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**INTERNATIONAL PATENT COOPERATION UNION**  
**(PCT UNION)**

**ASSEMBLY**

**Seventeenth Session (10<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary)\***  
**Geneva, September 24 to October 2, 1990**

MATTERS CONCERNING THE PCT UNION

*Memorandum of the Director General*

## INTRODUCTION

1. The present document contains (paragraphs 2 to 8) a progress report on the status and further development of an optical disc system for the processing, by the International Bureau, of international applications under the PCT, prepared in accordance with the statement made by the Director General at the sixteenth session of the Assembly of the PCT Union, which took place from September 25 to October 4, 1989 (see document PCT/A/XVI/3, paragraphs 10 and 11). It also contains a proposal (paragraphs 9 to 18) that each of the national Offices and International Searching or Preliminary Examining Authorities that chooses to receive, under Rule 87 of the PCT Regulations, the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs in substitution for paper or microfilm copies of published international applications, be able to request the International Bureau to provide it, free of charge, with one work station comprising the equipment needed for reading and printing the published international applications contained in those CD-ROMs.

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\* *Editor's Note:* This electronic document has been created from the paper original and may contain errors. Please bring any such errors to the attention of the PCT Legal Division by e-mail at [pct.legal@wipo.int](mailto:pct.legal@wipo.int)

*Progress Report on the Development of an Optical Disc System for the Processing of International Applications under the PCT*

2. It is recalled that the proposed development of a PCT optical disc system was submitted to the Assembly of the PCT Union at its sixteenth session (see document AB/XX/2, Annex A, item REG.01(5), and Annex Z, paragraphs 20 to 24, document PCT/A/XVI/1, paragraphs 27 to 31, and document AB/XVI/2) and that, before the said session, a study on the development of such a system had been undertaken by the International Bureau, with the help of an expert consultant. The results of the said study had shown that optical disc technology and associated technologies, in particular in the field of computer-aided publication, had reached a state of development in which they could be used to meet the numerous requirements associated with the processing of international applications which imply very advanced technical features. The results of the said study were presented at the sixteenth session of the Assembly of the PCT Union (see document PCT/A/XVI/2).

3. The proposed development of an optical disc system for the processing of international applications under the PCT was approved by the Assembly (see document AB/XX/20, paragraph 199(i)).

4. Following that approval, the International Bureau undertook a detailed analysis of the various tasks carried out by it for the processing of international applications under the PCT and of the various ways in which the carrying out of such tasks could be simplified and/or improved by using an optical disc system. Naturally, the said detailed analysis took into account the results of the study referred to in paragraph 2, above. The results of the analysis were set out in the form of user's requirements.

5. The above-mentioned user's requirements were drawn up having in mind the following objectives, while remaining within the same constraints (keeping of time limits, quality and accuracy of the formalities examination, integrity of files, quality of publications and keeping of confidentiality):

- (i) to improve the efficiency of operations, in particular access to files, their updating and their storage;
- (ii) to rationalize the tasks to be performed, in particular by avoiding, as far as possible, manual operations;
- (iii) to improve the circulation of information between the various functional units involved in the processing of international applications.

6. The following general requirements were identified as corresponding to the achieving of the above-mentioned objectives:

- (i) circulation, storage and retrieval of files: files of the international application would no longer exist in paper form. Instead, all papers making up a file would be stored on optical discs, thus constituting "optical disc files". The optical disc files corresponding to international applications the record copies of which have been received during the preceding three years would be stored on optical discs mounted on "juke box" disc changers and would be accessed in an on-line fashion for consultation and/or printing.

Conversely, the optical disc files relating to older international applications would be archived on optical discs stored on shelves and mounted manually, on request, on optical disc reading and printing equipment;

- (ii) automatic page setting, with the drawings, of the Gazette pages and of the pamphlet front pages: the page setting would be carried out by means of a computer-aided publication system incorporating an automatic drawing reduction and insertion facility, replacing the cumbersome manual reduction and mounting (cutting and pasting) of the drawings published with the abstracts in the Gazette and on pamphlet front pages;
- (iii) printing of pamphlets: the automatic printing of pamphlets (that is, the direct passage from the “optical disc files” to the laser printers) would replace the present printing on photocopiers fed manually by operators; moreover, with the pages of the PCT pamphlets stored on the optical disc system, it would no longer be necessary to have extensive storage space for paper copies of the PCT pamphlets since individual orders for PCT pamphlets would be filled by using the optical disc system to print the required copies as they were ordered;
- (iv) distribution and mailing of pamphlets: the pamphlets would be sent in optical disc format to national Offices and International Authorities which so desire, thus saving space for national Offices, International Authorities and the International Bureau as well as the cost of mailing hard copies. It should be noted that such distribution has already started in CD-ROM format, through “ESPACE-WORLD” (see paragraphs 9 to 18, below). However, for the time being, the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs are prepared from paper copies of the pamphlets, whereas the optical disc system would allow the preparation of such CD-ROMs directly from the optical disc files.

7. The following tendering procedure for the acquisition of an optical disc system, called “Document Imaging and Computer-Aided Publishing System”, was established:

- (i) preparation, with the assistance of a consultant, of a draft tender document and of a summary thereof, the draft tender document being a specification for distribution to prospective suppliers enabling them to submit bids that, were well-founded, knowledgeable and professionally sufficient, from both a technical and commercial viewpoint. The summary, which would contain sufficient salient information as to allow an appreciation of the scope of the project, would be used for inviting expressions of interest from potential suppliers;
- (ii) review of the draft tender document and the summary by a group of expert-advisors (two from Governments and two from private firms) and possible redrafting of the said document and summary, in the light of the advice of expert-advisors;
- (iii) publication of the summary for expressions of interest, asking the replying firms to describe their experience in the field concerned;

- (iv) selection, among the potential suppliers having expressed interest, of the firms which seem to meet the requirements of the project, and sending the tender document to the selected firms;
  - (v) analysis of the bids received from the selected firms with the assistance of the expert-advisors who reviewed the draft tender document;
  - (vi) selection of a contractor, adjudication and preparation of a contract.
8. Presently, the above-mentioned tendering procedure has been implemented as follows:
- (i) preparation of the draft tender document and the summary: the two documents were prepared with the assistance of a private consultant in May 1990;
  - (ii) the draft tender document and the summary were reviewed by a group of expert-advisors which met at the headquarters of WIPO together with staff members of the International Bureau. This group consisted of two expert-advisors from Patent Offices, namely, the Australian Patent Office and the United States Patent and Trademark Office and of two consultants from private firms. The draft tender document was partly redrafted in order to take into account the advice given by the expert-advisors. The resulting tender document provides that the development of the system will take place in two stages; the first (Phase 1) will involve an organizational study and the preparation of a detailed description of the proposed system; the second (Phase 2), which will depend upon the acceptance of the first by WIPO, will be the implementation of the system. The tender document provides for the following schedule:
 

Bids due	November 2, 1990
Bidder selected	January 31, 1991
Contract signed	February 28, 1991
Start of Phase 1	March 1, 1991
Delivery of Phase 1	July 27, 1991
Review and acceptance of Phase 1	October 26, 1991
Start of Phase 2	October 29, 1991
Delivery and installation of Phase 2	December 31, 1992
On-site testing	March 31, 1993
Acceptance of system	April 1, 1993;
  - (iii) the summary was then advertised in early July 1990, in accordance with the advice of the group of expert-advisors, in several countries;
  - (iv) among the 56 firms having sent expressions of interest within the time limit of July 27, 1990, nine were selected for the purpose of sending the tender document. Accordingly, nine bids are expected to be received and analyzed during the period extending from November 5, 1990, to January 31, 1991.

*Distribution of PCT Pamphlets through ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs*

9. Under Rule 87 of the PCT Regulations, the International Bureau provides, free of charge, copies of every published international application ("PCT pamphlet") to each International Searching or Preliminary Examining Authority (two copies) and to each national Office (one copy). Paper copies of the PCT pamphlets are provided in all cases, except that two national Offices receive, at their request, microfilm copies.

10. Since July 1990, all PCT pamphlets published since January 1, 1990, are available in CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only-Memory) format in the form of a product called "ESPACE-WORLD," developed in cooperation with the European Patent Office. Each ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROM contains an average of 500 PCT pamphlets (including drawings) in facsimile form, including the bibliographic data in coded, searchable form. The structure and features of the ESPACE-WORLD discs are identical to those of the ESPACE CD-ROM (which contains the published European applications). The ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs are made available progressively, each as soon as it is filled, shortly after the date of publication of the corresponding PCT pamphlets.

11. As compared to having paper or microfilm copies of PCT pamphlets, the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs provide the important advantage, from the perspective of the user, of being in machine-searchable form. Moreover, the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs provide the additional advantage of requiring considerably less storage space than paper copies.

12. From the perspective of the International Bureau, the provision of the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs is preferable to the provision of paper copies of PCT pamphlets, since the cost of the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs is considerably less than the paper, printing and distribution costs for paper copies, and is also less than the cost of microfilm copies. The cost of one set of the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs is about 2,500 Swiss francs per year, whereas the saving to the International Bureau of producing and sending one less set of paper copies of PCT pamphlets would be at least 18,000 Swiss francs per year. Thus the net saving to the International Bureau of sending one set of ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs instead of one set of paper copies of PCT pamphlets would be at least  $(18,000 - 2,500 =) 15,500$  Swiss francs per year.

13. In light of the above, the International Bureau has already agreed to send ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs to two national Offices that have requested to receive their copies of the PCT pamphlets in that format instead of as paper copies, and is sending a letter to all the International Searching or Preliminary Examining Authorities and to all the other national Offices suggesting that they choose to receive the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs in substitution for the paper or microfilm copies that they now receive from the International Bureau.

14. It is to be noted that the CD-ROMs do not yet cover the second and possibly third publications (e.g. "A3" publications, later published amended claims, corrections), which, however, comprise only about 1% of the number of the pages of the PCT pamphlets. Consequently, whenever CD-ROMs are used for the purpose of distributing PCT pamphlets, the International Bureau will continue distributing the above-mentioned later publications in paper form. The inclusion of such later publications in ESPACE-WORLD is under consideration.

15. The equipment needed for reading and printing, as required, PCT pamphlets contained in the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs consists of a microcomputer (with a CD-ROM reader), a graphic (high resolution) VDU screen and a laser printer (with a printing speed of about three facsimile pages per minute), which set of equipment is hereinafter referred to as a "work station". The approximate cost of a work station is 25,000 Swiss francs.

16. It is proposed that each of the International Searching or Preliminary Examining Authorities and each of the other national Offices that chooses to receive the ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs in substitution for paper or microfilm copies would be able to request the International Bureau to provide it, free of charge, with one work station.

17. The selection of a configuration of appropriate equipment has already been made by the International Bureau for its own use. It is recognized that the choice of equipment could vary somewhat for different Authorities and national Offices in light of the availability of maintenance for equipment in different countries. (The on-going maintenance costs some 2 to 3,000 Swiss francs per year would be at the charge of the user.)

18. The savings to the International Bureau that would result from the furnishing of ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs instead of paper copies (see paragraph 12, above) would be of such an amount that the cost of one work station would be, recovered in less than two years for each International Searching or Preliminary Examining Authority or national Office choosing to receive ESPACE-WORLD CD-ROMs instead of paper copies.

*19. The Assembly of the PCT Union is invited:*

*(i) to note the progress report contained in paragraphs 2 to 8, above, and*

*(ii) to approve the proposal contained in paragraph 16, above.*

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