

ANNEX VII

THE MOST APPROPRIATE DURATION OF REVISION CYCLES

Recommendation by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group

RECOMMENDATION

1. As decided by the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union, revision of the advanced level should not depend on revision cycles and will be carried out continuously. Revision cycles could therefore be applied only to revision of the core level.
2. Relative stability of the core level will result in a rate of revision, which will be significantly lower than for the current IPC. It will nevertheless be necessary to provide for revision of the core level to a certain extent. Such revision will be needed in order to accommodate new technologies at subclass or main group level of the IPC or to increase the quality of the IPC by clarifying its text. Revision of the core level could also be needed for providing new subdivisions of groups having a very large file size and a very high rate of growth of the national patent documentation. Revision of the core level could also be required by revision carried out at the advanced level when, for example, changes proposed to the advanced level would require modifications at subclass or main group level of the IPC.
3. Future revision of the core level could relate to the following categories:
 - (a) X-notations;
 - (b) Creation of IPC places covering new technologies for which no distinct place in the IPC exists;
 - (c) Clarification of wordings in order to improve consistency in classifying or to avoid overlap with other places of the IPC;
 - (d) Subdivision of IPC groups having a very large file size and a very high rate of growth of the national patent documentation;
 - (e) Modifications required by revision changes to the advanced level.
4. Revision amendments to the core level will be elaborated by the IPC Revision Working Group and will be adopted by the Committee of Experts.
5. Since the first publication of the IPC, it has been revised in five-year revision cycles and every five years a new edition of the IPC has been published. The current, seventh edition of the IPC will be valid until January 1, 2005. Regular publications of new editions of the IPC provided conditions for taking account in the system of technical development and to

guarantee that published patent documents were classified according to IPC symbols which were valid at the given period of time as, according to the Strasbourg Agreement, member States of the IPC Union shall include in their published patent documents the complete symbols of the Classification which is in force.

6. Regular publications of new editions led, however, to the need to rely on superseded IPC editions in the retrospective search. This presented a serious problem for industrial property offices and the general public. In the reformed IPC, this problem will be solved by the availability of the Master Classification Database containing the IPC data of patent documentation classified only according to the current edition of the IPC.

7. It is supposed that the core level of the IPC will be applied for classifying national patent documents by small industrial property offices, in particular in developing countries. For such offices, regular official publications on different information carriers of new editions of the core level will be extremely important for the proper administration of the classification and reclassification work.

8. A fixed revision cycle for the core level will also be needed for the periodical publication of its printed version, preparation of national language versions of the IPC, revision of the Guide to the IPC and updating the official catchword indexes to the IPC.

9. Previously applied five-year revision cycles met certain criticism of industrial property offices and the public as they led to considerable delay between the submission of a revision request and the implementation of revision results in the IPC. It became especially unacceptable at the present time of rapid technological changes observed throughout the world.

10. Revision periods will be shortened, therefore, by two years and three-year revision cycles will be applied henceforth. Starting from the year 2005, new IPC editions, incorporating revision changes, will appear every three years and will bear the designation of the year of publication, for example, IPC-2005.

11. The three-year revision cycle will be the most efficient for the core level as it will accelerate implementation in the core level of the changes necessitated by technological progress, preserving at the same time its relative stability.

12. Although the three-year revision cycle should normally be applied in the future for the core level, the IPC Committee of Experts could extend the revision cycle if it considered the publication of the new edition of the core level premature, as in the case, for example, of an insufficient number of revision amendments made to the core level.

13. Amendments to the core level adopted by the Committee of Experts will be accumulated during the three-year revision period and will officially enter into force at its end. Amendments adopted will also be incorporated by the International Bureau in the IPC and published in the Internet version of the IPC, following the sessions of the Committee.

14. Those amendments will not be mandatory for use until the end of the revision period and will be considered as temporarily belonging to the advanced level of the IPC. This would provide possibilities for the rapid implementation of the results of the core level revision by any member or observer of the IPC Union that applies classification in the advanced level and would wish to use such amendments for classification of published patent documents.

15. The above-mentioned use of core level amendments temporarily belonging to the advanced level should not distort the compatibility of the core and the advanced levels. Industrial property offices that will choose to use these amendments will be obliged to also assign official core level symbols to their published patent documents. Such an assignment will be facilitated by the revision concordance data which be available to offices at the same time as the core level amendments themselves, and, in certain cases, could be done in a automatic way.

[Annex VIII follows]