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

Fifty-Seventh Session
Geneva, February 24 to 26, 2026

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 fifty-seventh session in Geneva in hybrid format from February 24 to 26, 2026. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay (38). El Salvador, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Eurasian Patent Organization (EAPO) 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. Ken-Ichiro Natsume, Assistant Director General, who welcomed the participants.

OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mr. Roberto Iasevoli (European Patent Office) as Chair and Mr. Oliver Steinkellner (Germany) and Mr. Masato Miyachi (Japan) as Vice-Chairs.

4. Ms. Xu Ning (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 OF THE IPC REVISION PROGRAM

7. The Committee considered a report presented by the International Bureau on the progress of the IPC revision program (see Annex 27 to project CE 462). The report provided an update on the activities of the IPC Revision Working Group (hereinafter referred to as “the Working Group”) up to early 2026.

8. The Committee noted that the overall level of revision activity remained high, reflecting both the continuous evolution of technology and the ongoing maintenance requirements of the IPC. The electrical field continued to account for a significant share of revision work, while the mechanical and the chemical fields also accounted for a substantial number of projects. The Committee further noted that, in the last revision cycle, a significant increase was observed in the number of revision projects under the framework of the IPC Revision Roadmap. In this context, the number of C-projects increased considerably, whereas the number of F-projects remained relatively stable.

9. The Committee took note that the average duration of completing IPC revision projects remained relatively stable, while certain projects, in particular large or structurally complex ones, continued to span multiple years.

10. In this context, the Committee exchanged views on possible approaches to improving project efficiency, including clearer definition of project scope at the outset, more focused mandates, and improved planning of revision timelines. Recognizing the importance of maintaining high quality alongside quantity, the Committee invited the Working Group to reflect both aspects in future revision work, including through enhanced use of the IPC E-Forum and strengthening the responsibilities of Rapporteurs. The Committee emphasized that any measure aimed at accelerating revision work should remain compatible with existing working methods of the Working Group.

11. The Committee noted an increasing workload associated with definitions and maintenance-related activities and acknowledged their growing importance for ensuring consistent interpretation and application of the IPC. It was recognized that work on definitions often requires sustained effort beyond the formal completion of revision projects. The Committee, therefore, discussed the need to manage such activities efficiently within existing resources and instructed the Working Group to strictly apply the general strategy for generating IPC definitions.

12. The Committee further noted the role of new emerging technologies (NETs) in shaping revision priorities and acknowledged that the IPC revision program must remain sufficiently responsive to technological developments while preserving stability and predictability for users. In this regard, the Committee encouraged offices to enhance their participation in the IPC revision process, including through the submission of revision requests based on the IPC Revision Roadmap candidates and the NETs.

13. The Committee expressed its great satisfaction and appreciation for the efficient work carried out by the Working Group and for the enhanced structure and transparency of the report prepared by the International Bureau, in particular the presentation of both newly introduced and deleted IPC entries. The Committee took note of the information provided and reaffirmed the continued importance of the IPC revision program as the core mechanism for maintaining the relevance and usefulness of the IPC.

REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON SEMICONDUCTOR TECHNOLOGY (EGST)

14. The Committee considered an oral report of the EGST presented by the EPO, the leading Office of the EGST.

15. The Committee recalled that the EGST had been established to address major and rapidly evolving developments in semiconductor technology that could no longer be adequately accommodated within the existing IPC structure.

16. The Committee noted that the work of the EGST had resulted in significant structural changes to the IPC, most notably the creation of the new IPC class H10 and its associated subclasses. These changes were intended to provide a more coherent, future-oriented and scalable classification framework for semiconductor technologies, considering both current developments and anticipated technological evolution.

17. The Committee acknowledged the extensive scope and complexity of the work undertaken by the EGST. In this context, the Committee noted that, while the length of the project was exceptional, it was largely attributable to the scale of the restructuring required and the strategic importance of semiconductors. The Committee emphasized that the experience gained through the EGST provided valuable insights into the planning and management of future large-scale IPC revision projects.

18. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the members of the EGST, to the EPO, the leading Office of the EGST, and to the International Bureau for their commitment and contributions over the course of project CE 481. The Committee considered that the remarkable outcomes achieved justified the effort invested and constituted a significant milestone in the evolution of the IPC.

19. The Committee agreed to formally close project CE 481 and noted that certain residual activities, in particular related to definitions and maintenance matters, would continue to be addressed under existing IPC procedures, without reopening the EGST project or extending its mandate.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CPC AND FI REVISION PROGRAMS

20. The Committee noted presentations by the European Patent Office (EPO) and the United States of America on the progress of the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) revision program, as well as a presentation by Japan on developments related to the FI and F-term classification systems.

21. Regarding the CPC, the Committee noted that revision activities continued at a high level and that efforts were made to maintain its alignment with the IPC 2026.01 in the CPC January 1, 2026-release. The presentations highlighted the operational aspects of CPC releases, including the regular update cycles and the management of reclassification tasks following structural changes.

22. The Committee noted that the CPC revisions are typically driven by examiner needs and technological developments, supported by defined business justifications. It was underlined that, where appropriate, substantial CPC changes may lead to proposals for corresponding IPC revisions, thereby contributing to the coherence between the two classification systems.

23. The Committee further noted the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools within CPC workflows, including for classification support, monitoring and quality assurance. While recognizing the operational autonomy of the CPC, the Committee welcomed the continued coordination between the CPC and IPC processes.

24. Regarding the FI and F-term systems, the Committee noted the information provided by Japan on revision activities, maintenance and the relationship between FI/F-term and the IPC. The presentation illustrated the scale and frequency of annual FI/F-term revision activities and their synchronization with IPC updates.

25. The Committee noted the strategic role of FI and F-term classifications in supporting detailed search and analysis, as well as the efforts undertaken by Japan to ensure consistency and interoperability with the IPC and the CPC, including through IPC-FI-CPC scheme parallel viewer.

26. The Committee welcomed and appreciated the continued efforts by the EPO, the United States of America and Japan to ensure consistency and coherence between the IPC and IPC-based classification schemes and invited continued efforts to enhance and maintain such coherence.

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

27. The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Guide to the IPC (hereinafter referred to as the “Guide”) and to the Guidelines for Revision of the IPC (hereinafter referred to as the “Guidelines”) (see projects CE 454 and CE 455, respectively).

28. The Committee discussed specific amendments concerning the presentation of classification principles, the treatment of indexing schemes and the clarification of certain definition-related provisions.

29. Discussions were based on Annex 117 to project CE 454, containing a rapporteur report prepared by the International Bureau, which included a consolidated compilation of proposed amendments, with comments, to the Guide. The compilation reflected contributions submitted in Annexes 114 to 116 to the project file, originating from the EPO, the International Bureau and the Republic of Korea.

30. The Committee considered the proposed amendments aimed at clarifying and ensuring internal coherence of the Guide, alignment with established IPC revision practices and improved usability for both classification and search purposes.

31. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the amendments to the heading on the first page and to paragraphs 40, 58, 107*bis* and 111*bis* of the Guide, which appear in Annexes 118 and 119 to the project file. The adopted amendments will be incorporated into the 2026 version of the Guide to the IPC.

32. The Committee invited offices to further review paragraphs 81 and 183 of the Guide and to propose amendments to ensure the consistent use of terminology for categories of subject matter throughout the Guide, considering the discussions held during this session concerning the categories of “process” vs “method”.

33. Discussions were also based on Annex 123 to project CE 455, containing a rapporteur report prepared by the International Bureau, which provided a consolidated compilation of proposed amendments, with comments, to the Guidelines. The compilation was based on proposals and comments submitted in Annexes 112 to 122 to the project file by the EPO, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the International Bureau.

34. The Committee discussed intensively the proposed amendments concerning the revision strategies, scheme drafting practices, use of references and notes, guidance headings, indexing schemes and consistency with the principles set out in the Guide. The discussions improved a shared understanding among offices to ensure clarity, predictability and consistency of revision and classification practices.

35. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the proposed amendments to the heading on the first page and to paragraphs 30, 40 and 41 of the Guidelines as well as to paragraph 7 of Appendix II and pages 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Appendix VI to the Guidelines, which appear in Annexes 127 and 128 to the project file. The adopted amendments will be included in the 2026 version of the Guidelines for Revision of the IPC.

36. The Committee considered a proposal concerning the hyphenation of the expressions “first place” and “last place” in the standard wording of priority rules used in the Guide and Guidelines and decided to maintain the current form without hyphenation. The Committee also invited the International Bureau to compile a comprehensive list of places where the expressions of “first place priority rule” and “last place priority rule” appear incomplete or inconsistent in the scheme and definitions, for consideration by the Working Group.

37. In view of the approved hypothetical example of two informative references under subclass B60H in paragraph 40 of the Guidelines, the Committee noted that a proposal to incorporate these two references into the definition of subclass B60H would be submitted to the Working Group for its approval. Consequently, the term “hypothetical example” would be removed from the Guidelines.

INTEGRATION OF NEW EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES (NETs) INTO THE IPC REVISION ROADMAP

38. Discussions were based on Annex 7 to project CE 551, prepared by the International Bureau, containing a proposal on developing an IPC NET Catalogue and its possible integration into the IPC Revision Roadmap.

39. The Committee recalled its general agreement with the concept of an initial proposal by the International Bureau at its 55th session aimed at enhancing the transparency and visibility of the NETs in the context of the Revision Roadmap and, consequently, this approach would help visualize the revision activities by the Working Group in the NET-related areas. At the same time, the Committee noted certain concerns previously expressed regarding two divergent points of view: first, the possible mis-categorization of NETs in the absence of objective criteria for their identification; and, second, whether it would be worthwhile to invest significant effort in developing potential objective criteria for NET identification, given that such criteria would be indicative, rather than binding.

40. The Committee noted that the International Bureau, in its proposal presented in Annex 7, had put forward an IPC NET Catalogue comprising 11 top-level NET categories. These categories were based on the commonly agreed definition of NETs, their key defining features, such as novelty, rapid growth, characteristics and supporting evidence deriving from the

statistical analysis of the IPC Revision Roadmap Candidates data and, as well as, where appropriate, AI-based analytical approaches and technical experts' review at a later stage. The Committee further noted certain indicative and non-exhaustive sub-categories, associated with IPC places, were also proposed within each of the 11 top-level categories.

41. The Committee welcomed the proposal and expressed appreciation for the International Bureau's efforts and engaged in depth discussion on the IPC NET Catalogue, including its potential integration into the IPC Revision Roadmap.

42. The Committee approved the proposal of the IPC NET Catalogue comprising 11 top-level categories and invited further refinement of the sub-categories and their corresponding IPC places. In view of the rapid development of the NETs, the Committee agreed that the IPC NET Catalogue should be updated and communicated in a flexible manner, for example twice a year in alignment with updates to the IPC Revision Roadmap candidates, or more frequently where appropriate. This would also ensure that the IPC remains responsive to rapidly evolving technologies.

43. The Committee further decided to integrate the IPC NET Catalogue, including its sub-categories and corresponding IPC places, into the existing Excel file used for the IPC Revision Roadmap candidates under project CE 456. To that end, the Excel file will be expanded to include a separate tab dedicated to the IPC NET Catalogue. The Committee agreed that the IPC NET Catalogue would facilitate early tagging of NET-related subject matter, enhance the visibility and transparency of NET trends within the IPC revision program and support more evidence-based prioritization of future IPC revisions. At the same time, the Catalogue would remain non-binding and serve only as indicative information.

44. The Committee agreed that, upon its readiness, the International Bureau would prepare a document presenting the IPC NET Catalogue in a format suitable for public access on the WIPO website to facilitate broader awareness and understanding of emerging technological trends relevant to the IPC.

SECONDARY CLASSIFICATION AND INDEXING SCHEMES IN THE IPC

45. Discussions were based on rapporteur proposals prepared by China and comments from Brazil, the EPO and Germany, regarding the role of secondary classification and indexing schemes within the IPC framework (see Annexes 17 to 22 to project CE 552).

46. The Committee recalled earlier work undertaking to clarify the function and presentation of supplementary classification mechanisms and their relationship to the classification scheme.

47. The Committee emphasized that secondary classification schemes and indexing schemes should support the effective use of the IPC.

48. The Committee approved the proposed table providing guidance about secondary classification schemes contained in Annex 22 and decided that it would replace the table currently set out in paragraph 107*bis* of the Guide (see paragraph 31 above).

49. The Committee further approved, with some modifications, the proposed list of indexing schemes contained in Annex 20 (see paragraph 31 above). The Committee decided that this list would be made accessible through the IPC Publication on the WIPO website.

50. In this context, the Committee decided to create a new maintenance project M 850, with Germany as Rapporteur, to review notes referring to indexing schemes in the IPC scheme and definitions.

51. The Committee expressed appreciation to China, as Rapporteur of this project, as well as to all commenting offices, for the considerable efforts contributed to this final achievement and concluded that project CE 552 would be considered completed.

RECLASSIFICATION STATUS REPORT AND RELATED ISSUES

52. The Committee considered reports on the status of IPC reclassification activities under projects CE 532 and CE 562. The reports provided an overview of progress achieved since the previous session, the volume of remaining reclassification work and the distribution of reclassification activities across technical fields.

53. The discussion addressed challenges associated with large-scale reclassification, particularly in areas affected by major structural revisions. Several delegations highlighted differences in reclassification approaches among offices and the importance of maintaining consistency and reliability of classification data across the IPC.

54. The Committee discussed the increasing use of automation and AI-assisted tools to support reclassification activities. While recognizing the potential of such tools to improve efficiency and manage workload, the Committee stressed the importance of appropriate quality control, transparency and human oversight in reclassification processes.

55. The Committee took note of the report of the test results of AI-based reclassification, as documented in Annex 7 to the project CE 532. In this context, the Committee invited offices, on a voluntary basis, to review the test results, including by making use of the illustrative testing scenario described in Annex 8 or by applying any other appropriate review approach.

56. Offices were invited to submit comments on the test results and on the testing methodology, including feedback on the example scenario, with a view to improving mutual understanding of the outcomes and limitations of such AI-based activities.

57. The International Bureau confirmed that the purpose of the testing exercise was purely informational and aimed at familiarizing offices with the conducted activity, and that the test results were not intended to be used for actual reclassification or for operational decision-making.

58. The Committee noted improved reclassification activities in the reclassification status report contained in Annex 2 under project CE 562, prepared by the International Bureau. The Committee recalled its previous decision to apply default transfers (DTs) for IPC versions 2009.01 to 2015.01 to improve search efficiency and reduce the backlog. Having noted that the International Bureau, with help from the EPO, intended to carry out reclassification data clean-up before implementing the DTs in August 2026, as well as the improved reclassification status for IPC version 2016.01, the Committee decided to include IPC version 2016.01 into the DTs implementation.

59. The Committee noted, with gratitude, the intention of the EPO to investigate the possible propagating of CPC reclassification data into the IPC via CPC-IPC concordance, as an alternative approach to complement IPC reclassification activities.

EXPERIENCE FROM OFFICES ON COMPUTER ASSISTED (E.G. AI-BASED) CLASSIFICATION AND RELATED SYSTEMS AND TOOLS

60. The Committee noted a series of presentations by several offices on their experience with computer-assisted including AI-based classification tools. The presentations illustrated different stages of development and deployment, ranging from experimental pilots to tools integrated into operational classification and examination workflows.

61. Saudi Arabia presented *SAIPER*, an AI-assisted IPC classification system specifically designed to address the linguistic and structural challenges of Arabic patent texts. The system is based on hybrid architecture combining local large language model (LLM) translation with semantic retrieval and ranking techniques, while maintaining full examiner control and transparency. Pilot results demonstrated a significant reduction in classification time and a high level of accuracy at the IPC subgroup level, highlighting the importance of language-aware solutions for promoting more inclusive global use of the IPC.

62. Japan reported on the development of *GAIA-Index*, an AI-based system aimed at the automatic generation and assignment of search indexes to support prior-art searches. This approach seeks to reduce the cost and variability associated with manual classification while enabling rapid adaptation to emerging technologies. Japan emphasized that the system is designed to complement examiner expertise and to support strategic considerations regarding the future use and possible simplification of classification schemes in different technical fields.

63. The Republic of Korea described its AI-assisted classification and reclassification tools for frontfile and backfile processing, respectively. The systems combine machine-learning-based recommendations with expert-defined contextual inputs, allowing flexible deployment depending on data availability and technical complexity. The Republic of Korea highlighted the role of AI tools in supporting large-scale reclassification activities while preserving expert validation as a key quality safeguard. The Republic of Korea further informed the Committee that the AI-assisted reclassification tool was under pilot stage.

64. The EPO provided an overview of the use of AI within CPC-related workflows, including CPC text categorizer for pre-classification or CPC symbol suggestions for the EPO internal usage and AI-supported tagging of specific schemes such as Y02 and Y04. AI-assisted tools are used to support routing, classification and reclassification tasks, with continuous model updates and examiner oversight. The EPO underlined that AI functions as an assistive technology integrated into established quality-control frameworks and aligned with CPC governance principles.

65. The Committee took note of the information provided and of the common challenges identified across offices, including issues related to accuracy, explainability and governance. The Committee welcomed continued sharing of experience in this area.

66. The Committee noted that such exchanges constitute a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions on the role and impact of AI in patent classification (see paragraphs 67 to 72, below).

IMPACT OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TOOLS ON PATENT CLASSIFICATION

67. Discussions were based on a proposal prepared by the International Bureau (see Annex 5 to project CE 579) containing suggested brainstorming discussion topics with guiding questions about the impacts of AI and AI-Assisted tools on patent classification.

68. The Committee welcomed the proposal and noted that the proposal served as a good support document for an open, in-depth and exploratory strategic discussion on the potential impacts of AI and AI-assisted tools on patent classification, such as the IPC scheme structure and granularity and the use of AI in IPC revision reclassifications activities. The discussion addressed the evolving role of AI across the classification lifecycle, including classification, reclassification, search and translation.

69. The Committee emphasized that AI-assisted tools should remain assistive in nature, with human expertise retaining a central role in classification decision-making.

70. The Committee considered that the exchange of views had been useful in identifying opportunities, challenges and open questions and recognized the need for continued reflection on how the IPC should evolve in an AI-supported environment, while reaffirming the importance of maintaining the IPC as a stable, reliable and internationally harmonized classification system.

71. The Committee also agreed to establish a Task Force to further examine the implications of AI and AI-assisted tools for IPC governance, working methods and future development. The Committee agreed that any of its members could join the Task Force on a voluntary basis at any later stage. The new project CE 571 was created on the IPC e-forum to facilitate and steer the discussion, with the International Bureau as Rapporteur.

72. The Committee invited the International Bureau to prepare a separate document compiling a set of topics with guiding questions, based on the elements outlined in Annex 5 to project CE 579, to support more focused and consistent exchanges among offices.

73. The Committee concluded that continued discussions on these topics would help ensure that IPC remains responsive, predictable and future-ready in an increasingly AI-driven innovative landscape.

OTHER ISSUES

74. The Committee noted a proposal by the EPO in Annex 13 of project CE 445 concerning a request for introducing a “Favorites” functionality in the IPC e-forum, aimed at improving usability and facilitating access to frequently consulted discussion threads and documents. The proposal was noted as a potential enhancement of the e-forum user experience.

75. The Committee also noted a request by Germany, presented in Annex 14 of project CE 445, concerning the possibility of granting read-only access to the IP5 e-forum for offices that are not members of the IP5.

76. The Committee agreed that, for the sake of the coherence of the discussion of F-projects in both IP5 and IPC phases, consolidated Rapporteur reports summarizing discussions held at the IP5 phase, including the key issues addressed, should be provided once such F-projects were promoted to the IPC phase.

77. The Committee further noted that the request for the read-only access would be considered and formally confirmed later by the FiveIPOffices. The International Bureau was invited to investigate the technical feasibility of implementing such read-only access function for the IP5 e-forum.

NEXT SESSION OF THE IPC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

78. The Committee noted that the next (fifty-eighth) session would be held in Geneva at the end of February 2027, subject to the schedule of the WIPO principal Committees.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION

79. The Chair closed the session.

80. The Committee of Experts unanimously adopted this report by electronic means on March 17, 2026.

[Annexes follow]

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS/
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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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 of the Expert Group on Semiconductor Technology (EGST)
   See project CE 481.

6. 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.

7. Amendments to the Guide to the IPC and other basic IPC documents
   See projects CE 454 and CE 455.

8. Integration of the new emerging technologies (NETs) into the IPC Revision Roadmap
   See project CE 551.

9. Secondary classification and Indexing schemes in the IPC
   See project CE 552.

10. Reclassification status report and related issues
    See projects CE 532 and CE 562.

11. Experience from offices on computer assisted (e.g. AI-based) classification and related systems and tools
    Presentations by offices and see project CE 524.

12. Impact of AI and AI-assisted tools on patent classification
    See project CE 579.

13. Other issues
    See project CE 445.

14. Next session of the Committee of Experts

15. Closing of the Session

[End of Annex II and of document]