

# WIPO



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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
GENEVA

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

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS**

**Thirty-Second Session  
Geneva, February 24 to 28, 2003**

WORKING GROUPS AND WORKING METHODS OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

*Document prepared by the Secretariat*

1. At its thirty-first session, held in February/March 2002, the Committee of Experts discussed the proposal by the International Bureau relating to working methods of the Committee (see document IPC/CE/31/7) and agreed that all measures should be taken to ensure sufficient flexibility of the working methods in order to manage a project or a task in a dynamic manner which was especially important in the period of IPC reform.

2. It was suggested that the decision-making process in the IPC Union was relatively slow which was caused by the fact that the Committee normally meets in ordinary sessions only once a year. In order to accelerate the decision-making process, certain Delegations proposed that the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group be abolished, its duties assumed by the Committee itself, and the number of annual meetings of the Committee increased.

3. The Committee agreed that the above proposal supposed introduction of drastic changes in the working structure and methods of IPC bodies and required careful consideration. The Committee requested its member States and observer organizations to submit comments on the proposal in time for the seventh session of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group and authorized the Working Group to consider the proposal and comments submitted thereon. [See document IPC/CE/31/8, paragraphs 47 to 51.]

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4. At its seventh session, held in May 2002, the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group agreed that the implementation of the above proposal in the year 2002 could negatively influence the IPC reform process, in view of the additional resources that would be needed for convening an extraordinary session of the Committee of Experts and taking into consideration that the Working Group had reached a stage where several tasks on the program could be completed in the course of this year. The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Committee to consider its abolishment and the increase in the number of annual meetings of the Committee at the next ordinary session of the Committee, at the beginning of 2003. [See document IPC/REF/7/3), paragraphs 11 to 13.]
5. In considering whether the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group could be abolished, the Committee of Experts may wish to take into account the following factors.
6. The ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group was created by the Committee of Experts at its twenty-eighth session, held in March 1999, when the Committee decided to launch IPC reform. The mandate given to the Working Group included the preparation of the strategic plan for the development of the IPC and the elaboration, in light of the IPC long-term goals, of tasks of IPC reform (see document IPC/CE/28/5, paragraph 14).
7. The program of the Working Group initially included 13 tasks. Six more tasks were later added to the program.
8. Since 1999, eight sessions of the Working Group have been held. The Working Group considered and approved the strategic plan for the development of the IPC at its second session in November 1999. The strategic plan was subsequently adopted by the Committee and served as a guide in the elaboration of the tasks of IPC reform.
9. At its eighth session, held in November 2002, the Working Group reviewed the tasks included in the IPC reform program and indicated the status of each task (see Annex IX to document IPC/REF/8/2).
10. As follows from this review, out of 19 tasks on the IPC reform program, nine tasks have been completed by the Working Group, three tasks are close to completion and for five tasks substantial work remains to be done. Two tasks represent the tasks of continuing activity.
11. If the Committee decided to abolish the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group, the completion of the remaining tasks of IPC reform should be carried out by the Committee itself, the Task Force on the revision of the Guide to the IPC and the International Bureau. If so decided, the next session of the Committee may be held in Autumn 2003.

12. With regard to the improvement of working methods of the Committee and its working groups, the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group, at its seventh session in May 2002, considered and approved a respective proposal by the International Bureau (see Annex IV to document IPC/REF/7/3). The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Committee to adopt the proposal as contributing to more efficient IPC-related work. The proposal is reproduced in the Annex to this document.

*13. The Committee of Experts is invited to take a decision concerning the abolishment of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group and to adopt the proposal regarding the improved working methods of the Committee.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

EXCERPT FROM DOCUMENT IPC/REF/7/3, ANNEX IV

WORKING METHODS OF THE IPC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

1. The working methods of the Committee of Experts and its working groups should be of sufficient flexibility to manage a project or a task in a dynamic manner and to provide for increased use of electronic working which would allow for issues to be considered by a maximum number of experts. The overall mandate of the Committee of Experts should be to provide policy guidance with regard to the development of the IPC, to consider the reports of the working groups as to whether their activities are in line with overall objectives of the development of the IPC, to establish work programs of the working groups and to adopt the results achieved.
2. The working groups should have authority to further modify their work programs. In respect of the IPC revision requests, a simplified procedure has already been authorized by the Committee allowing submissions of the revision request directly to the IPC Revision Working Group.
3. The Committee should also authorize the IPC Revision Working Group to carry out the work on the introduction in the electronic layer of the IPC of the electronic data, such as classification definitions, illustrating chemical formulae and informative references, and to approve this data, when appropriate, without submitting them for adoption to the Committee which will carry out monitoring of this work.
4. Any working group dealing with tasks of IPC reform should be authorized to modify the title and scope of the task, as needed, and accept new tasks to the reform program proposed by its members, if appropriate. Decisions of a working group regarding new tasks and changes to existing tasks should be based on the overall policy laid down by the Committee and should be reported to the Committee for adoption.
5. The working groups are empowered to create Task Forces to carry out short-term, focused activities. Emphasis will be placed on working by electronic means but physical meetings may be held, as necessary.
6. Discussion of IPC revision projects and of other tasks of the IPC Revision Working Group is carried out electronically, through submission of proposals and comments to the IPC electronic forum which is structured with regard to major activities of the Working Group, such as revision projects, definition projects, translation projects. Alternatively, the IPC revision list server may be used for other submissions.
7. Discussion of IPC reform tasks is carried out electronically through submission of proposals and comments to the IPC reform list server. In the future, activities with respect to IPC reform tasks and certain tasks which could be carried out by the Committee of Experts itself will also be incorporated in a structured form on the WIPO IPC Website.

8. Meeting documentation will be handled electronically with the exception of the letter of invitation and the agenda. The agenda will indicate the meeting documents available on the WIPO IPC Website and an address to contact should paper copies be required. A limited number of paper copies will be available for delegates at the meeting.

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