 2018, when the CPC symbols provided by offices using the CPC would be kept at family level, instead of at document level as in the current practice.

15. The Committee was informed about the availability of information in English on the JPO website on classification, in particular the Patent Map Guidance, the IPC-FI-CPC scheme parallel viewer and the FI/F-Term revision information. The Committee was also informed that the alignment of the FI with the latest version of the IPC had reached 98.5% in November 2016 and that complete alignment would be expected in 2018.

## **REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE IPC REVISION ROADMAP**

16. Discussions were based on project file [CE 493](#), in particular on Annex 1 to the project file prepared by the International Bureau containing the proposal of renewal of the IPC Revision Roadmap.

17. The Committee adopted the updated IPC Revision Roadmap by agreeing on the continuous application of the IPC Revision Roadmap with updates included in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Annex III to this report, and also agreed that this updated IPC Revision Roadmap would be effective until otherwise decided by the Committee.

18. With respect to the future working format of the Working Group (see paragraph 11, above), the Committee, in the updated IPC Revision Roadmap, authorized the Working Group to consider the creation of task forces/expert groups, e.g. for complex revision projects.

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDE TO THE IPC AND OTHER BASIC IPC DOCUMENTS**

19. Discussions were based on project file [CE 454](#), in particular on Annex 29 to the project file, prepared by the International Bureau, containing amendments to the *Guide to the IPC (Guide)*.

20. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the proposed amendments to paragraphs 15, 39, 47 and 95 which appear in Annex 32 to the project file. These amendments would be included in version 2017 of the *Guide*.

21. Discussions were also based on project file [CE 455](#), in particular on Annex 45 to the project file prepared by the International Bureau containing compiled amendments to the "Guidelines for Revision of the IPC", which integrated proposals and comments by offices.

22. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the amendments to paragraphs 17, 37 to 39, 41 and 122 of the Guidelines which appear in Annex 49 to the project file.

23. The International Bureau was invited to inform offices when the IPCRMS was ready to allow the use of the new indicators ("T" and "L") as adopted in paragraph 122 of the Guidelines.

24. With respect to the proposed amendments to paragraph 122 submitted by Japan in Annex 44 concerning the introduction of a new indicator "S" covering one hypothetical case as described in Annex 30 by the EPO, the Committee agreed that a new indicator should be created when all business cases were taken into account. In that respect, the Committee decided to establish a task force to review the current and future practice in the IPC revision process and to identify business cases, in which the following offices volunteered to participate: Brazil, Sweden, United

Kingdom, United States of America and the EPO. The Committee agreed that its other members could join the Task Force at any later stage. New project CE 492 was created to facilitate the discussion, with the International Bureau as Rapporteur.

25. The Committee noted a proposal submitted by the EPO in Annex 42 to project file [CE 455](#), proposing to amend the manner of displaying section “Synonyms and Keywords” in the Definition Template by using a tubular format. The Committee adopted the proposed amendments in the Definition Template and invited the International Bureau to further investigate the feasibility to implement the amended template in IPCRMS, its compatibility with IPC Definition Master Files, as well as its impact on IPCPUB and to integrate the adopted template into Appendix VI of the Guidelines for Revision of the IPC, where appropriate.

#### **RECLASSIFICATION STATUS REPORT AND TREATMENT OF NON-RECLASSIFIED PATENT DOCUMENTS IN THE MCD AND IPCRECLASS**

26. Discussions were based on Annex 26 to project file [CE 381](#), containing a proposal for “Treatment of Non-Reclassified Patent Documents in the MCD and IPCRECLASS” and a statistical report from IPCRECLASS prepared by the International Bureau.

27. The Committee noted that due to the fact that the synchronization between the MCD and IPCRECLASS was still ongoing, the reclassification status presented for IPC versions 2009.01, 2010.01 and 2011.01 remained almost unchanged since its last session. The Committee then repeated its invitation to the International Bureau to prepare an updated reclassification status report whenever the synchronization could be considered as completed, based on which the Committee would decide electronically whether the default transfers for versions 2009.01, 2010.01 and 2011.01 could be implemented even before its next session.

#### **HANDOVER OF THE WORKING LISTS MANAGEMENT FROM THE EPO TO WIPO**

28. The Secretariat, together with the EPO, delivered a presentation on the latest status of the handover of Working Lists management from the EPO to WIPO and associated IPC Working List Management (IPCWLM) project, in particular introduced the results of joined investigations conducted by EPO and WIPO on the backlog of reclassification and the plan that the first production of IPC reclassification Working Lists by WIPO was foreseen in 2018 for IPC–2019.01.

29. The Committee decided that no further default transfers based on IPC reclassification statistics in IPCRECLASS should be considered until the corresponding synchronization is deemed correct (see paragraph 27, above).

30. The Committee also decided to create a task force dedicated to specific aspects in relation to IPCWLMS business requirements. Where necessary, the task force would prepare a proposal to be submitted to the Committee for its electronic approval. The Committee further decided to integrate the task force described in paragraph 24, above, into this task force.

#### **REPORT ON IPC-RELATED IT SYSTEMS**

31. The Committee noted a presentation by the Secretariat on the status of IT-related developments in relation to IPC support, in particular (1) the completion of the migration to a new authentication method and WIPO Identity Management system (WIM) as completed, (2) the first outcome of preparatory work in order to resume research in the field of automatic text categorization in the IPC and its potential applications, (3) the status of the most recent developments in the IPCPUB 7 platform, including archive mode, (4) a list of suggestions for improvements by offices (see Annex 21 to project file [CE 447](#)), and (5) the foreseen availability of the corresponding IPCPUB software package for the publication of national translations of the IPC during the second quarter of 2016.

32. The Committee took note of the presentation and requested the International Bureau to expand the substantive scope of IPC warnings to non-limiting references, and to investigate the possibility of IT automation to assist their creation and publication.

### **IPC REVISION MANAGEMENT (IPCRM) PROJECT**

33. The Secretariat delivered a presentation on the latest improvements in the IPC Revision Management Solution (IPCRMS), in particular on the improved technical feasibility of creation and translation of new IPC entries by rapporteurs and translators of revision projects.

34. The International Bureau informed that tailored training sessions on the use of IPCRMS could be provided upon request.

35. In relation to the production of the validity file by IPCRMS, the International Bureau confirmed the continuation in producing the validity file in its current format, as agreed by the Committee at its forty-eighth session (see document IPC/CE/48/2, paragraph 49).

36. The Committee repeated its invitation to offices using the validity file to survey the status of its use in their IT systems and to report it to the Committee at its next session. Recognizing that offices need time to adapt their IT systems, the production of the validity file would continue without correction of errors that could be possibly found in the historical part.

### **BRIEFING ON ONGOING DISCUSSIONS BY THE PCT WORKING GROUP ON THE USE OF NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION IN INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS**

37. The International Bureau made an oral presentation about the current situation of ongoing discussions on the use of national classification symbols in international applications, based on documents PCT/MIA/24/12 and PCT/MIA/24/15, and referred to the important aspects for such national classification such as, (1) coherence with the IPC, (2) wide use and (3) transparent governance.

38. The Committee took note of the issue and requested to be informed on its future progress.

*39. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee of Experts by electronic means on March 24, 2017.*

[Annexes follow]

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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Vice-présidents/  
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[L'annexe II suit/  
Annex II follows]

## AGENDA

1. Opening of the session
2. Election of a Chair and two Vice-Chairs
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Report on the progress of the IPC revision program  
See project [CE 462](#).
5. Report on the progress of the CPC and FI revision programs  
Reports by the EPO and the USPTO on the CPC and by the JPO on the FI.
6. Review and update of the IPC Revision Roadmap  
See project [CE 493](#).
7. Amendments to the *Guide to the IPC* and other basic IPC documents  
See projects [CE 454](#) and [CE 455](#).
8. Reclassification status report and treatment of non-reclassified patent documents in the MCD and IPCRECLASS  
See project [CE 381](#).
9. Handover of the Working Lists management from the EPO to WIPO  
See project [CE 472](#).
10. Report on IPC-related IT systems  
Presentation by the International Bureau. See projects [CE 446](#) and [CE 447](#).
11. IPC Revision Management (IPCRM) Project  
Presentation by the International Bureau. See project [CE 457](#).
12. Briefing on ongoing discussions by the PCT Working Group on the use of national classification information in international applications  
Presentation by the International Bureau
13. Closing of the Session

[Annex II follows]

## RENEWAL OF THE IPC REVISION ROADMAP

1. The IPC Committee of Experts (Committee) decided to take a proactive approach in identifying the areas where the IPC should be revised in the coming years and the IPC Community has worked in line with the IPC Revision Roadmap agreed on in 2013. Since then, a good pace of revision has been observed up to now as was reported to the Committee at each session. Taking into account the fact that the IPC Revision Roadmap has contributed to such achievement, the direction and elements introduced by the IPC Revision Roadmap should continue to be implemented and applied to the IPC revision work going beyond 2017.
2. The “MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO) FOR 2016-2021” taken note by Member States at the WIPO General Assembly in 2016 talks about the strategy on IPC, with reference to the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) as follows:
3. “The International Patent Classification (IPC) remains the unifying system of patent classification worldwide. The common classification system adopted by certain members of the IP5 provides a more granular and advanced classification system that builds upon the IPC. The objective will be to ensure that the linkage between the two systems continues to be maintained in order to ensure the maximum coherence internationally for patent classification.”
4. One factor that might affect the IPC Revision Roadmap is the significant expansion of the regional coverage of the CPC. Under such circumstances, those areas where there is a large amount of patent applications from emerging countries with significant growth rate and where the number of subgroups in the IPC is not sufficient for effective search continue to be important as candidate areas for revision because 1) revision work in those areas in a cooperative manner between two systems contributes to the maintenance of coherence between those systems, and 2) those technical areas would also be important as possible emerging technical areas for other countries and should be reflected in the unifying system of patent classification worldwide, i.e. the IPC. From those perspectives, the list of candidate areas as annexed to the IPC Revision Roadmap should be continuously updated by the International Bureau and be considered by the Committee in the context of IPC revision. Other factors may also have an effect on the IPC Revision Roadmap.
5. As well as areas where there is a large amount of patent applications from emerging countries, New Emerging Technologies (NET), such as Internet of Things (IoT), are also important as candidate areas for revision. Revision in those areas has to be done in a quick and timely manner in order to maximize the function of the IPC as an efficient search tool for new technologies. Especially in this context, NET-related revision requests might also be submitted by the EPO/The United States of America or JapRan in case that introducing NET-related new areas would be planned for the CPC or FI, in order to maximize the benefit by the IPC, as well as by the CPC or FI. In case where the discussion goes through the IP5 phase, both the IP5 phase and the IPC phase should coordinate well and have smooth transition of both phases through striking the balance between speed and detailed aspects. Concerning the identification of NET, it would also be important to reflect the opinion of the industry and the Committee should consider how it could be done in an effective manner.
6. The areas where IPC revision and related work are conducted should also be identified, duly taking account of the following aspects:
  - a) overly complex structures. Such structures could be obstacles to precise classification, even for examiners; and
  - b) divergence in classification practice in an area to be revised.

7. Those two aspects might also impact the possible use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and text categorization, for classification purposes.

8. As revision work becomes more complex and more efficiency is required for revision work by the IPC Community, the effective use of more flexible and efficient format for the work such as task forces/expert groups should be considered in addition to the elements introduced by the current IPC Revision Roadmap. The IPC Revision Working Group is authorized to adopt such format when the complexity of a revision project and/or the duration of revision projects necessitates.

[End of Annex III and of document]