

ANNEX

IPC REFORM STATUS REPORT

1. In 1999, the Assembly of the IPC Union endorsed the recommendation by the Committee of Experts to launch the reform of the IPC. This recommendation was made in order to adapt the Classification to the electronic environment, to increase its efficiency for the retrieval of patent information and to facilitate its use for small and medium-sized industrial property offices and the general public.

2. In 2005, the basic period of IPC reform was completed. The reform has resulted in a number of fundamental changes to the structure and methods of revision and use of the IPC, as follows:

- the IPC has been divided into two levels – the core and the advanced levels – to better satisfy differing needs of users of patent information;
- an electronic layer has been created to include the data illustrating IPC entries and providing their detailed explanation;
- a new revision procedure providing rapid introduction in the IPC of changes required by developments in technology has been elaborated;
- the principle of reclassification of search files has been introduced to ensure that only the most recent version of the IPC is used when undertaking a patent information search;
- the Master Classification Database has been established which would contain a global collection of patent documents classified according to the most recent version of the IPC.

3. The new, eighth, edition of the IPC incorporating the changes resulting from the reform was published in summer 2005. This new edition represents the product of a six-year period of reforming, as well as revising, the Classification.

4. Numerous revision amendments have been included in the eighth edition in order to improve the classification system and take into account technical development. In total, over 1,400 new entries, mostly relating to new technologies, have been introduced in the IPC. The most prominent revision amendments include:

- a new subclass for conjoint control of vehicle sub-units and control of hybrid vehicles;

- a new subclass for combinatorial chemistry – a new area in chemical technology applied, for example, to drug synthesis;
- a new subclass for data processing systems and methods for administrative, commercial, financial and managerial purposes;
- a new main group for traditional medicine based on the use of plants, which represents the most important part of documented traditional knowledge.

5. In order to make the new edition available on various media, it has been published on paper in its reduced form (core level) and on the Internet in its complete form including the electronic layer. Various IPC-related materials supplementing the new edition, such as official Catchword Indexes, the Revision Concordance List, the IPC validity file, have also been published and made available to users.

6. In the process of IPC reform, modern information technologies were widely applied and various IT tools supporting the reformed IPC and its use have been elaborated, including:

- a new IPC management information system for maintenance, revision and publication of the IPC;
- a natural language system for searching in the IPC;
- an automated tool for classification at high hierarchical levels of the IPC intended to provide assistance in the classification work to smaller industrial property offices;
- an IPC symbols validation tool.

7. The eighth edition of the IPC entered into force on January 1, 2006, and as of this date the majority of industrial property offices had started using the new edition for classifying their published patent documents.

8. On February 13, 2006, WIPO organized the IPC Forum Open Day to commemorate the publication and entry into force of the reformed IPC. The purpose of the IPC Forum was to further promote the worldwide use of the IPC by discussing the role of the IPC in accessing and searching patent information and by considering principal features of IPC reform. The Forum was open to the general public.

9. In its conclusions, the IPC Forum agreed that, in the course of a six-year process of IPC reform, basic objectives of the reform have been achieved. However, the Forum noted that the quality of the reformed classification was not yet sufficiently high. It encouraged industrial property offices to take measures to increase the quality of classification of their patent documents, in particular, by validation of published classification symbols and by following the standards for the reformed IPC elaborated by WIPO.

10. The Forum also noted that work should continue to encourage all industrial property offices using the IPC to start application of the reformed IPC as soon as possible.

11. The development of the IPC will continue in order to achieve the following strategic goals:

- further adaptation of the system to technological progress and to the electronic environment;
- creation of a universal search tool for all industrial property offices;
- establishment of a global system for generating, processing and distributing classification information.

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