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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**

GENEVA

**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION  
(IPC UNION)****IPC REVISION WORKING GROUP****Second Session****Geneva, November 23 to December 3, 1999**

REPORT

*adopted by the Working Group*

## INTRODUCTION

1. The IPC Revision Working Group (hereinafter referred to as “the Working Group”) held its second session in Geneva from November 23 to December 3, 1999. The following members of the Working Group were represented at the session: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), European Patent Office (EPO) (17). Croatia and Slovenia were represented by observers. The list of participants appears as Annex A to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. A. Bruun (Sweden), Chairman of the Working Group. Mr. M. Makarov, Head, International Patent Classification Section, Inter-Office Information Services, WIPO, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of WIPO.

## OFFICERS

3. Mr. A. Farassopoulos (WIPO) acted as Secretary of the session.

## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. The Working Group unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex B to this report.

## CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

5. 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 Working Group (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 Working Group was expressed or repeated after the conclusion was reached.

## REPORT ON THE SECOND SESSION OF THE AD HOC IPC REFORM WORKING GROUP

6. The Working Group noted an oral report by the International Bureau on the second session of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group (see document IPC/REF/2/2), in particular that the Reform Working Group had approved the IPC strategic plan which outlined the major steps of the IPC reform aimed at achieving the long-term goals of the development of the IPC. The Working Group also noted that the Reform Working Group had agreed on the types of electronic data to be introduced in the electronic layer of the IPC, had continued to study the use of multiple classification and of the hybrid systems in the IPC and had established a survey of reclassification data available from industrial property offices as a first stage in creating the Master Classification Database encompassing classification data relating to the latest edition of the IPC.

7. The Working Group agreed that the results and trends of the ongoing IPC reform should always be taken into account in the revision work, for example, the possibility of multiple classification and the need for the introduction of informative references should systematically be considered in the revision projects under discussion.

## IPC REVISION PROGRAM

### General

8. The Working Group discussed 50 pending IPC revision projects and approved amendments relating to those projects (see Annexes 1 to 48 to this report). The decisions of the Working Group in respect of those projects are listed in Annex C to this report, and further information with respect to some of these decisions is given in paragraph 16, below. A list indicating to which classes or subclasses amendments have been approved during the revision period appears as Annex D to this report. Changes to amendments approved at earlier sessions are indicated in Annex E to this report.

9. The Working Group had before it, in particular, document IPC/WG/1/2 and the relevant project files.

10. In addition to revision projects, the Working Group considered a paper, submitted by the EPO, indicating errors in the position of separating lines in subclasses C 04 B and C 10 G. With regard to subclass C 04 B, the Working Group agreed that the indicated error should be treated as a minor correction of the IPC and requested the International Bureau to introduce the necessary correction in the next edition of the Classification. With regard to subclass C 10 G, the Working Group could not agree on an appropriate solution and, consequently, invited the EPO to submit a revised paper indicating more detailed reasons for the requested corrections. Comments were invited on the paper to be submitted.

11. The Working Group also considered a discussion paper, submitted by the EPO, which outlined problems in using the new subclass A 61 P covering therapeutic activity and in classifying patent documents relating to combinatorial chemistry.

12. In respect of subclass A 61 P which is used for classification in combination with chemical areas of the IPC, the Working Group noted the difficulties in finding appropriate classification symbols of subclass A 61 P for examiners working in chemical areas, due to a lack of medical knowledge and a large number of therapeutic activities sometimes indicated in relevant documents. The Working Group further noted that those difficulties could be partially overcome by forwarding the documents for secondary classification to examiners working in the area of medicine. The Working Group agreed to monitor the problem of classifying in subclass A 61 P and to further discuss it at a later time when sufficient experience in using that subclass has been accumulated. The Working Group also agreed that a situation when complete classification would lead to a high number of classification symbols, like in subclass A 61 P, should be addressed in the future revision of the Guide to the IPC. Finally, the Working Group requested the EPO to provide examples of patent documents illustrating classification problems in subclass A 61 P.

13. In respect of combinatorial chemistry, the Working Group noted that it represented an emerging complex technology for which no appropriate place existed in the IPC. The Working Group was informed that the United Kingdom Patent Office and the United States Patent and Trademark Office had elaborated classification schemes covering combinatorial chemistry in their national patent classifications. The Working Group agreed that elaboration of a relevant classification scheme for the next edition of the IPC was of utmost importance. In this regard, it was noted that the United Kingdom intended to submit, in the near future, a revision request concerning combinatorial chemistry. It was agreed that submission of a detailed revision proposal could be postponed to a later time when an experience in using the already elaborated classification schemes could be estimated. The Working Group noted that, for assistance in developing an IPC classification scheme for combinatorial chemistry, the United States of America and the EPO would provide examples of respective patent documents.

14. When considering IPC revision projects, the Working Group noted that, in a number of projects, it was felt necessary to elaborate informative references for inclusion in the electronic layer of the IPC or to transfer existing references to the electronic layer. It was agreed that with regard to informative references the normal revision procedure was not appropriate and that a simplified accelerated procedure should be introduced. In this context, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the IPC Committee of Experts that the following procedure be implemented.

(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 Working Group. In the case of positive comments, the proposed informative references would formally be approved at the session of the Working Group.

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

(c) It was suggested that some informative references, for example, between function-oriented and application places, could be introduced in the IPC, after a preliminary study, using automated means and that, in the future, a global project for reconsidering existing references in the IPC might be envisaged.

15. Finally, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Committee of Experts that the provisional presentation of informative references in the form of informative notes, agreed upon at the first session of the Working Group, should be reviewed and that the difference between informative and defining references should be described in the Guide to the IPC.

#### IPC Revision Projects

16. The Working Group made the following observations, in addition to the decisions set forth in Annex C to this report, with respect to the IPC revision projects:

Project C 278 (mechanical) – It was agreed to abolish the first place rule in the part of subclass B 32 B relating to “methods or apparatus for making layered products”, since the said rule was not profitable for classifying and searching production methods. The Working Group realized that the partial abolishment of the first place rule would result in different rules operational in different parts of subclass B 32 B, which would contradict one of the long-term goals of the IPC reform, namely to make the IPC easy to use. In the opinion of some Delegations, it was preferable therefore to create a new subclass covering production methods and apparatus. It was also indicated that layered products and production methods thereof were closely interrelated and that their separation in different subclasses would make classifying and searching more difficult.

Comments were invited on:

- whether “methods and apparatus for making layered products” should be retained in subclass B 32 B or should be transferred to a new subclass of the IPC;
- how the relationship between products and production methods should be specified in the classification scheme, taking into account the provisions of the Guide to the IPC and the existing notes in subclass B 32 B, in particular the note following the title of group 31/00;
- the wordings of groups included in the consolidated proposal by the EPO (see Annex 12 to the project file), and the desirability of multiple classification within the main groups for “methods and apparatus for making layered products” and between those main groups.

Project C 314 (chemical) – It was agreed to apply multiple classification for subject matter covered by several main groups of subclass A 23 G and a note to that effect was introduced (see Annex 2 to this report).

Project C 323 (chemical) – In view of the complex classification rules, including the first place rule, which were operational in subclass B 32 B, it was decided not to introduce multiple classification by combination of main groups relevant for the subject matter in question, since it could disturb the balance of the existing rules in the subclass. It was agreed therefore to introduce proposed subdivisions of group B 32 B 15/08 (see Annex 3 to this report).

Project C 325 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on whether the references in group B 60 R 16/04 should be considered as informative and should therefore be transferred to the informative layer of the IPC.

Project C 336 (chemical) – Comments were invited on:

- the clarity of the title of group A 01 P 7/00 (see Annex 7 to this report) and whether it needed further explanations;
- whether a group covering “algicides” (see the proposed group A 01 P 13/06 in Annex 12 to the project file) was needed and, if that were the case, where it should be placed in the classification scheme.

Project C 340 (mechanical, e-forum) – Comments were invited on:

- whether any amendments to the titles of subclasses A 45 C and A 45 F and to their main groups would be needed, in view of the references introduced in the subclass titles (see Annexes 15 and 16 to this report) in order to establish a clear borderline between them;
- how the borderline between subclasses A 45 C and B 65 D could be clarified, taking into account the existing references in the subclass titles and in group B 65 D 85/00;
- the correctness of the hierarchical position of group A 45 C 13/06 (see Annex 15 to this report).

Project C 341 (chemical) – Comments were invited on the rapporteur report in the light of the comments submitted by Germany (see Annexes 16 and 15 to the project file, respectively), in particular whether group A 61 K 50/00, covering “electrically conductive gels, adhesives and compositions” for use in diagnosis or therapy, should be created.

Project C 342 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on the desirability of special classification rules in the area covered by group A 61 B 5/15, for example, the last place rule, precedence references, multiple classification.

Project C 343 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on (see Annex 18, relating to subclass A 61 B, to this report, unless otherwise indicated):

- the correctness of the Note after group 17/00;
- whether additional references, similar to the existing references, would be needed in group 17/32;
- the desirability of the proposed groups A 61 B 17/3215 and 17/3217 (see Annex 16 to the project file) and the necessity of references between subclass A 61 B and other places of the IPC, for example B 65 D 83/00, relating to subject matter covered by those groups;
- whether examples would be desirable in the title of group 17/94 as proposed in the said Annex 16.

Project C 346 (mechanical) – It was agreed that the existing application-oriented groups 4/04, 4/14, 4/22, 4/36, 7/175, 18/40, 18/42, 18/44, 19/12 and 19/14, as well as the proposed groups 18/407 and 18/413, were not appropriate in the function-oriented subclass B 02 C and that respective amendments were required in the subclass.

Comments were invited on which of the three alternative solutions was preferable: the deletion or non-adoption of those groups, the transfer of the groups to relevant application places of the IPC, including possible creation of new groups in those places, or the replacement of the groups with an indexing scheme covering specified materials or articles as proposed by the Rapporteur (see Annex 18 to the project file).

Project C 352 (chemical) – Comments were invited on the correctness of the titles of the existing groups B 41 M 5/132 and 5/155, in particular whether “additives or binders” were meant to be colour-forming and colour-developing.

Project C 353 (mechanical) – In view of the speciality of subject matter covered by subclass B 60 J, it was agreed that the relationship between subclasses B 60 J and E 06 B should be directed by the rules disclosed in paragraph 59 of the Guide to the IPC so as to provide the possibility for double classification in the function-oriented and application places. To that effect, it was decided to introduce a new note after the title of subclass B 60 J, instead of the existing notes (1) and (2) (see Annex 25 to this report).

In the opinion of the Working Group, this Project and the revision approach applied could serve as an example for the study of multiple classification carried out by the Reform Working Group and for the future revision of the Guide to the IPC in respect of function-oriented and application places.

Project C 354 (mechanical) – Germany was invited to submit a consolidated proposal, taking into account the counter-proposals by France and Sweden (see Annexes 15 and 16 to the project file).

Comments were invited on the proposal to be submitted.

Project C 355 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on (see Annex 27, relating to subclass B 60 T, to this report, unless otherwise indicated):

- whether the abbreviation “ABS” in the example of group 8/176 was a registered trademark and, if that were the case, whether it should be replaced by another example;
- how a proper relationship between groups 8/1763 and 8/1764 should be established, for example, whether a precedence reference was needed or the latter group could become a subgroup of the former;
- the correctness of the wording of group 8/1767, in the light of its intended scope;
- whether multiple classification was desirable in main group 8/00 or in some parts of the main group, for example, inside its one-dot groups, taking into account the approved amendments to the main group and the proposed, but not yet considered, amendments;
- the remaining part of the Rapporteur’s proposal (see Annex 6 to the project file), which included groups 8/322 to 8/84.

Project C 358 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on:

- the clarity of the amended title of group B 65 G 69/28 in respect of the term “accessories” used therein (see Annex 30 to this report);
- the desirability and the clarity of the title of the group proposed as B 65 G 69/30 in Annex 7 to the project file.

Project C 362 (chemical) – Comments were invited on the rapporteur report (see Annex 16 to the project file), in particular, whether the last place rule should be used in main group C 09 K 7/00 and, if that were the case, how it should be implemented.

Project C 363 (chemical) – The EPO was requested to carry out a statistical analysis concerning the potential file size of groups in the amended classification scheme of main group C 10 L 1/00 (see Annex 31 to this report) and, if necessary, to propose additional groups for the introduction therein.

Comments were invited on:

- how “mixtures of additives” should be classified, in the light of the proposal submitted by the EPO (see Annex 12 to the project file), and whether indexing or multiple classification should be applied for that purpose;
- whether a group covering subject matter indicated in the proposed group C 10 L 1/31 (see Annex 1 to the project file) should be created and, if that were the case, where it should be placed in the classification scheme.

It was noted that “hydrazones and semicarbazones” included as examples in the title of group C 10 L 1/226 (see Annex 31 to this report) were also covered by group C 10 L 1/228 and should be classified in the latter group in view of the last place rule applied in groups C 10 L 1/12 to 1/30. Comments were invited on whether those compounds should be moved as examples to group C 10 L 1/228 or referred out from that group.

Project C 366 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on the revised proposal by Germany (see Annex 13 to the project file).

Project C 367 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on the Rapporteur’s proposal (see Annex 6 to the project file).

Project C 368 (chemical) – A part of the Rapporteur’s proposal was approved. Comments were invited on the remainder of the proposal, group C 09 K 8/04 and onwards (see Annex 16 to the project file).

Project C 371 (mechanical) – It was decided to proceed with the complete revision of subclass F 23 B. It was indicated that a relatively small size of subclass F 23 B facilitated its restructuring and implementation of new features envisaged by the IPC reform, for example, the introduction of classification definitions.

Sweden was invited to submit a detailed proposal concerning subclass F 23 B. Informal comments on the proposals contained in Annexes 6 to 8 to the project file were requested for submission by e-mail to Sweden before the date indicated for the detailed proposal (see Annex C to this report).

Comments were invited on the proposal to be submitted.

Project C 373 (electrical) – Comments were invited on:

- the relationship between group 29/06 and the other groups of main group G 01 N 29/00;
- whether, in view of this relationship, group 29/06 could be used for multiple classification and where it should be better placed, for example, as a one-dot group at the end of the scheme of main group 29/00;



– the relationship between the proposed groups G 01 N 29/36 and 29/44 (see Annex 17 to the project file), especially in respect of subject matter relating to “improving the signal-to-noise ratio”, whether a clear borderline between them could be elaborated or whether they should be combined in one group.

Project C 378 (electrical) – It was agreed that in the new classification scheme under group H 01 H 1/02, based on the nature of the material, overlap among its subgroups should not be eliminated by precedence references, but multiple classification should be used. To that end, a note specifying how multiple classification should be applied in this area was introduced.

Project C 379 (electrical) – The Working Group agreed that multiple classification in group H 01 H 13/70, as well as in groups H 01 H 13/50 and 13/68, should not be used.

Comments were invited on how group H 01 H 13/70 should be further subdivided.

Project C 393 (mechanical) – Comments were invited on the proposal submitted by the EPO (see Annex 5 to the project file).

Project C 394 (mechanical) – Comment were invited on the Rapporteur’s proposal, in the light of the counter-proposal by the EPO (see Annexes 9 and 7 to the project file, respectively).

Project C 397 (electrical) – The Working Group agreed that subject matter relating to “active triangulation” should be covered by subclass G 01 S.

Comments were invited on:

– whether the borderline between subclasses G 01 C and G 01 S could be clarified by including, in the reference to G 01 S in the title of subclass G 01 C, the full text of the title of subclass G 01 S;

– whether a reference to the approved group G 01 S 17/48 (“active triangulation”) should be introduced in group G 01 C 3/00 or its subgroups, in the light of the existing references to subclass G 01 C in group G 01 S 17/08.

Project C 400 (electrical) – Comments were invited on the correctness of the wording of approved group G 06 F 5/14 (see Annex 45E to this report), in English and French, in the light of its intended scope.

Project C 404 (electrical) – Comments were invited on the rapporteur report (see Annex 16 to the project file), in particular on the applicability of multi-aspect classification in the area in question.

Project C 405 (electrical) – The Working Group agreed not to create the proposed group G 11 B 17/059 (see Annex 16 to the project file), in view of its inevitable overlap with subclass G 06 K.

It was further agreed to draw the attention of the IPC Reform Working Group to the unclear borderline between subclasses G 06 K and G 11 B and the insufficient structure of the former subclass. The Working Group recommended including those subclasses in the future review of IPC subclasses aimed at the standardization of their structure and elaboration of classification definitions.

Project C 406 (electrical) – Comments were invited on the rapporteur report (see Annex 6 to the project file).

Project C 410 (electrical) – Comments were invited on the rapporteur report and the Rapporteur's proposal (see Annexes 15 and 16, respectively, to the project file), especially on the proposed notes, in the light of the comments from the EPO (see Annex 18 to the project file).

Project C 412 (chemical, e-forum) – It was decided to broaden the initial scope of the Project and to carry out a revision of the whole main group A 61 K 7/00 as proposed by the EPO (see Annex 13 to the project file). It was suggested that renumbering of the said main group to group A 61 K 8/00 could be desirable.

Comments were invited on (see the said Annex 13):

- the proposed amendments to main group A 61 K 7/00, in particular on the groups printed in bold, and whether a new classification scheme of main group 7/00 could be restricted to those groups or whether their proposed subdivisions should also be introduced;
- whether the overall last place rule in main group 7/00 was desirable or whether other arrangements would be preferable;
- the proposed notes following group 7/00.

Project C 413 (chemical, e-forum) – The EPO was invited to submit a counter-proposal in respect of subject matter covered by groups B 01 D 15/10 to 15/22 in the Rapporteur's proposal (see Annex 10 to the project file).

Comments were invited on:

- whether the Rapporteur's proposal or the proposal to be submitted should be followed in respect of those groups;
- whether "sorbent chromatography materials" should be classified under group B 01 D 15/00, B 01 J 20/00, G 01 N 30/48 or another group of the IPC, bearing in mind that it was decided to collect all those materials in one place of the classification;
- whether the proposed group G 01 N 30/89 (see the said Annex 10) should be created or whether its subject matter should be provided in another area of the IPC;
- whether "preparative chromatographic methods for specific materials" should be classified in main group B 01 D 15/00 as proposed in Annex 1 to the project file, or whether the solution proposed by the Rapporteur in the Note after group B 01 D 15/08 should be followed.

Project C 417 (mechanical, e-forum) – Comments were invited on the Rapporteur's proposal (see Annex 7 to the project file), in particular on the desirability of precedence references within group F 23 C 13/00 and of precedence references between groups 10/00 and 13/00 and other main groups of subclass F 23 C.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF A GENERAL QUESTION AND ANSWER PAMPHLET ON THE APPLICATION OF THE IPC

17. Discussions were based on document IPC/WG/2/2 containing a report submitted by the United States of America acting as Rapporteur for the elaboration of this Task on the program of the IPC reform. The report included an outline of the possible procedure for the preparation of a general question and answer pamphlet.

18. The Working Group agreed that the pamphlet should be targeted to novice users wishing to access the IPC for the retrieval of patent information and should contain general information on the classification and search in the form of frequently asked questions and answers thereto.

19. It was noted that the elaboration of the pamphlet could be based on the available explanatory material describing the current state of the IPC, for example, on the brochure "General Information on the IPC," and could incorporate, at a later stage, further material resulting from the IPC reform, depending on trends in its development.

20. The Working Group requested its members and observers to collect available training material and IPC-related user's inquiries, appropriate for the purposes of the pamphlet, and to submit those materials to the Rapporteur and the International Bureau, in time before the next session of the Working Group. It was noted that a detailed time schedule for the preparation of the pamphlet would be specified in the IPC strategic implementation plan to be elaborated following further guidance with regard to the IPC reform, which would be provided by the IPC Committee of Experts at its session in March 2000.

#### CREATION OF AN IPC ELECTRONIC FORUM

21. The International Bureau made a demonstration of the IPC electronic forum site on the Internet which had been implemented in August 1999, following a decision of the Working Group taken at its first session (see document IPC/WG/1/2, paragraphs 22 to 27). The Working Group also noted an oral report by the International Bureau on the use of this facility and the problems encountered during the trial period.

22. The Working Group expressed its appreciation of the work carried out by the International Bureau on developing the IPC electronic forum—a new tool for supporting the revision process.

23. The Working Group was informed that the above-mentioned problems would be solved as a result of some modifications already introduced by the Information Technology Division of WIPO. Furthermore, it was planned to introduce the following improvements:

- regular replacement of the Word or WordPerfect files by PDF files;

- notification by e-mail to the members and observers of the Working Group of the availability of new documents on the e-forum;
- provision of links from the “IPC Revision Projects” page on the Internet to the electronic forum for the relevant projects;
- the files on the e-forum would keep their original names which would follow the rules established at the nineteenth session of the PCIPI Working Group on Search Information (see document PCIPI/SI/XIX/5, paragraph 26).

24. It was agreed to include in the electronic forum trial the Projects C 411 to C 421. It was further agreed that the paper documentation on C-projects sent to the offices by mail would be replaced by a limited number of PDF files, for example, one file for mechanics, one for chemistry and one for electricity, sent to the offices by e-mail in due time before each meeting. The paper documentation would be available during the meeting and sent thereafter in one copy to each office.

#### STATUS OF THE WORK

25. The Chairman assessed the status of the Tasks assigned to the Working Group and stated that 50 revision projects on the agenda of this session (see Annex B to this report), as well as the other Tasks before the Working Group had been satisfactorily dealt with. Of the revision projects dealt with, 20 related to the mechanical field, 14 to the chemical field and 16 to the electrical field. He pointed out that Annex C to this report gave the status of each revision project and brief information on actions to follow.

#### NEXT SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP

26. The Working Group assessed the workload expected to be before it at its next session (see the following paragraph) and agreed to devote the first three days of the first week to the mechanical field, the remainder of that week to the chemical field and the second week to the electrical field.

27. The Working Group noted the provisional dates for its third session: June 5 to 16, 2000.

*28. This report was unanimously adopted by the Working Group at its closing meeting on December 3, 1999.*

[Annexes follow]