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November 12, 2004

Madam,
Sir,

This Circular is addressed to your Office in its capacity as receiving Office, International Searching Authority (ISA), International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) or designated and/or elected Office under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) concerning the receipt, processing and communication of priority documents in electronic form by the International Bureau.

In its status report on PCT Information Systems presented to the thirty-third Session of the Assembly of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Union, held in Geneva from September 27 to October 5, 2004 (document PCT/A/33/3), the International Bureau noted that it had developed "the E-Pdoc application permitting the full electronic processing of priority documents received in electronic form" and that "user testing of this application is currently under way".

The International Bureau is pleased to announce that, following the successful completion of user testing, the E-Pdoc application has recently entered into production. Consequently, the International Bureau is now in a position to receive, process and communicate priority documents submitted to it in a completely paperless manner. Relying on the E-Pdoc application, the International Bureau has been able to absorb, without undue difficulty, more than 12,000 priority documents which it has recently received on CD from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). As also noted in document PCT/A/33/3, the International Bureau intends to extend, in the coming months,

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the use of the E-Pdoc application for the electronic processing of priority documents received in paper form but which are scanned upon receipt.

The attention of Offices is drawn to the fact that the E-Pdoc application will lead to a number of changes in the International Bureau's practices for the processing and communication of priority documents under the PCT. By separate circular, your Office will be consulted on the details of these changes.

Experience with the priority documents received on CD from the USPTO has demonstrated that the E-Pdoc application enables the International Bureau to handle priority documents in a much more efficient manner than was previously possible. That being the case, Receiving Offices transmitting priority documents to the International Bureau under PCT Rule 17.1(b) are now encouraged to do so electronically rather than on paper.

Priority documents in electronic form can be submitted to the International Bureau on CD/DVD or through PCT Electronic Data Interchange (PCT-EDI), a new mechanism developed by the International Bureau permitting the secure ordering and delivery of PCT documents through the Internet. From the point of view of the International Bureau, PCT-EDI is the preferred means of document delivery because it avoids human intervention required for the uploading of a
./.   CD/DVD. A brochure providing more details on PCT-EDI is joined to this Circular.

Receiving Offices which receive CDs containing priority documents from the USPTO directly from applicants under PCT Rule 17.1(a) are invited to forward them to the International Bureau.

Offices wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity to submit priority documents to the International Bureau in electronic form or having any other questions relating to the above are invited to contact my colleague Ms. Viviane Gross, Assistant PCT Operational Support Officer (e-mail: viviane.gross@wipo.int; tel.: +41 22 338 99 66).

Yours sincerely,

Francis Gurry
Deputy Director General

Enclosure: Brochure on PCT-EDI

PCT - EDI

PCT Electronic Data Interchange Service

The WIPO PCT Electronic Data Interchange Service (PCT-EDI) provides a flexible, secure mechanism for the exchange of patent documentation between Offices and the International Bureau (IB). This includes Priority Documents (P-DOCS), examination reports, search reports and pamphlets, as well as other bulk data products. This system is one of a trio of services associated with the PCT COR environment:

- **Paper-Based Requests and Submissions** – documents are delivered to or requested from the International Bureau via postal mail,
- **Online COR Retrieval** – requests for documents are entered one by one using an online Web interface or by uploading orders in XML. Documents may then be viewed or ordered and received in the chosen format,
- **PCT-EDI Service Order** – documents are requested in bulk using XML and the results are furnished in bulk for downloading.

In addition, PCT-EDI supports the secure submission of Priority Documents to the IB. The IB has implemented document submission services under PCT-EDI that support:

- **US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) PDF P-DOCS** – US Priority documents are received from USPTO each week on CD-ROM and are uploaded on to the PCT-EDI system, where they are then converted and imported into the PCT electronic dossier system,
- **Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) SGML Document Interchange Format (SDIF) P-DOCS** – KIPO uploads SDIF-wrapped documents on to the PCT-EDI server, where they are decoded and the XML and TIFF files are extracted from the SDIF wrapper and are imported into the PCT electronic dossier system.

An important goal in the development of this service is the provision of low-or-no cost software for participating Offices. The IB has elected to support the Secure Shell suite (SSH) of protocols and services, as it is widely supported in both free and commercial versions. SSH provides a secure means of reliably transferring data over communications networks via the Secure Shell File Transfer Protocol (SFTP), without requiring custom-developed application software. All services available under PCT-EDI may be accessed using free SSH applications available in numerous languages. WinSCP (the application documented by the IB) supports French, English, Spanish, Russian, German, Japanese and 19 other languages.

Offices wishing to integrate SFTP access to PCT-EDI will find this a straightforward exercise using any of several free or commercial SSH/SFTP application development tools and libraries for languages such as C++, Java, and Perl.

The modularity of PCT-EDI is such that other access mechanisms and protocols can be easily added if needed.

The PCT-EDI Web site will be accessible from September 20, 2004, via the WIPO web site.
For further information, you can contact us at pctis@wipo.int.