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**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION
(IPC UNION)**

IPC REVISION WORKING GROUP

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LIST OF PRIORITIES FOR DEFINITION AND MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

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1.   At its thirty-seventh session, the Committee of Experts adopted the IPC Development Program for 2006 to 2008 (see Annex IV of document IPC/CE/37/9). Task No. 1(a) of this program relates to the development of a plan for completion of all subclass definitions with, as a first step, the preparation of a list of priorities in the second quarter 2006, and of a list of prioritized subclasses in the fourth quarter. Task No. 2(a) of this program relates to the development of a plan for maintenance of all subclasses which should result in a list of priorities and the start of ten pilot projects.

Definitions

2.   Regarding the priorities for inclusion of new subclasses in the definition program, the following subclasses are proposed as candidates:

     (a)   New or extensively revised subclasses should be treated with the highest priority. Their subclass definitions should be discussed in the framework of the corresponding revision project with the aim to complete them at the moment of the publication of the new scheme at the advanced level. Currently the following subclasses are concerned: H04H (Project C 434) and H04W (Project C 435).

(b)   For each subclass which is under revision, either in the core or the advanced levels, the Working Group (WG) should consider whether subclass definitions are needed or should be amended, if they already exist. Currently, in addition to the subclasses mentioned above, the following subclasses are under revision, in the core level: A01N (C 432) and in Project C 433 subclasses C08K and C08L with definition projects D 100 and D 093, respectively, under discussion; in the advanced level: A62D (A 001 and D 071 under discussion), B60K (A 006), G05G (A 002) and H02M (A 004).

(c)   At its fourteenth session, the WG decided that for subclasses where no consensus had been reached as to whether a new residual main group would be needed, the rapporteur could recommend the initiation of a definition project to clarify any unclear scope of such a subclass or of its main groups (see paragraph 7(b) of document IPC/WG/14/3).

(d)   It would be beneficial to include in the definitions program all subclasses which were selected for systematic maintenance. This would allow for a most efficient treatment because experience and knowledge gained in a particular project would not be lost. The same Office should be Rapporteur of both definition and maintenance projects corresponding to the same subclass.

3.   In addition, priority criteria similar to those for selecting subclasses for maintenance (see Annex VIII of document IPC/CE/33/12) should be used, i.e. priority should be given to those subclasses where

"–   a subclass presents classification difficulties that are caused by shortcomings of the scheme;

–   a subclass covers technology that has developed substantially since the subclass was created; and

–   a subclass has a high search activity or high file size growth."

4.   Currently definition projects for 123 subclasses exist, of which 48 have been completed both in the English and French languages. Given that some 30 definition projects are in a rather advanced state, it is very likely that the number of 50 additional subclasses to be completed by end of 2008 (see Task No. 2(b)) would easily be reached. Therefore, prioritizing existing definition projects does not seem to be necessary, with the exception of projects in categories 2(a) or 2(b), above.

Maintenance

5.   At its thirty-second session, the Committee of Experts adopted a Procedure for the Systematic Maintenance of the IPC (see Annex VIII of document IPC/CE/33/12). This procedure describes the systematic review of all subclasses with respect to the following goals:

–   to achieve harmonization, updating, and clarification of the schemes;

–   to move informative material from the schemes to the electronic layer;

–   to refine the initial separation to the core and the advanced levels and make necessary consequential adaptations of the schemes;

–   to address matters relating to the standardized sequence of groups.

6.   In the same document, the following priority criteria for selecting subclasses for systematic maintenance were defined:

"–   subclasses presenting classification difficulties that are caused by shortcomings of the scheme;

–   subclasses covering technology that has developed substantially since the subclass was created; and

–   subclasses having a high search activity or high file size growth."

However, the following tasks, mentioned in that document, have now become separate tasks of the WG in the development program: the removal of informative references (Task No. 4), the introduction of residual main groups (Task No. 5), borderlines between the core and advanced levels (Task No. 9). Furthermore, work done in Projects WG 010 to WG 014 for improving the IPC or correcting obvious errors, could also be considered as a type of maintenance of the IPC.

7.   Regarding the selection of subclasses for systematic maintenance, it would be beneficial to select subclasses for which a definition project exists. In the course of definition projects substantial experience and knowledge has been gathered which would be lost if maintenance was delayed. Rapporteurs for the definition and maintenance project of a subclass should be the same because of their comprehensive knowledge of that subclass.

8.   It is proposed to include as candidates those subclasses where there are already recommendations and/or proposals for maintenance:

(a)   In a number of rearrangement projects rapporteurs have recommended certain problematic issues to be solved by maintenance projects (e.g. subclasses A01F, A01G, A01M, F23Q, F25C).

(b)   Rapporteurs of definition or of R 70 projects (see also paragraph 2(c) above) should indicate during the fifteenth session of the WG whether there is a need for systematic maintenance in any of the subclasses under their responsibility and indicate which of the criteria, mentioned in paragraph 6 above, apply.

(c)   In addition, for each proposal submitted in Projects WG 010 to WG 014 the WG should determine whether a systematic maintenance of the corresponding subclass is needed (see paragraph 43 of document IPC/WG/12/4).

9.   Task No. 2(b) of the development program requires the completion of systematic maintenance of ten subclasses by end of 2007. The WG should select those ten subclasses from those already proposed or to be proposed, as indicated in paragraph 8 above.

10.   At its fourteenth session the WG decided that "existing residual groups being residual to their whole subclass should be renumbered to 99/00 or 999/00, and their titles should be replaced by the standard title, in the framework of the systematic maintenance of the IPC" (see paragraph 9(c) of document IPC/WG/14/3).

11.   It is proposed to carry out this task outside the systematic maintenance of whole subclasses. There are about 90 subclasses that contain such residual main groups; in the course of Projects R 701 to R 706 the International Bureau established a table summarizing the findings regarding existing residual main groups. The International Bureau therefore volunteers to prepare the necessary IPC amendments for consideration at the sixteenth session of the WG.

12.   In order to carry out the maintenance work under all the above-mentioned aspects, a new type of projects will be created on the e-forum, M projects. Projects WG 010 to WG 014 will be renamed to M 010 to M 014 and existing documentation will be transferred to the new projects.

13.   The Working Group is invited:

(a)   to approve the priority criteria for inclusion of new subclasses in the definition program as described in paragraphs 2 and 3, above;

(b)   to approve the priority criteria for selecting subclasses for systematic maintenance as described in paragraphs 6 and 7, above;

(c)   to select ten subclasses as described in paragraphs 8 and 9, above, and initiate pilot systematic maintenance projects.

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