

# WIPO



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(IPC UNION)**

**ASSEMBLY**

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IPC REFORM STATUS REPORT

*Document prepared by the International Bureau*

1. The Assembly of the International Patent Classification (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 the use 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, and twenty-first (14<sup>th</sup> ordinary) session, held in September/October 2003, the Assembly considered the IPC reform progress reports and took note of them (IPC/A/19/1, IPC/A/19/2, IPC/A/21/1 and IPC/A/21/2).
2. At its thirty-fourth session, held in February 2004, the Committee of Experts requested the International Bureau to prepare an IPC reform status report and to submit it to the Assembly (IPC/CE/34/10, paragraph 44).
3. The IPC reform status 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 IPC reform status report.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

IPC REFORM STATUS REPORT

1. IPC reform has been carried out by the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union and its Working Groups since 1999. The Assembly of the IPC Union considered IPC reform progress reports in September/October 2001 and September/October 2003.
2. Since October 2003, significant progress has been made by the Committee of Experts in achieving the goals of the reform. At its thirty-third session, held in October 2003, and its thirty-fourth session, held in February 2004, the Committee considered pending tasks on the IPC reform program and approved the following documents which will provide a basis for the revision and use of the reformed IPC: "Revision Policy and Revision Procedure for the Reformed IPC," "Concept of Operations for the Reformed IPC" and "The Guide to the Eighth Edition of the IPC."
3. In view of the progress in the elaboration of the tasks of IPC reform, the Committee of Experts, at its thirty-fourth session, updated the IPC Reform Implementation Plan and noted that, out of 19 tasks on the IPC reform program, 17 tasks have been completed.
4. It was earlier planned that, in the first half of 2004, the basic period of IPC would be completed and the preparatory work could start for the publication of the next, eighth, edition of the IPC (reformed IPC) with its entering into force on January 1, 2005.
5. However, at the thirty-fourth session of the Committee of Experts, several Delegations stated that their Offices had difficulties in the implementation of IPC reform to meet the target date of January 1, 2005. Also, the Delegation of the European Patent Office (EPO) announced that the development of the Master Classification Database (MCD), which should be created at the EPO for receiving, processing and exchanging the IPC reform classification data, would be far more complex and expensive than initially expected, and that the creation of this database could not be accomplished by January 1, 2005.
6. In view of these circumstances, the Committee of Experts came to the conclusion that the postponement of the entering into force of the reformed IPC for one year would constitute the most feasible solution and would provide more time for the creation of the Master Classification Database and for the implementation of the reformed IPC in industrial property offices. The Committee agreed therefore that the next edition of the IPC would enter into force on January 1, 2006.
7. The Committee of Experts indicated that implementation of IPC reform by industrial property offices would be closely monitored at its sessions and that, for the successful implementation of the reform, good communication between classification experts and IT specialists should be established. The Committee also decided that the additional year before entering into force of the reformed IPC should be used for the enhanced implementation in the IPC itself of new features introduced by the reform, for example, for further improving the quality of the core and the advanced levels of the reformed IPC, and instructed its IPC Revision Working Group to carry out the necessary work in this respect.

8. According to the corrected plans of the International Bureau, the next edition of the IPC will be published in the printed form and on the Internet no later than June 2005. Since the advanced level of the reformed IPC will be continuously revised, only its core level will be published in the printed form. This publication will be comprised of five volumes and will be intended for industrial property offices wishing to use the core level for classifying their published patent documents and for the general public.

9. The Internet version will be considered as an official publication of the IPC. Compared with the printed version, the Internet version will contain a complete text of the Classification and will incorporate the electronic layer, including supplementary information facilitating the use of the Classification, such as classification definitions, illustrating chemical formulae and informative references.

10. The reformed Classification will be published as the eighth edition of the IPC. It will include new features resulting from the reform process, as well as many changes resulting from the revision of the seventh edition of the IPC, which were made in order to reflect in the Classification developments in technology. Since 1999, reform and revision of the IPC were carried out in parallel.

11. Revision amendments to the seventh edition may be outlined using the data relating to major structural subdivisions of the seventh edition which are represented by eight sections, 120 classes and 620 subclasses. The revision amendments were made in all sections of the IPC. One new class and five new subclasses, mostly related to new technologies, such as combinatorial chemistry or business methods, were created. A detailed new classification scheme was elaborated for traditional medicine based on the use of plants which represents the most important part of documented traditional knowledge. In total, nearly 1,200 new entries were introduced into the IPC in the course of the revision of the seventh edition.

12. As concerns modern information technologies used in the IPC reform process, the CLAIMS project of the International Bureau is successfully carried out to support IPC reform. Such deliveries of the CLAIMS project as the Natural Language Access to the IPC and the IPC Categorizer are nearly completed. The IPC Categorizer, which will allow automatic prediction of classification of patent documents at hierarchically high classification levels, will be operational in five languages: English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. It will provide assistance to small and medium-sized industrial property offices in classification of their published patent documents.

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