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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
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**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION  
(IPC UNION)**

**ASSEMBLY**

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IPC REFORM PROGRESS REPORT

*Document prepared by the International Bureau*

1. The Assembly of the IPC Union at its seventeenth (12<sup>th</sup> ordinary) session, held in September 1999, approved the recommendation made by the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union to launch IPC reform in order to accommodate the Classification to be used in the electronic environment (see document IPC/A/17/1 and paragraph 12 of document IPC/A/17/2). At its nineteenth (13<sup>th</sup> ordinary) session, held in September/October 2001, the Assembly considered the IPC reform status report and took note of it (see documents IPC/A/19/1 and IPC/A/19/2).
2. At its thirty-second session, held in February 2003, the Committee of Experts agreed that the IPC Reform Implementation Plan was successfully carried out and decided that it was necessary to inform the Assembly of the IPC Union of the progress of IPC reform. The Committee requested the International Bureau to prepare an IPC reform progress report and to submit it to the Assembly (see document IPC/CE/32/12, paragraph 70).

3. The IPC reform progress report prepared by the International Bureau is contained in the Annex to this document.

*4. The Assembly of the IPC Union is invited to take note of the contents of the IPC reform progress report contained in the Annex to this document.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

IPC REFORM PROGRESS REPORT

1. In 1999, the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union recommended launching the reform of the IPC in order to adapt the Classification to the electronic environment, to increase its efficiency for the retrieval of patent information and to facilitate its use for small and medium-sized industrial property offices and the general public. This recommendation was later endorsed by the Assembly of the IPC Union.
2. Development of modern methods of electronic access and retrieval of information required accommodation of the patent classification to the electronic age. In order to ensure its efficient and effective use in the electronic environment, substantial changes to the IPC structure and to methods of its revision and application were needed.
3. IPC reform has been carried out by the Committee of Experts and its Working Groups since 1999. Close cooperation of industrial property offices was necessary for achieving successful results of the reform. Guidance in conducting the reform was provided by the Strategic Plan for the Development of the IPC approved by the Committee of Experts in 2000.
4. The basic period of IPC reform is coming to completion. The next edition of the IPC will enter into force on January 1, 2005. It will already represent the reformed IPC and will include many new features elaborated in the course of the reform. The most important of them are outlined below.
5. One of the important features of the reformed IPC will be its two-level structure which would better satisfy differing needs of small, medium-sized and large industrial property offices and the general public. The two-level system will consist of a core and an advanced level.
6. The core level will contain approximately 20,000 entries at high hierarchical levels (classes, subclasses, main groups and, in some fields, subgroups) of the current version of the IPC. It will be a relatively stable part of the IPC. Revision amendments to the core level will be made in three-year revision cycles when necessitated by technological progress.
7. The advanced level will represent a further elaboration of the core level, i.e., it will include the core level and additional subgroups. Initially, in 2005, it will include approximately 70,000 entries of the current, seventh edition of the IPC, but its size will rapidly grow since revision amendments to the advanced level will be continuously made through an accelerated procedure under the supervision of a special subcommittee.

8. Although any industrial property office may choose which level they wish to employ for classifying their published patent documents, namely, the core or the advanced level of the reformed IPC, it is intended that the relatively simple core level will be used for classifying and searching patent documents belonging to small and medium-sized national patent collections, while the more complex advanced level will be used for classifying and searching patent documents belonging to large patent collections. In particular, classification at the advanced level will cover patent documents included in the PCT Minimum Documentation.
9. The publication of the IPC in paper form will be continued, it will, however, be restricted to the core level, in view of its stability during the three-year revision cycles. The Internet publication will contain the complete text of the Classification including the core and advanced level and will become a principal form of publication of the IPC. The Internet version will incorporate the electronic layer, including various electronic data illustrating IPC entries or explaining them more in detail. This electronic data will enhance understanding and facilitate the use of the IPC for industrial property offices and the general public.
10. Classification definitions for selected subclasses of the IPC will already be available in the electronic layer of the next edition of the IPC. They are intended to provide more detailed explanations of the contents of IPC entries than the official text of the IPC. During further development of the IPC, classification definitions will be elaborated for all of the more than 600 subclasses of the Classification. More than 3,000 structural chemical formulae will be available for viewing in the electronic layer of the next edition. Their role will be to illustrate chemical areas of the IPC by providing a visual graphic representation of the subject matter of the chemical areas. The electronic layer will also include facilities for displaying main groups of the IPC in the standardized order.
11. One of the objectives of the IPC reform is to provide possibilities for performing patent searches with the use of the current version of the IPC only and to eliminate the need to rely on superseded IPC editions. This objective will be achieved by reclassification (i.e. updating of IPC symbols on patent documents) of patent collections according to revision changes of the IPC.
12. Access to the worldwide collection of patent documentation will be provided through the Master Classification Database which will be created in 2004. The Master Classification Database will contain the IPC data of patent documents classified only according to the current versions of the IPC and patent family information. It also will provide links to patent documents in the electronic form. The provision of such classification data should be achieved by reclassification efforts of industrial property offices. With a view to alleviating the workload of reclassification, industrial property offices, whose documents have patent family members in the PCT Minimum Documentation, may wish to request that these documents be reclassified by automatic propagation of the reclassification data from the PCT Minimum Documentation.

13. In the process of the accommodation of the IPC to the electronic environment, modern information technologies were widely applied. The International Bureau is currently carrying out the Classification Automated Information System (CLAIMS) project which is expected to be completed in 2003. One of the objectives of the CLAIMS project is the elaboration of a new IPC management and information system which will be an Internet-based open system compatible with the revision procedure of the new IPC. The part of this system which is already in use includes enhanced possibilities for the maintenance and publication of the IPC and provides support for the building up of an infrastructure of the reformed IPC.

14. Another main objective of the CLAIMS project is the development of a computer-assisted classification tool which would be operational in several languages and which would allow automated prediction of classification of patent documents at hierarchically high classification levels (subclasses and main groups). This classification tool is intended to provide assistance to small and medium-sized industrial property offices, in particular in developing countries, in classification of their published patent documents.

15. Elaboration of modern IPC training tools is essential for the efficient application of the IPC. A package of computer-based and Internet-based information materials will be prepared for users of the reformed IPC. A composite part of this package will be interactive IPC tutorial elaborated under the CLAIMS project on the basis of the available set of IPC training examples which will be updated according to changes introduced in the IPC in the course of its reform.

16. Significant work is still needed for the completion of IPC reform. This work should be done in the second half of 2003 and the first half of 2004. Continuation of cooperation of industrial property offices is indispensable for achieving the goals of the reform. The International Bureau plans to publish the next edition of the IPC in the printed form and on the Internet in June 2004. The advance publication of the next edition would allow industrial property offices to prepare for the implementation of the reformed IPC from January 1, 2005, and to take necessary measures for the accommodation of their internal administrative systems based on the requirements of the reform.

[End of Annex and of document]