ANNEX VII/ANNEXE VII

PROCEDURE FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE IPC

1.   The Invitation

The maintenance procedure is initiated by the International Bureau (IB) which regularly invites members of the IPC Committee of Experts (CE) and the intergovernmental organizations referred to in Article 5(2) of the Strasbourg Agreement to submit requests for subclasses that need maintenance.

2.   The Request

A maintenance request should explain the reasons for the need for maintenance. The request should be posted on a dedicated part of the WIPO IPC Web site and submitted to the IPC electronic forum.

3.   Consideration of the Request

The IB forwards the requests for consideration by the IPC Revision Working Group (IPC/WG). The IPC/WG evaluates all requests to ensure that they comply with the policy and criteria laid down by the CE and determines the need for them and their priority. Requests approved by the IPC/WG are put on a waiting list. At a rate that the resources of the IPC/WG allow, the approved requests are included as maintenance "M" projects in the IPC maintenance program.

As a long-term goal all subclasses of the IPC should undergo maintenance. Priority is given as a result of a balanced consideration of several factors. The following are examples of factors speaking in favor of priority:

- If a subclass presents classification difficulties that are caused by shortcomings of the scheme;

- If a subclass covers technology that has developed substantially since the subclass was created; and

- If a subclass has a high search activity or high file size growth.

Subclasses that have received subclass definitions should have priority, particularly when the rapporteur of the definition project has indicated a need for maintenance.

4.   Rapporteurs

        The rapporteurs are responsible for organizing discussions on the projects through the IPC electronic forum, for taking decisions as to when the projects should be submitted for final approval or consideration by the IPC/WG and for preparing rapporteur reports. The objective of the rapporteurs should be to accomplish as much work as possible by electronic communication, so that the projects could be finally approved, in one of the authentic language versions, at a single session of the IPC/WG.

5.   The Maintenance Task Force

        A Task Force is appointed by and reports to the IPC/WG. It is responsible for settling matters of principle that might turn up during maintenance projects and, if necessary, indicate them to the IPC/WG. The Task Force should discuss and solve problems for which a solution has not been found during the e-forum discussion. If necessary, the Task Force may request a new round of comments. In exceptional cases, the Task Force may request a decision by the IPC/WG. The Task Force normally works by means of electronic correspondence, but the IB may arrange physical meetings.

        The Task Force should make a collection of preferred standard solutions, which shall serve as a basis for future maintenance projects and for revision of the IPC. This collection should serve as a basis for a handbook on how IPC schemes should be drafted and organized.

6.   Working Procedure

        The maintenance projects are discussed at three levels:

•   first on the e-forum for maintenance projects; then

•   at the Task Force when agreement on certain points has not been achieved; and finally

•   at the IPC/WG for formal approval. Before this formal approval the project must be approved by the Special Subcommittee for the advanced level.

        Maintenance projects are based on subclasses or other major coherent parts of the IPC, and therefore involve maintenance of both the core and the advanced levels at the same time. The IPC/WG is responsible for the maintenance work, but participation of the offices that are members of the Special Subcommittee is highly desirable.

        When a project is included in the program, an M project file is created and the IPC/WG establishes time frames for individual actions on the project (initial comments, initial proposal, comments and rapporteur reports) and appoints an office-rapporteur.

        At the start of a project the IPC/WG invites initial comments on particular issues that need to be addressed. These comments should form the basis of an initial proposal by a volunteering office, that could either be the office-rapporteur or some other office.

The initial comments and the initial proposal are posted on the e-forum. Comments are posted on the e-forum by any office wishing to comment, whether it is a member of the Maintenance Task Force or not, before the deadline indicated for each project. After each round of comments, the rapporteurs post their reports and, if necessary, modified proposals.

When general agreement has been reached on the project or when the commenting Offices have failed to reach agreement within a specified time, the electronic phase of the project, in its original language, is considered completed. The Rapporteur then submits it to the IPC/WG with a report stating any recommendations.

7.   Finalization of a Project

The IPC/WG may approve a project, with or without amendments, reject it or return it to be partly or completely reconsidered.

When the IPC/WG has approved amendments in one of the authentic language versions, a volunteering office should prepare the amendments to the core level in the other authentic language version.

Upon completion of the core level parts of the project in both language versions, the amendments of the core level should be forwarded for adoption to the CE. Adopted amendments of the core level are included in the next edition of the printed IPC. Amendments that do not require reclassification of documents can be introduced in an electronic version of the IPC after approval.

Upon approval of the amendments of the advanced level in one of the authentic language versions, the IB should incorporate them in the advanced level. Within three months after the approval, the IB should incorporate amendments to the other authentic language version in the advanced level.

8.   Conversion of a Maintenance Project to a Revision Project

The ambition of the maintenance should be to achieve improvements to the schemes without causing any intellectual reclassification of documents. The content of entire groups can for example be moved by renumbering or by modification of the hierarchical structure, as long as the moves do not necessitate evaluating individual documents. If a problem is noticed during a maintenance project that can only be solved by making substantial changes to the schemes, resulting in intellectual reclassification, the rapporteur should submit a request for revision. The IPC/WG and/or the Special Subcommittee should give priority to consideration of such revision requests, so that the maintenance project, or a relevant part of it, can quickly be converted to a revision project.

[Annex VIII follows/
L'annexe VIII suit]