

WIPO



IPC/CE/30/11

ORIGINAL: English

DATE: February 23, 2001

E

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION
(IPC UNION)**

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

**Thirtieth Session
Geneva, February 19 to 23, 2001**

REPORT

adopted by the Committee of Experts

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) held its thirtieth session in Geneva from February 19 to 23, 2001. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America (21). India was represented by observers. The European Patent Office (EPO) was also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.
2. The session was opened by Mr. G. Smith, Director, Office of the PCT (Patent Cooperation Treaty), WIPO, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of WIPO.

OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mr. H. Pauwels (EPO) as Chair and Mr. J.A. Calvert (United Kingdom) and Mr. G. Nenakhov (Russian Federation) as Vice-Chairs.

4. Mr. M. Makarov (WIPO) acted as Secretary of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Committee unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

6. 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 Committee (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 Committee was expressed or repeated after the conclusion was reached.

REPORT ON THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE TRILATERAL WORKING GROUP ON CLASSIFICATION

7. The Delegation of the United States of America, on behalf of the Trilateral Offices, made an oral report on the fourth meeting of the Trilateral Working Group on Classification, held at the Japan Patent Office in Tokyo, from February 5 to 9, 2001. The Delegation indicated that the Trilateral Offices discussed their plans for reorganization of their respective classification systems for 2001, in order to identify potential common reclassification projects. The Trilateral Offices considered ECLA-FI Concordance and USPC-ECLA Concordance with a view to identifying areas where the classification systems could be harmonized and to selecting the fields where harmonization would be most easily attainable. The list of potential common projects would be reviewed with the intention of coming up with a common scope of coverage for as many projects as possible. The Trilateral Offices agreed that bilateral projects may be carried out at the first stage, if trilateral agreement was not possible to reach.

8. With regard to issues under discussion by the Committee, the Delegation informed that the Trilateral Offices supported delaying the introduction of the reformed IPC until January 1, 2005, and recommended freezing of current IPC revision projects for which no substantial work had been done, in order to limit reclassification expenses to a necessary minimum. The Trilateral Offices also proposed that the membership in the special subcommittee for the advanced level of the IPC should be determined by the degree of reclassification burden. The Trilateral Offices considered that all changes needed in the core level as a result of the amendments of the advanced level should be carried out and submitted to the International Bureau for possible implementation in the IPC.

9. The Delegation indicated that the Trilateral Offices recommended to create a special task force for consideration of classification issues relating to traditional knowledge. The Delegation also indicated that a document "Concept of operations" embracing trilateral revision projects and aspects concerning IPC reform was under elaboration.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE IPC

10. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/30/2, containing amendments to the IPC approved by the IPC Revision Working Group, and its Suppl.1, containing comments on those amendments submitted by the Netherlands and Sweden. The Committee adopted a number of amendments to the IPC, which appear in the Technical Annexes to this report. Annex IV to this report lists the classes and the subclasses to which the said Technical Annexes pertain.

Observations Relating to the Amendments Considered

11. When considering the amendments proposed under Project C 404, the Committee noted that the Working Group had introduced a Note after group G 11 B 7/252 giving guidance on multi-aspect classification. The Committee agreed that such notes should be taken into account as examples of multiple classification during the revision of the Guide to the IPC; the wording of, and the need for, such notes should be reconsidered and standardized after the rules of classification were finally decided upon.

IPC REVISION REQUESTS

12. The Committee considered the revision requests contained in document IPC/CE/30/3. The Committee decided to provisionally accept the revision request contained in Annex 1 to the said document, holding it in abeyance until the Trilateral Offices propose a common classification scheme for the subject matter in question. The Committee agreed to reconsider the status of the project at its next session, in the light of the progress achieved by the Trilateral Offices. Concerning the two other requests contained in Annexes 2 and 3 to document IPC/CE/30/3, it was considered that they did not completely satisfy the criteria currently applied for accepting new projects and they were withdrawn by the EPO as the proposing Office. In order to decrease the workload of the IPC Revision Working Group and to test new revision methods, the Delegations of the Trilateral Offices suggested to suspend the elaboration of those C-type revision projects on which no substantial work had been done and to continue consideration of such projects in the framework of the trilateral cooperation.

13. The Committee agreed to suspend the revision work on the following Projects: C 387, C 388, C 393, C 394, C 395, C 411, C 417, C 420, subject to any persuasive reasons which could be submitted at the next session of the Working Group, in which case it would be authorized to continue elaboration of those Projects. The Committee agreed that there was currently no need for actions (i.e. to submit rapporteur reports or comments) in respect of Projects C 387, C 417 and C 420 and requested the Trilateral Offices to provide annual reports to the Committee on the progress in consideration of the suspended Projects.

STATUS OF THE IPC REFORM

14. The International Bureau introduced document IPC/CE/30/4 containing a review of the status of the IPC reform and the IPC revision program. The International Bureau indicated that the initial planning of the transitional revision period, established by the Committee, provided entering into force of the new IPC incorporating basic elements of the reform on January 1, 2003. On the basis of the analysis of the work which remained to be done, the International Bureau explained that, although it was still feasible to follow the initial planning of the Committee, this would only allow limited implementation of features of the reform.

15. The International Bureau suggested for the consideration by the Committee two options for continuing the IPC reform, namely, to retain the current planning of the transitional revision period with the eighth edition of the IPC entering into force on January 1, 2003, or to extend the transitional revision period by two years with the eighth edition of the IPC entering into force on January 1, 2005.

16. In discussing the matter, the Committee agreed that the reform process was considerably more complex than was initially envisaged and that significant work still remained to be done for both elaborating of principles and rules of the reformed IPC and implementing the reform results in the IPC itself. The Committee agreed that the new IPC when published should represent a substantially reformed classification which would provide more benefits to the user than an earlier publication of a transitional product between the traditional and the new IPC.

17. The Committee also indicated some additional factors which would preclude an early publication of the reformed IPC, in particular that the Master Classification Database, being one of the key elements of the reform, could not be created earlier than in the year 2004.

18. On the basis of the above considerations, the Committee decided to extend the transitional revision period by two years with a view that the next edition of the IPC—reformed IPC—would enter into force on January 1, 2005. The Committee indicated that careful planning would be necessary in order to ensure successful completion of the IPC reform. To this end, the Committee agreed to create a new Task No. 18 “Prepare an IPC reform implementation plan” and to assign this Task to the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group. In order to initiate work on the Task, the Committee requested the International Bureau to prepare, by April 15, 2001, the draft IPC reform implementation plan and to circulate it to the members of the Working Group.

DETERMINATION OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE CONTENTS OF THE CORE LEVEL OF THE IPC

19. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/30/5 containing the results of the study conducted by the EPO, which was based on an automated procedure using file size of IPC groups as a main parameter for distribution of groups between the core and advanced levels. The Committee considered also the results of a survey carried out by the International Bureau with regard to the intentions of industrial property offices to use the core or advanced level for classification of their published patent documents (see document IPC/CE/30/5 Suppl.1) and the comments on the study by the EPO submitted by Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the EPO (see document IPC/CE/30/5 Suppl.2).

20. The Delegation of the EPO explained the algorithm used in the study specifying quantitative parameters relating to a minimum and a maximum size of IPC groups. The Delegation indicated that the algorithm used did not take into account the existence of precedence rules in local areas of the IPC and that the results of distribution of IPC groups between the core and advanced levels for the whole IPC were available on compact disk.
21. The Committee noted that the most appropriate size of the core level should be determined by two factors which could be considered as conflicting, namely, its relative stability and its sufficient searching power for the retrieval of information from national patent collections.
22. Having agreed that an ideal file size of the groups of the core level should be in the range of 100 to 150 documents per group and having estimated a potential largest volume of national patent collections, the Committee came to the conclusion that the use of the parameter of the maximum file size of 5,000 documents in the EPO study would lead to obtaining the core level with sufficient stability and sufficient searching power with respect to national patent collections. The Committee noted that the use of that parameter would result in the overall inclusion in the core level of approximately 30% of IPC groups currently present in the IPC.
23. The Committee indicated that the distribution of IPC groups between the core and advanced levels of the IPC should be further specified by collecting the data relating to file size of IPC groups introduced in the seventh edition of the IPC and IPC groups created during the current revision period. The Committee requested the EPO to collect this information using the data which was already available or would be available from ECLA, with a view to obtaining a final distribution of IPC groups between the core and advanced level in the year 2003.
24. The Committee realized that division of the IPC into the core and advanced levels would require additional work relating to checking references, notes, and other explanatory material in the IPC and instructed the IPC Revision Working Group to start this work as soon as possible in respect of IPC groups which did not belong to the set of groups introduced in the seventh edition of the IPC or created for the new edition. In order to estimate the possibility of using automated methods in carrying out the work, the Committee accepted an offer by the Delegation of the United States of America to make a study in several IPC subclasses on how division of the IPC influenced existing references and notes and to submit the results of the study to the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group by the middle of April 2001.
25. Finally, the Committee expressed its confidence that the decision taken with regard to the size of the core level would result in the most appropriate distribution of IPC groups between the core and advanced levels and would satisfy the needs of both users searching international patent collections and users searching only smaller national collections.
26. The Committee indicated that the revision of the IPC should continue to be made in the framework of the Strasbourg Agreement. The Committee agreed that division of the IPC into the core level, which would be mandatory for the classification of patent documents, and the advanced level, which could be chosen for using its entries for classifying, did not formally contradict the Strasbourg Agreement and that existence of IPC entries non-obligatory for use was also allowed in the IPC in the past.

REVISION PROCEDURE IN RELATION TO THE ADVANCED LEVEL OF THE IPC

27. The Committee considered document IPC/CE/30/6 outlining central points of the future revision procedure for the advanced level of the IPC, in particular that revision of the advanced level should be provided through an accelerated procedure and should not depend on revision cycles. In this respect, the Committee expressed its satisfaction with the intentions of the Trilateral Offices to provide significant resources that would be required for the revision of the advanced level and for corresponding reclassification of search files. Having realized that the Trilateral Offices would carry out a major part of the revision and reclassification work at the advanced level, the Committee authorized these Offices to assume responsibility of rapporteurs for all revision projects concerning the advanced level.

28. The Committee confirmed its earlier decision (see document IPC/CE/29/11, paragraph 29(g)) that a special subcommittee within the IPC Union supervising the revision of the advanced level should be established. The Committee agreed that such supervision would be necessary in order to ensure the compliance of the amendments to the advanced level with general rules and principles of the reformed IPC and to provide a mechanism for resolving possible disagreements in relation to the proposed amendments.

29. The Committee considered the proposal submitted by the EPO, on behalf of the Trilateral Offices, according to which the membership in the special subcommittee should be determined by the volume of patent collections being reclassified by respective offices. The Committee endorsed the principle of allotting more authority for the revision of the advanced level to offices carrying out a major part of work therefor, but realized that the proposed criterion of doing at least 20% of the total reclassification work to be qualified for inclusion would lead to the composition of the special subcommittee consisting of a very limited number of offices. In order to provide certain balance in the membership, the Committee agreed to include in the subcommittee, in addition to the offices satisfying the said criterion, also the International Bureau.

30. The Committee agreed that the special subcommittee should deliver annual reports on the work carried out, which results should be reviewed by the Committee and, if needed, necessary corrections be made.

31. The Committee also indicated that a detailed mandate for the special subcommittee should be elaborated under the Task relating to the revision policy and the revision procedure for the reformed IPC.

32. The Committee noted the explanation given by the Trilateral Offices on the reclassification of the PCT minimum documentation in the advanced level by those offices. They pointed out that, according to the current situation, for reclassification in the advanced level only complete patent documents could be used, under the condition that the documents had been published in one of their working languages, namely, in the English, French, German or Japanese languages. The documents in other languages, even when an abstract in English was available, could not, in principle, be reclassified by the Trilateral Offices because abstracts did not contain sufficient technical information.

RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY THE AD HOC IPC REFORM WORKING GROUP

33. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/30/7 containing recommendations formulated by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 3 (“Introduction of Electronic Data Illustrating the Contents of IPC Entries”)

34. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) Classification definitions, representing the most important type of electronic data to be introduced in the IPC, should provide additional information in respect of classification entries and serve for their clarification, but should not change the scope of classification entries. Definitions should be relatively short, practical for use and explain terminology used in classification entries without merely repeating it. Classification definitions should be present only in the informative layer of the electronic version of the IPC and should not appear in the paper version of the Classification.

(b) Defining references should be retained in the titles of subclasses or groups of the IPC, but should not be repeated in the “Subclass title” or “Group title” part of classification definitions. With regard to explanatory-type information currently contained in notes in the IPC, notes defining subject matter not covered by a subclass or group should be retained in the IPC, but other explanatory-type information should be transferred to classification definitions.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 4 (“General Principles of Classification; Elaboration of Rules for Multiple Classification in the IPC”)

35. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) The following principle of classification of patent documents should be further elaborated in the Guide to the IPC:

- all invention information, i.e., technical information representing an addition to the state of the art, should be classified, using the claims as guidance;
- it is recommended to classify also other information which could be useful for search purposes.

(b) In the future revision of the Guide the following should be, in particular, done:

- to reconsider the rules of classification stated in paragraphs 52 and 60 of the Guide to the IPC with the intention to clearly enable classification of useful information relating to constituent parts;

– to include in paragraph 59 of the Guide to the IPC a statement to the following effect: “When there is a doubt whether a document is to be classified in a function-oriented or an application-oriented place, it should be classified in both places.”

(c) In the revised version of the Guide, it should be, *inter alia*, described in detail how to classify different kinds of patent documents, namely granted patents, examined and unexamined published patent applications.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 5 (“Review of the Hybrid Systems in the IPC”)

36. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) The following principles of treatment of the existing hybrid systems should apply:

(i) Delete indexing codes if they are superfluous or are not practically used.

(ii) – Convert separate indexing schemes into classification schemes and use them for multiple classification.

– Move separate indexing schemes, which are useful and cannot be converted into classification schemes, to the advanced level of the IPC.

– Consider moving the converted indexing schemes to the advanced level of the IPC.

– Abolish double-purpose use of classification groups and consider use of those groups for multiple classification.

(b) Since the existing hybrid systems are so different, the above principles should be seen as general guidance and not as strict instructions, and the hybrid systems should be treated individually.

(c) In relation to future hybrid systems, the following principles should apply:

(i) Abolish the linked mode of presentation of indexing schemes.

(ii) Elaborate guidelines for the creation and use of indexing schemes.

(iii) Provide definitions for indexing schemes.

(d) Indexing schemes introduced in the sixth edition or earlier editions of the IPC with use below 10% should be excluded from the IPC, subject to any persuasive reasons in favour of their retaining which could be submitted by the members of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group by March 1, 2001.

(e) The indexing schemes introduced in the seventh edition of the IPC should be retained, as well as the indexing schemes contained in the following places of the IPC: B 29 K, B 29 L, B 62 D, C 04 B 103:00 and 111:00, C 09 K, C 10 N, D 06 M and F 16 L.

(f) The following approach should be used for classifying mixtures: the mixture as a whole should be classified as invention information and constituents of the mixture should be classified as additional information using existing classification schemes for compounds, for example, classes C 01 and C 07. Detailed rules would be needed for classifiers to use that approach in order to avoid inconsistency in classifying.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 8 (“Study of the Possibility of Cooperation Between Offices in the Reclassification of Backlog Search Files”)

37. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) A linked mode of presentation of additional information symbols should not be used because it would bring unnecessary complexity in the presentation of classification symbols without providing sufficient benefits for the user.

(b) The linear form of the presentation of classification symbols, currently used in the IPC, should be replaced by a tabular form as suggested by the EPO and the United States of America (see Annexes 18 and 26 to project file IPC/R 8/99), since the tabular form of the presentation of classification symbols would allow different types of classification information to be shown in a more simple and clear way.

(c) Industrial property offices should verify implementation of the tabular form because it could require changes in the formats, for example, of the first page of patent documents, and should ensure its implementation by their computer systems.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 15 (“Feasibility of Introducing a Simplified Set of Rules in the IPC, in Particular a Uniform Precedence Rule”)

38. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) Introduction of a standardized IPC layout was highly desirable because it would make the IPC easier to use.

(b) The standardized sequence of main groups in IPC elaborated by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group (see Annex IV to document IPC/REF/4/4) was noted.

(c) The standardized sequence of main groups should be used as guidance in the elaboration of new subclasses or substantially revised subclasses. Standardization of the presentation of the sequence of main groups was intended to facilitate the use of the IPC and did not aim at the renumbering of main groups in the existing subclasses which are not under substantial revision.

(d) Presentation of main groups in the standardized sequence, in parallel with their current presentation in the IPC, was possible to achieve by rearranging information in IPC subclass indexes according to the standardized sequence. This would allow, at the choice of the user, display of main groups in the sequence currently present in the IPC or in the standardized sequence.

(e) The IPC Revision Working Group should start, as soon as possible, revision of subclass indexes according to the approved standardized sequence of main groups and creation of subclass indexes using the standardized sequence in subclasses where they are missing. In the course of the revision of subclass indexes, some standardization of the sequence of subgroups in main groups could be achieved by including, in subclass indexes, of subgroups representing different categories of subject matter indicated in the standardized sequence. This procedure could lead, in the long term, to the standardization of the sequence of groups in the IPC.

(f) In the course of the revision of subclass indexes, a limited revision of the subclasses under consideration, for example, introduction of residual main groups where necessary, would be desirable.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 16 (“Study of Ways and Means for the Establishment of the French Version of the Advanced Level of the IPC”)

39. The Committee adopted the following recommendations relating to the above Task:

(a) The following approaches should be explored for the establishment of the French version of the advanced level of the IPC:

- outsourcing the translation of amendments to external contractors; and
- elaboration of automated translation tools which could produce translated texts at least of the quality sufficient for final editing.

(b) The International Bureau should request resources necessary for conducting a study of automated translation tools for the biennium 2002-03.

(c) A procedure for the preparation of the French version of the advanced level of the IPC should be elaborated in the framework of the general IPC revision procedure for the reformed IPC.

IPC REFORM PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR 2001

40. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/30/8 containing proposals by the International Bureau for the IPC reform program for the year 2001.

41. The Committee agreed to commence the revision of the Guide to the IPC and decided to create the new Task No. 17 “Revise the Guide to the IPC to provide for a more comprehensive explanation of the principles and rules of the IPC and to take into account the results of the IPC reform,” and to assign this Task to the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group. In order to initiate elaboration of the Task, the Committee requested the International Bureau to prepare a table of contents for the new Guide and to circulate it to the members of the Working Group by May 1, 2001.

42. The Committee agreed to change the wording of Task No. 8 as follows: “Elaborate principles of the creation, maintenance and functioning of the Master Classification Database.”

43. The IPC reform program for the year 2001, as adopted by the Committee, appears in Annex III to this report.
44. In connection with the discussion of the IPC reform program, the Committee recalled that the Assembly of the IPC Union, at its seventeenth session in September 1999, had approved the recommendation by the Committee to launch the IPC reform and the strategy to be applied in carrying out the reform. The Committee felt it necessary to provide the Assembly with the IPC reform status report so as to inform the Assembly of the principal results achieved in the process of the reform.
45. In view of the lack of time, the Committee was not in a position to elaborate the IPC reform status report and authorized the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group to prepare the report and to submit it, on behalf of the Committee, to the Assembly of the IPC Union for consideration. The Committee requested the International Bureau to prepare the draft status report and to circulate it to the members of the Working Group by April 15, 2001.
46. In the context of the recommendation made by the Assembly to the members and observers of the IPC Union to provide necessary internal resources for carrying out the IPC reform, the Committee also recalled its own request to the International Bureau, made at the twenty-ninth session of the Committee in March 2000 (see document IPC/CE/29/11, paragraph 14), to provide additional manpower IPC resourcing within the International Bureau—required in view of coordination and management of the IPC reform process. The Committee reiterated its request and invited the International Bureau to provide appropriate human and financial resources as soon as possible.

DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSIFICATION TOOLS FOR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

47. The Delegation of India made a presentation of the governmental project for establishing a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) relating to traditional Indian medicine and outlined backgrounds of the project aimed at providing access to traditional knowledge published data as searchable prior art. The Delegation explained the approach used by the Indian Traditional Knowledge Task Force for collecting and processing various published data on traditional medicine and the structure of the Traditional Knowledge Resources Classification (TKRC) developed by the Task Force for providing efficient access to traditional knowledge data.
48. The International Bureau informed the Committee of a WIPO program of investigating intellectual property aspects of traditional knowledge under which an Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore had been established for the study, in particular, of respective terminological issues; the applicability of existing intellectual property standards; the definition of prior art and issues related to the examination of patent applications; and the enforcement of rights in traditional knowledge. The International Bureau also outlined its plans to conduct an activity to test the suitability of existing intellectual property documentation standards for the integration of traditional knowledge into existing administrative procedures of intellectual property offices and to identify requirements for the electronic exchange and dissemination of traditional knowledge documentation.

49. With regard to the Traditional Knowledge Resources Classification, the International Bureau informed the Committee of provisional recommendations made by the International Bureau to the Indian Traditional Knowledge Task Force, which were aimed at the simplification of the classification structure and use of more general terminology, in order to facilitate further expansion of the system to documents of other countries.

50. The Committee welcomed the initiative of India in collecting traditional knowledge published data and elaborating a special classification system for facilitating access to the data. The Committee underlined the importance of providing access to traditional knowledge information by incorporating it in information search systems.

51. The Delegation of China informed the Committee of the existence of databases relating to traditional medicine developed in China and volunteered to make the respective information available to the Committee.

52. The Committee agreed that the Traditional Knowledge Resources Classification elaborated in India should be studied in detail with a view to investigating its information aspects and its relationship to the IPC and decided to create, to this end, a WIPO Traditional Knowledge Task Force. The Committee noted that the following Offices volunteered to participate in the Task Force: China, India, Japan, United States of America, EPO, and that the International Bureau would act as coordinator of the Task Force.

53. The Committee agreed that the mandate of the WIPO Task Force would be to elaborate advice on the future development of TKRC, in particular with a view to its expansion to documentation of other countries, and the investigation of how its proper relationship to the IPC should be established. The Committee requested the Task Force to submit a report on the results of its work to the next session of the Committee.

REQUEST TO GRANT OBSERVER STATUS IN MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

54. The Committee considered a request to grant observer status submitted by the Publishers of the journal *World Patent Information*, in the light of the guidelines for inviting organizations involved in the commercial provision of IP information services to attend or participate in WIPO meetings as observers (see document SCIT/5/7).

55. The Committee noted that a similar request had been considered by the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) at its fifth session, in July 2000, and had not been considered as appropriate for granting observer status.

56. The Committee noted that, although it was unlikely that certain topics under discussion by the Committee may give rise to conflicts of interest if organizations involved in the commercial provision of IP information services were present during discussions, such situations, in principle, could arise in the future. At the same time, the Committee realized the value of the international journal *World Patent Information* in disseminating information to the general public concerning the IPC and the Committee's interest in rapidly informing the public through the journal of IPC-related activities with a view to promoting the worldwide use of the Classification.

57. On the basis of those considerations, the Committee agreed to grant the Publishers of the journal *World Patent Information* observer status in the meetings of the Committee and its working groups on a case-by-case basis, for attending the meetings where no topics that may give rise to conflicts of interest were included in the agenda of the meeting.

58. The Committee authorized the International Bureau to act accordingly when issuing invitations to the IPC meetings.

INFORMATION

59. The Committee noted information reported by the Delegation of France of the project for the extension of the natural language system for accessing the IPC, earlier developed in the French language, to the English language. The project would be carried out in cooperation by the EPO and Industrial Property Offices of France and the United Kingdom.

NEXT SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

60. The Committee noted the tentative time for its next session, namely: February 2002.

61. The Committee also noted the dates for the sessions of its Working Groups in the first half of 2001:

ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group: fifth session: May 14 to 18, 2001

IPC Revision Working Group: fifth session: June 11 to 22, 2001.

62. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its closing meeting on February 23, 2001.

[Annexes follow]