

# WIPO



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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**

GENEVA

**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION  
(IPC UNION)****COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS****Twenty-Ninth Session  
Geneva, March 13 to 17, 2000**

## 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 twenty-ninth session in Geneva from March 13 to 17, 2000. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America (20). The European Patent Office (EPO) was also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. K.-P. Wittig, Deputy Director, Inter-Office Information Services, WIPO, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of WIPO.

## OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mr. R.W. Saifer (United States of America) as Chair and Mrs. M. Lyon (France) and Mrs. I. Velinsky-Huber (Austria) as Vice-Chairs.

4. Mr. M. Makarov (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.

#### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

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.

#### COOPERATION WITH THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (SCIT)

7. The Secretariat reported that, following the instructions given at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee (see document IPC/CE/28/5, paragraph 25), the International Bureau had prepared a draft request for cooperation between the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union and the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT). This request had been adopted by the members and observers of the Committee by correspondence and submitted to the SCIT.

8. The Secretariat further informed that, at its third Plenary session, held in June 1999, the SCIT favorably considered the request for cooperation and agreed that a working relationship between the SCIT and the Committee would contribute both to the effective IPC reform and to the effective implementation of the Intellectual Property Digital Libraries (IPDL) project (see document SCIT/3/4, paragraph 13). The SCIT indicated that specific information technology projects conducted by the SCIT and the Committee, where cooperation would be desirable, should be reflected in the implementation plans of both Committees.

9. With regard to information technology projects, the Secretariat also reported that the International Bureau had started an IPCISbis (IBIS) project aiming at the modernization of the current IPC Information System (IPCIS) and the establishment of an Internet-based, open IPC management system which would incorporate new features resulting from the IPC reform. The IBIS project was also intended to provide a basis for the future elaboration of the CLAIMS (Classification Automated Information System) project included in the SCIT Information Technology Strategic Implementation Plan.

10. The members and observers of the Committee expressed the wish to be periodically informed on the progress of the IBIS project.

## REPORT ON THE SECOND MEETING OF THE TRILATERAL WORKING GROUP ON CLASSIFICATION

11. The Delegation of the EPO, on behalf of the Trilateral Offices, reported on the second meeting of the Trilateral Working Group on Classification, held in The Hague, from February 1 to 4, 2000, and introduced document IPC/CE/29/10 containing a report of that meeting. The Delegation indicated that, with regard to the classification work, the Trilateral Offices had two options, namely, to actively participate in the IPC reform with a view to building a convenient advanced level of the IPC or to concentrate on developing a trilateral classification scheme. The Delegation further indicated that the Trilateral Offices had chosen the first option but, if the IPC reform would not result in establishing the convenient advanced level of the IPC, the second option would be followed.

12. The Delegation explained that the Trilateral Offices had to provide large resources for use by each of those Offices of two patent classifications simultaneously, namely, using by the European Patent Office of the IPC and ECLA, by the Japanese Patent Office (JPO) of the IPC and the FI Classification and by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) of the IPC and the USPCS. With a view to substantially decreasing expenses for the classification work, the Trilateral Offices took an active part in the reform of the IPC, one of the objectives thereof being the creation of a new IPC, efficient and acceptable to all industrial property offices. The Delegation also underlined that, at the above-mentioned meeting, the Trilateral Offices were able to reach a common position with regard to major issues of the IPC reform, such as the structure of the new IPC, information to be classified, the principle of multiple classification, storage of symbols and revision procedure.

13. The Delegation clarified the contents of some parts of the report by responding to questions raised by the participants at the session. It was indicated by the Trilateral Offices that, for many aspects of the IPC reform, the report of the Trilateral Working Group presented a general approach and that many practical details needed further elaboration.

## RESOURCES NEEDED FOR THE IPC REFORM

14. The Committee considered the need for additional manpower resourcing within the IPC Section, Inter-Office Information Services of the International Bureau (IB) required in view of coordination and management of the IPC reform process, and as outlined in document IPC/CE/29/2. In conclusion of the discussions, the Committee gave support for strengthening the IPC Section within the budgetary process, and invited the IB to request appropriate resources as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Committee asked to be kept informed about budgetary matters, and intends to readdress resource requirements at a future date on the basis of progress reached in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Development of the IPC.

## LONG-TERM GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IPC

15. The Committee considered document IPC/CE/29/3 containing long-term goals and the strategic plan for the development of the IPC elaborated by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group.

16. With regard to Annex I of the said document, containing a list of the long-term goals, the Committee took note of the list and agreed that there was no need to separately adopt the long-term goals, since those goals were in essence also included in the strategic plan for the development of the IPC, contained in Annex II to the document.
17. Following detailed discussion of the strategic plan, the Committee agreed to make some amendments to paragraphs 10 and 11 of Annex II, intended to specify that the Master Classification Database would contain full bibliographic identification data, including the IPC data, relating to patent documents and technical non-patent literature.
18. Finally, the Committee adopted the strategic plan which appears in Annex III to this report.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY THE AD HOC IPC REFORM WORKING GROUP

19. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/29/4, containing recommendations formulated by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group, and its Supplement 1 containing replies submitted by industrial property offices in response to WIPO Circular No. IPC 33 concerning the contents of the core level of the reformed IPC. In its discussions, the Committee took also into consideration the recommendations formulated by the Trilateral Offices at the second meeting of the Trilateral Working Group on Classification, as disclosed in document IPC/CE/29/10. Some of the latter recommendations were adopted by the Committee and incorporated into recommendations made by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group. In respect of other recommendations, see paragraph 40, below.

#### Recommendations relating to the two-level structure of the reformed IPC

20. The Committee discussed in depth the contents that the core level of the two-level reformed IPC should have and noted interventions on this subject by many delegations. The discussions centered round the question whether the core level should correspond to the classification part of the current IPC (first option) or should represent its restricted version (second option).
21. The Committee was informed that, following the request made at the second session of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group (see document IPC/REF/2/2, paragraph 21), the International Bureau issued Circular No. IPC 33 inviting members and observers of the IPC Union to express their views in regard to the contents of the core level.
22. The Committee noted the summary of replies to the said Circular (see document IPC/CE/29/4 Suppl.1, Annex 25), and the replies recently submitted by Finland and France. According to the replies received by the International Bureau, 19 industrial property offices were in favor of the core level representing the classification part of the current IPC and five industrial property offices were in favor of the core level representing a restricted version of the current IPC.

23. Despite a clear majority manifested in favor of the first option, the Committee was not in a position to take a decision concerning the contents of the core level for the following reasons:

- it was felt that it was necessary to reach consensus on this question, critical for the IPC reform process;
- only half of the members and observers of the IPC Union have submitted replies to Circular No. IPC 33 so far;
- several Delegations argued that, despite their respective offices had already disclosed their opinions in the replies to the Circular, their positions could be reconsidered in view of some additional factors which were presented during this session of the Committee (see paragraphs 24 and 25, below).

24. The Delegations of the Trilateral Offices stated that if the core level was not restricted with regard to the current IPC, their Offices would no longer participate in the IPC reform process for reasons indicated in paragraph 11, above.

25. The Committee indicated that the following factors should be taken into consideration in determining the contents of the core level:

- sufficient searching power for searching national patent collections;
- provision of both, English and French, language versions;
- ease of use for small industrial property offices and the public;
- need for a more efficient revision procedure for the core level and accelerated revision procedure for the advanced level;
- need for a relatively stable core level;
- minimizing reclassification expenses with regard to the core level.

26. Given the urgency of the matter, the Committee decided to entrust the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group with the Task “Determine the most appropriate contents of the core level of the reformed IPC” and assigned this Task the highest priority. The Committee instructed the Working Group to finalize consideration of this Task at the next session of the Working Group, in May 2000, for consideration by the Committee at its thirtieth session, which could take place earlier than planned (see paragraph 62, below), if necessary.

27. In order to obtain sufficient material for the consideration of the Task, the Committee requested the International Bureau to prepare a background paper explaining the nature of the problem, the factors which should be taken into consideration and providing any additional useful information. The Committee indicated that the background paper should be submitted to the members and observers of the Working Group by April 15, 2000.

28. The Committee also requested the EPO to prepare, on behalf of the Trilateral Offices, a proposal on how a restricted core level of the reformed IPC could be obtained in an efficient and practical manner and to make an estimate of the resources required to this end. The proposal should be submitted to the International Bureau by April 10, 2000.

29. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the two-level structure of the reformed IPC:

(a) The core level should represent “the complete symbols of the Classification” in the sense of the Strasbourg Agreement. The Classification within the core level should be mandatory and should be used by members and observers of the IPC Union for classifying patent documents. The core level should embrace the worldwide collection of patent documents.

(b) The advanced level should represent a further elaboration of the core level, not mandatory for use. Any member or observer of the IPC Union can choose to use its entries for classifying and indexing patent documents. The advanced level should embrace at least the PCT minimum documentation.

(c) The core level, which should be a relatively stable part of the IPC, could correspond to the classification part of the seventh edition of the IPC, with eventual amendments which could be introduced during the transitional revision period, or could represent a restricted version of the seventh edition (see also paragraphs 20 to 28, above). In the latter case, classification entries not included in the core level should be included in the advanced level of the IPC.

(d) The procedure as well as the criteria for revision, respectively, of the core and advanced levels should be elaborated, taking into account the strong relationship between the core and advanced levels.

(e) The revision of the core level should be carried out in harmony with the revision of the advanced level. The proposed amendments should be adopted by the Committee so as to ensure the highest quality of the core level necessary for the consistent classification of patent documents worldwide.

(f) The revision of the advanced level should be provided through an accelerated procedure and should not depend on revision cycles.

(g) Amendments to the core and advanced levels should be incorporated in the IPC by the International Bureau. For the supervision of the revision of the advanced level, a special subcommittee within the IPC Union, including International Searching Authorities under the PCT, should be established.

(h) The publication of the complete IPC should be regularly performed by the International Bureau. The International Bureau should also provide for expeditious, in the long term, monthly, publication of amendments to the advanced level of the IPC.

30. The Committee noted that the revision proposals of the Trilateral Offices would be submitted only in the English language.

Recommendations relating to Task No. 3 (“Consider the introduction of electronic data illustrating the contents of IPC entries”)

31. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) Electronic access to definitions of standard terms and expressions should be provided by introducing respective hyperlinks to definitions thereof in the Guide to the IPC, bearing in mind, however, that, in certain places of the IPC, those terms and expressions might have a meaning deviating from the definition.

(b) Chemical formulae defining the contents of IPC entries should be included in the text of the IPC. Illustrating chemical formulae should be introduced in the electronic layer of the IPC in association with general chemical areas of the IPC, such as main groups of section C, where they are needed. The Committee requested the International Bureau to initiate a special project aiming at the preparation, by an external contractor, of a database of chemical formulae hyperlinked to relevant places in the IPC.

(c) Drawings and other graphical material should be introduced in the IPC parts where they are needed for illustrating the contents of IPC places. The Committee requested its members and observers to select those places and provide the International Bureau with electronic images representing typical drawings and graphical material for the subject matter in question. The Committee noted, with gratitude, that the EPO would provide available material to the International Bureau.

(d) Classification definitions representing important explanatory material should constitute part of the Classification itself and be incorporated in the IPC sections or presented as a separate publication associated with the IPC. Classification definitions should be introduced at least in all active IPC subclasses. Their preparation should take into account existing IPC notes defining the contents of places and technical terms used. Classification definitions should provide additional guidance without changing the scope of classification places whose titles should be self-explanatory and clear as far as possible without additional information.

(e) Informative references should be only included in the electronic layer of the IPC. The possibility of automatic introduction of informative references between function-oriented and application places by using the reverse reference list should be investigated.

(f) In view of the difficulty in the elaboration and the cost of development and maintenance of lists of synonyms or catch-terms, their introduction in the IPC could be considered but should not be a matter of priority.

(g) Exemplifying patents, which are necessary in the revision process for precisely defining the scope of new groups, should not generally be introduced in the IPC, since a sufficient number of patent documents would be available under the new groups as a result of classifying new documents therein or reclassifying the backlog file.

Recommendations relating to Task No. 4 (“Consider the elaboration of rules for multiple classification in the IPC”)

32. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) The possibility of introducing multi-aspect classification schemes in the IPC, where desirable, should be systematically considered.

(b) Although multiple classification in the electronic environment is desirable and, in fact, already applied by many offices, it could not be automatically introduced by eliminating place rules in the IPC. The last place rule is useful in most of the subclasses where it is applied, whereas in some others it could be abolished. In a similar way, precedence notes could not be in general replaced by multiple classification.

(c) A simplified set of rules should, in the long term, be introduced in the IPC.

(d) Multiple classification and the first and last place rules should be further considered in a broader context of providing uniform and simplified rules in the IPC.

33. In this regard, the Committee decided to create a new Task “Study the feasibility of introducing a simplified set of rules in the IPC, in particular, a uniform precedence rule” and to assign this Task to the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group.

Recommendations relating to Task No. 6 (“Study factors influencing an insufficient level of the consistency in the application of the IPC and elaborate measures for increasing the consistency”)

34. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) The only use of concordances between other classification systems and the IPC for classifying patent documents according to the IPC should be avoided.

(b) In order to provide the full classification data relating to published unexamined applications, industrial property offices should be encouraged to classify additional information, i.e. non-trivial technical information given in the description, which is not claimed. Classification changes occurring in respect of patent documents published at subsequent publication levels should be reflected in the Master Classification Database.

(c) The standardization of the IPC structure and the introduction of uniform rules and classification definitions should be achieved in the long term, in the course of the development of the IPC. The need for such standardization, rules and definitions should always be taken into account when considering IPC revision proposals.

(d) Additional electronic data illustrating the contents of the IPC entries should be introduced in the IPC.



(e) Modern Internet- and computer-based training tools for classifiers in industrial property offices should be elaborated in order to provide a uniform approach to the classification procedure.

(f) To increase the efficiency of the patent search using the IPC, patent family information should be included in the Master Classification Database.

(g) The IPC should provide classification places for any patentable subject matter. Insufficient coverage of the IPC in this respect should be remedied by an X-notation revision procedure.

(h) In order to ensure the consistent application of the IPC by classifiers working with different language versions of the Classification, all attempts should be made, in revising the authentic English and French versions, to use adequate, well-defined technical terminology.

(i) The Guide to the IPC should be revised in order to provide for a more comprehensive explanation of the principles and rules of the IPC, taking into account the results of the IPC reform. Prior to that revision, general classification policy principles should be reconsidered, indicating in a precise manner:

- (i) what is the subject matter in a patent document that should be classified;
- (ii) how to select a classification place where it should be classified; and
- (iii) how to retrieve information, i.e., how to use the IPC for search purposes.

35. The Committee agreed that the revision of the Guide to the IPC should commence in the year 2001.

Recommendations relating to Task No. 8 (“Study of the possibility of cooperation between offices in the reclassification of backlog files”)

36. The Committee noted, with appreciation, a summary of replies received in response to WIPO Circular No. IPC 18, which indicated that several industrial property offices reclassified or intended to reclassify their patent collections to the latest edition of the IPC, and that those offices were willing to provide reclassification data to populate the Master Classification Database. The Committee requested all its members and observers to consider the feasibility of reclassification of their national patent collections according to the amendments introduced in the IPC.

37. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) In view of the functionalities already available in the DOC d.b. database of the EPO and its coverage of a major part of the worldwide classification data, the DOC d.b. database should serve as a basis to the Master Classification Database.

(b) The feasibility of providing of the classification and reclassification data not included in the DOC d.b. database should be investigated. Also outsourcing of the reclassification work to external contractors and using automatic reclassification tools should be studied.

38. The Committee noted that the Trilateral Offices would classify their own published documents only according to the advanced level of the IPC under the provision that the core level classification data would automatically be generated in the Master Classification Database.

39. In order to provide sufficient material for further consideration of Task No. 8 by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group, the Committee requested the EPO to submit a background paper explaining an envisaged structure and functioning of the Master Classification Database in time for the third session of the Working Group.

40. The Committee noted recommendations formulated by the Trilateral Offices at the second meeting of the Trilateral Working Group on Classification, other than recommendations which were adopted by the Committee at this session (see, in this regard, paragraph 19, above), and agreed that those recommendations should be considered by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group under different tasks assigned to it, as follows (see document IPC/CE/29/10):

(a) Recommendations relating to the heading “Structure of the new IPC”:

– recommendations disclosed in paragraphs 7 to 9 should be considered under the new Task No. 14;

– recommendation disclosed in paragraphs 10 and 11 should be considered under the new Task No. 15.

(b) Recommendations relating to the headings “Information to be classified” and “Classifying as a whole/multiple classification”:

– recommendations disclosed in paragraphs 13 to 18 and 21 should be considered under Task No. 4;

– recommendations disclosed in paragraphs 19 and 20 should be considered under Task No. 5.

(c) Recommendations relating to the heading “Storage of symbols and Master Classification File”:

– recommendation disclosed in paragraph 22 should be considered under Tasks Nos. 4 and 8;

– recommendation disclosed in paragraph 24 should be considered under Task No. 8.

(d) Recommendations relating to the heading "Revision procedure":

– recommendations disclosed in paragraph 27 should be considered under Task No. 2;

– recommendations disclosed in paragraph 28 should be considered under Task No. 7.

41. The complete text of the recommendations referred to in paragraphs 40(a) to (d), above, is compiled in Annex IV to this report under different Tasks to which the recommendations were assigned.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY THE IPC REVISION WORKING GROUP

42. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/29/5, containing recommendations formulated by the IPC Revision Working Group concerning the elaboration and the transfer of informative references to the electronic layer of the IPC, as well as the presentation of such references. Following the discussion, the Committee agreed that the following procedure should be implemented for the introduction of informative references:

(a) The selection of informative references should continue, as needed, in the framework of IPC revision projects and should be the responsibility of rapporteurs. The rapporteurs should propose informative references, when necessary, in time appropriate for commenting by members and observers of the IPC Revision Working Group. In the case of positive comments, the proposed informative references should formally be approved at the session of the IPC Revision Working Group.

(b) Members and observers of the IPC Revision Working Group should also be free to propose informative references not relating to revision projects and distribute them for comments. After the formal approval by the IPC Revision Working Group, those references should be considered as minor corrections to the IPC and the International Bureau should introduce them into the next edition of the Classification.

(c) Some informative references, for example, between function-oriented and application places, could be introduced in the IPC, after a preliminary study, using automated means.

43. Finally, the Committee agreed that the provisional presentation of informative references in the form of informative notes, approved at the first session of the IPC Revision Working Group, should be reviewed and entrusted the Definition Task Force with this task. The Committee also agreed that the difference between informative and defining references should be studied by the Definition Task Force and later explained in the Guide to the IPC.

#### IPC REFORM PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR 2000

44. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/29/6 containing proposals by the International Bureau for the IPC reform program for the year 2000.

45. The Committee reviewed a list of IPC reform tasks established at its twenty-eighth session (see Annex V to document IPC/CE/28/5) and agreed with the proposal by the International Bureau to consider Tasks Nos. 1 and 6 on the reform program completed.
46. The Committee agreed with the proposal by the International Bureau to combine Tasks Nos. 2 and 9 and decided that the wording of the combined Task should be as follows: “Consider the IPC revision policy, the revision procedure and the criteria for accepting new revision proposals in relation to the core and advanced levels of the reformed IPC”.
47. The Committee decided that Task No. 7 was appropriate for inclusion in the reform program for the year 2000.
48. In view of the close relationship between Task No. 10 (“Develop a general question and answer pamphlet on the application of the IPC”) and Task No. 13 (“Improve IPC training by providing modern training techniques, for example, computer-based and Internet training tools”), the Committee decided that elaboration of both tasks should be coordinated, with a view to preparing an electronic training tool containing training packages for, respectively, novice users, intermediate-level users and advanced users. The Committee agreed therefore that Task No. 10 should be assigned to the International Bureau responsible for the elaboration of Task No. 13.
49. Following the discussion of the contents of the core level and a uniform set of rules for the reformed IPC, the Committee agreed to create new Tasks Nos. 14 and 15 (see paragraphs 26 and 33, above).
50. Bearing in mind that revision proposals relating to the advanced level of the IPC would be submitted in the English language and taking account of the needs of non-English language speaking users and the provisions of the Strasbourg Agreement, the Committee agreed that ways and means for preparing the French version of the advanced level should be studied and decided to create the new Task No. 16 “Study ways and means for the establishment of the French version of the advanced level of the IPC”.
51. The IPC reform program for the year 2000, as adopted by the Committee, appears in Annex V to this report.

#### IPC REVISION REQUESTS

52. The Committee considered the revision requests contained in document IPC/CE/29/7, taking also into account the proposals reproduced in Supplements 1 and 2 to this document.
53. The Committee accepted the revision requests referred to in Annex VI to this report. In respect of project C 422, concerning combinatorial chemistry, the Committee agreed that elaboration of a relevant classification scheme for the next edition of the IPC was of utmost importance. The Committee therefore requested comments on the two proposals, to be submitted before May 15, 2000, in order to allow a first substantial discussion on the project at the next session of the IPC Revision Working Group, which should appoint a project rapporteur.

## IMPLEMENTATION BY INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OFFICES OF THE SEVENTH EDITION OF THE IPC

54. The Committee took note of document IPC/CE/29/8, which Annex contained a summary, prepared by the International Bureau, of the replies received in response to WIPO Circular No. IPC 32, dated January 28, 2000, requesting information on when offices started, or would start, printing the symbols of the seventh edition of the IPC on the patent documents they issue. This summary contained a list indicating the dates given by 38 offices, which list appears in Annex VII to this report.

## REQUEST TO GRANT OBSERVER STATUS IN MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

55. The Committee considered a request to grant observer status submitted by the Publishers of the journal *World Patent Information* and reproduced in the Annex to document IPC/CE/29/9.

56. The Committee noted that a similar request by the Publishers of the journal *World Patent Information* had been considered by the SCIT at its fourth Plenary session, in December 1999, and that the SCIT had requested the International Bureau to prepare a set of guidelines which could help to clarify the various possibilities for inviting organizations involved in the commercial provision of IP information services to attend or participate in the meetings as observers.

57. While recognizing the value of the international journal *World Patent Information* in disseminating information to the general public concerning the IPC, the Committee decided, awaiting the above-mentioned guidelines, to defer its decision as to whether the Publishers of the journal should be granted the observer status.

58. The Committee authorized, however, the International Bureau to invite, on a provisional basis, the Publishers of the journal to participate, in an observer capacity, in the meetings of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group in 2000.

## PRESENTATIONS

59. The Delegation of Japan made a presentation of the OWAKE (“Primary automatic classification”) system developed by the Industrial Property Cooperation Center, an affiliated organization of the JPO. The OWAKE System provides automatic allocation of patent applications to appropriate classifiers and automatic preclassification assignment on the basis of the morphological, syntactic and semantic automatic analysis of technical terms in the patent application, selection of most important terms and their comparison with preselected terms from the Patent Gazette database and the IPC database, by calculating the resemblance ratio. By improving the accuracy ratio of the system, OWAKE system has possibility to be converted in the future to an automatic retrieval system and automatic classification assignment system, with an ultimate goal to reach accurate classification at IPC main group level.

60. The Delegation of the EPO made a presentation of a new classification technique which was under testing at the EPO and was intended for classifying complex objects for which a traditional classification technique and text searching were not successful. Such complex objects included spatial relations, multistep processes, mixtures with alternative components, electric circuits and other concepts. The new technique provided linking existing classification symbols into sentences and paragraphs and avoided development of complex classification schemes. Special tags indicating their position in a sentence or paragraph were assigned to linked classification symbols. The objective of the new classification technique was to increase accuracy of the patent search.

61. The Committee expressed its gratitude for the presentations made.

#### NEXT SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

62. The Committee noted the tentative time for its next session, namely: February 2001.

63. The Committee also noted the dates for the sessions of its Working Groups in the first half of 2000:

ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group: third session: May 1 to 5, 2000

IPC Revision Working Group: third session: June 5 to 16, 2000.

*64. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its closing meeting on March 17, 2000.*

[Annexes follow]