

# WIPO



IPC/CE/31/8

ORIGINAL: English

DATE: March 1, 2002

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION  
GENEVA

SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION  
(IPC UNION)

## COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

Thirty-First Session  
Geneva, February 25 to March 1, 2002

### 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 thirty-first session in Geneva from February 25 to March 1, 2002. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America (24). India and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were represented by observers. The European Patent Office (EPO) was also represented. The publishers of the journal *World Patent Information* were represented by an observer. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. F. Gurry, Assistant Director General, WIPO, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of WIPO.

#### OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mrs. M. Lyon (France) as Chair and Mr. M. Lydon (Ireland) and Mr. Y. Zheng (China) 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 NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE IPC UNION

7. The Committee noted an oral report by the Secretariat on the nineteenth session of the Assembly of the IPC Union (see documents IPC/A/19/1 and IPC/A/19/2), held in September/October 2001, at which session the Assembly had considered the IPC reform status report prepared under the instructions of the Committee. The report described the principal results achieved in the process of the reform since 1999 and included the strategic plan for the development of the IPC.
8. The Committee was informed that the Assembly had taken note of the IPC reform status report and that, in the interventions made, the Delegations of the member States of the IPC Union had supported the IPC reform process, approved the reform results achieved so far and underlined the importance of cooperation in conducting the reform in order to ensure its successful completion.

#### CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE IPC

9. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/31/2, containing amendments to the IPC approved by the IPC Revision Working Group, and its Suppls.1 and 2, containing comments on those amendments submitted by Sweden and France, respectively. The Committee adopted a number of amendments to the IPC, which appear in the Technical Annexes to this report. Annex VI to this report lists the classes and subclasses to which the Committee has adopted amendments during the current revision period, and Annex VII to this report lists the classes and subclasses to which the said Technical Annexes pertain.

### Observations Relating to the Amendments Considered

10. When considering the amendments proposed under Project C 367, the Committee noted that there was considerable overlap between existing groups E 04 G 3/02 to 3/16 and the new groups E 04 G 3/18 to 3/34. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the references in groups E 04 G 21/24 and E 04 G 27/00 pointed to the deleted group E 04G 1/26. The Committee decided, therefore, not to adopt the amendments contained in Annex 15 to document IPC/CE/31/2, and referred them back to the IPC Revision Working Group for solving the overlap problem and correcting the said references.

11. Concerning Project C 407, the Committee noted that the IPC Revision Working Group had introduced a Note after the title of subclass H 01 B specifying multi-aspect classification in this subclass. The Committee decided not to adopt this Note, since it did not provide additional guidance to classification philosophy in this field, in view of the general rules for multiple classification laid down in paragraph 70 of the Guide to the IPC. The ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group was requested to study such notes specifying multi-aspect classification, already existing and newly introduced in the IPC, and to propose a standardized wording of such notes when the rules of classification were finally decided upon.

### IPC REVISION PROGRAM

12. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/31/3, containing a status report concerning the suspended revision projects, submitted by the Trilateral Offices. The Committee noted that the Trilateral Offices had made significant progress and had elaborated several projects to the stage where they could be brought back to the IPC Revision Working Group. The Committee also noted that the work on those projects would contribute to the classification harmonization program of the Trilateral Offices.

13. Concerning the need expressed by the Trilateral Offices to broaden the scope of Project C 388, the Committee agreed to authorize the Trilateral Offices to broaden the scope of any project if this was found necessary.

14. The Trilateral Offices were requested to accelerate consideration of projects for which substantial progress has not yet been made, as well as the "Business Methods" project (see document IPC/CE/31/3, project T 002), so as to ensure inclusion of their results in the next edition of the IPC. Concerning the latter project, it was noted that it was a revision project provisionally accepted by the Committee, but held in abeyance until the Trilateral Offices propose a common classification scheme for the subject matter in question. The Committee agreed to give this project the number C 424 and to introduce it in the IPC revision program.

15. The Trilateral Offices were requested to submit prepared proposals in good time before respective meetings of the IPC Revision Working Group, in the form of rapporteur reports. They were also requested to periodically submit progress reports to the IPC Revision Working Group on the remaining suspended revision projects.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY THE AD HOC IPC REFORM WORKING GROUP

16. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/31/4 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”)

17. The Committee adopted, with some changes, the recommended definitions of informative and limiting references, as follows:

#### Informative reference:

An informative reference is a reference that indicates the location of subject matter that could be of interest for searching, but which subject matter is not within the scope of the classification place where the reference occurs.

#### Limiting reference:

A limiting reference is a reference associated with a classification place that:

- (a) excludes specified subject matter from the scope of this classification place, when this subject matter would otherwise fulfill all the requirements of the classification title and definition, i.e. would otherwise be covered by that place; and
- (b) indicates the place(s) where this subject matter is classified.

18. The Committee briefly discussed the question of practical attribution of references in the IPC to informative or limiting, on the basis of the comments submitted by Sweden (see Suppl.1 to document IPC/CE/31/4). The Committee noted that this question would be considered in detail at the meeting of the Definition Task Force of the IPC Revision Working Group, in May 2002. The Committee requested the members of the Working Group to submit comments on the matter in good time before that meeting.

19. The Committee also noted that when the classification definition format would be finalized by the IPC Revision Working Group on the basis of the practical experience in preparing the definitions, it would be submitted to the Committee for adoption.

20. Bearing in mind the totality of recommendations relating to this Task, adopted by the Committee at this and earlier sessions (see document IPC/CE/29/11, paragraph 31, and document IPC/CE/30/11, paragraph 34), the Committee agreed to consider this Task completed.

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

21. The Committee adopted, with some changes, the submitted Guidelines for Creation of Indexing Schemes in the Reformed IPC which appear as Annex III to this report.

22. Bearing in mind the totality of recommendations relating to this Task, adopted by the Committee at this and an earlier session (see document IPC/CE/30/11, paragraph 36), the Committee agreed to consider this Task completed.

Recommendations relating to Task No. 7 (“Determination of the Most Appropriate Duration of Revision Cycles”)

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

(a) A fixed revision cycle would be needed for the core level of the IPC for the periodical publication of its printed version, preparation of national language versions of the IPC, revision of the Guide to the IPC and proper administration of classification and reclassification work;

(b) A three-year revision cycle would be the most efficient for the core level as it would accelerate implementation in the core level of the changes necessitated by technological progress, preserving at the same time its relative stability;

(c) Although the three-year revision cycle should normally be applied in the future for the core level, the IPC Committee of Experts could extend the revision cycle if it considered the publication of the new edition of the core level premature, as in the case, for example, of an insufficient number of revision amendments made to the core level.

Recommendations Relating to Task No. 8 (“Elaboration of Principles of the Creation, Maintenance and Functioning of the Master Classification Database”)

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

(a) The following additional field indicators of classification symbols stored in the Master Classification Database (MCD) would be necessary for the reformed IPC:

- core or advanced level classification indicator;
- validity date (version) classification indicator;
- action date (date of allotting classification symbol) indicator;
- first or other invention symbol indicator;
- invention or other information symbol indicator;
- original or reclassified data indicator;
- generating office indicator;
- intellectual or propagated data indicator.

(b) The character currently identifying indexing codes (a colon) should be replaced by a slash, since the double-purpose use of classification symbols had been abolished and the separate indexing codes have different numbers than classification symbols.

#### IPC REFORM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

25. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/31/5, containing the IPC reform implementation plan prepared by the International Bureau.

26. The Committee noted that the IPC reform implementation plan had already been considered by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group and that its objective was to ensure careful planning of the IPC reform process.

27. Having made some changes to certain actions and timelines relating to particular tasks of IPC reform, the Committee adopted the IPC reform implementation plan as shown in Annex IV to this report.

28. With regard to Task No. 17 (“Revision of the Guide to the IPC”), the Committee noted the complexity of this Task, in view of the amount of the material involved and of the fact that certain basic principles of the reformed IPC had not yet been agreed upon. The Committee requested, accordingly, the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group to consider a need for creating a special subgroup or a task force in order to complete the revision of the Guide.

29. The Committee agreed that Task No. 18 (“Prepare an IPC reform implementation plan”) should be of a continuous nature and requested the International Bureau to submit updates of the implementation plan to each session of the Committee and of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group.

30. In order to provide for easy monitoring of the status of various tasks of IPC reform, the International Bureau was also requested to include on the IPC electronic forum IPC reform project files and to compile, on the forum, information on recommendations made by the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group and decisions taken by the Committee regarding IPC reform.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSIFICATION TOOLS FOR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

31. The discussions of this item were preceded by presentations made by the Delegations of India and China.

32. The Delegation of India made a presentation of the progress of the governmental project for establishing a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) relating to traditional Indian medicine. The Delegation outlined the background of the project and the organizational framework in which it was carried out.

33. The Delegation explained that the Traditional Knowledge Resources Classification (TKRC) had been specifically developed for providing efficient access to the traditional knowledge data and it proved to be an indispensable tool for retrieval of the Indian traditional medicine data. The Delegation informed that medicinal formulations collected,

which amounted to 35,000 formulations, were being translated into several languages for facilitating access to TKDL on the international basis. The Delegation indicated that completion of the first stage of the project, relating to traditional system of Ayurveda, was expected in 2002.

34. The Delegation of China made a presentation of an internal classification scheme for traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) developed by the Chinese Intellectual Property Office. The Delegation explained that this scheme, representing further extension of the IPC, proved to be very efficient for retrieval of patent information relating to traditional medicine.

35. The Delegation indicated that classification rules applied in the internal classification scheme followed the classification philosophy of the IPC as the internationally recognized patent classification and that further extension of the IPC classification scheme was based on taxonomic names of plants used in TCM. The Delegation informed that, for facilitating the use of the complex botanical classification, a special searching system had been elaborated, which allowed retrieval of relevant classification symbols on the basis of the Chinese, English or Latin names of plants. This system had been supplemented by a manual searching table providing access to the classification scheme for users not having computer facilities.

36. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/31/6 containing a report of the Task Force on Classification of Traditional Knowledge established at the thirtieth session of the Committee. The report described the work carried out by the Task Force and included recommendations concerning the development of classification tools for traditional knowledge.

37. The Committee expressed its appreciation of the work conducted by the Task Force and agreed with its conclusion that the most efficient way of developing classification tools for traditional knowledge would be their integration into the IPC.

38. The Committee noted that the IPC, representing the worldwide system for classifying patent information, could also be applied for classifying non-patent documentation, such as traditional knowledge documentation. However, only a few entries in the IPC were available for classifying this subject matter, and substantial revision of the Classification could be required in this regard, including creation of a new subclass covering traditional knowledge subject matter.

39. The Committee instructed the Task Force, accordingly, to continue its work and to start preparation of an IPC revision proposal with regard to classification of traditional knowledge documentation. The Committee indicated that, in view of the urgency of the matter, it would be highly desirable that the revision results were available already in the next edition of the IPC and requested the Task Force to prepare a revision request with a revision proposal and to submit it for consideration to the IPC Revision Working Group by the end of 2002, with the view of its inclusion in the IPC revision program.

40. The Committee also requested the Task Force to consider, after the preparation of the revision proposal (see paragraph 39, above), how the future revised IPC could be linked to traditional knowledge resources classifications which may be developed in various countries, and how to best organize access to traditional knowledge documentation which was in public domain.

41. The Secretariat informed the Committee of the ongoing activities of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) which is considering, among other tasks, the task relating to the integration of traditional knowledge documentation into searchable prior art. One of the activities approved by the IGC relates to the study of the feasibility of electronic exchange of public domain traditional knowledge documentation data, including the establishment of traditional knowledge databases and digital libraries. The IGC, however, noted that, in carrying out this activity, cost effectiveness, access to and use of such databases, and the protection of their contents, should be carefully investigated.
42. The Committee noted that the IGC expressed the wish to coordinate its work with the other Committees of WIPO, in particular with the IPC Committee of Experts, and fully agreed that cooperation should be established between the two Committees.
43. In order to initiate such a cooperation, the Committee agreed to submit to the IGC for information the report of the Task Force on Classification of Traditional Knowledge and the part of this report reflecting its discussions of classification tools for traditional knowledge.
44. The Committee also agreed to recommend to the IGC that a prototype traditional knowledge database which had been compiled by India and made available on the WIPO Web site, and the traditional knowledge sample patent database developed by the Chinese Intellectual Property Office and available on the Internet, be used for testing of classification and information exchange systems for traditional knowledge data.

#### RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

45. The Committee considered the proposed changes to its Rules of Procedure as contained in the Annex to document IPC/CE/31/7 and in its Suppl.1 and noted that those changes mainly intended to specify an observer status in the sessions of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies that may be given to Member States of WIPO which are not members of the IPC Union.
46. Having agreed on certain amendments to the proposal, the Committee adopted the modified Rules of Procedure as shown in Annex V to this report.

#### WORKING METHODS OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

47. The Committee briefly discussed the proposal by the International Bureau relating to working methods of the Committee as contained in paragraphs 5 to 13 of document IPC/CE/31/7, but, in view of the lack of time, was not in a position to arrive at conclusions with regard to this matter.
48. The Committee noted that all measures should be taken to ensure sufficient flexibility of its working methods in order to manage a project or a task in a dynamic manner, which was especially important in the period of IPC reform. In this regard, several Delegations indicated that a decision-making process in the IPC Union was relatively slow which was caused by the fact that the Committee normally meets in ordinary sessions only once a year.



49. In order to accelerate a decision-making process, certain Delegations proposed that the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group be abolished, its duties assumed by the Committee itself and the number of annual meetings of the Committee increased.

50. The Committee agreed that the above proposal supposed introduction of drastic changes in the working structure and methods of IPC bodies and required careful consideration. The Committee requested its member States and observer organizations to submit comments on that proposal, as well as on the proposal by the International Bureau relating to working methods of the Committee (see paragraph 47, above), in time for the seventh session of the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group scheduled to be held from May 13 to 17, 2002.

51. The Committee authorized the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group to consider both proposals and comments submitted thereon and, in case the majority of Delegations would be in favor of increasing the number of annual sessions of the Committee and the abolishment of the Working Group, to request the Director General of WIPO, on behalf of the Committee, to convene an extraordinary session of the Committee in the second half of 2002, subject to resources available.

#### PRESENTATION BY THE EPO

52. The Delegation of the EPO made a presentation on the "DocArea Rebuild" project and on its impact on the Master Classification Database (MCD). DocArea is the collection of the Documentation databases, mainly the "Doc d.b.," part of which is the MCD. DocArea provides front office support, that is introduction, validation and reformatting of patent and non-patent bibliographic data. It further provides storage and maintenance of patent and non-patent data, and of patent legal status data. It supports document classification, acquisition, storage and maintenance of document components and it assures batch exchange and online query services.

53. The huge maintenance requirements, the increasing volumes of data and timeliness of their loading required the rebuild of DocArea. Its rebuild would further assure better quality control, external data exchange in XML, storage of data in various languages and better future maintainability.

54. From a technical point of view, the current system would be replaced by "DB2" database software. The number of separate databases and files, and the complexity of batch procedures would be reduced. The rebuild project was expected to be achieved by end of 2003 and would require in total 40 man-years.

#### INTERNET-BASED IPC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IBIS

55. The Secretariat made a presentation of the IBIS project which had been finished in 2001. A similar demonstration was also given in December 2001 to the IPC Revision Working Group and gave a full overview about the project (its goals, budget, time scale, and deliverables). During the presentation, a quick summary was provided about the Technical Assessment done in January and February 2002, of two key components of the project: the XML publishing framework and the Data Entry Interface.

56. It was noted that during the technical assessment the performance of the system was improved, several presentation anomalies were eliminated and many functional improvements were implemented. The improvements proved the strength of the XML publishing framework handling the virtual IPC.

57. The following amendments were done: a direct link provided between entries presented in full-text and in path view; a hierarchical view (imitation of a basic IPC:CLASS function) was developed allowing navigation on the hierarchy; language links were added, i.e. each entry was linked to its nearest corresponding entry in the various translations (e.g., in Chinese, Dutch, German, Hungarian, Korean, Russian and Spanish); links were added to the “authentic” static HTML versions of IPC. Links were provided to the newly developed hyperlinked PDF version. One-click access was provided to some important Internet connected publicly available databases (Esp@cenet, USPTO, PCT, JOPAL).

58. The Secretariat explained that, in the framework of the amendments, the static HTML version was remade and a full-fledged hyperlinked PDF version was developed for Internet use (files split up on subclass level) and for Intranet use (files split up on class level). Each IPC entry was translated to a collapsible Adobe bookmark. The entries can be addressed in the form of a URL for easy integration into internal office applications. It was indicated that the International Bureau was ready to make available these versions for internal use of the industrial property offices.

59. The Secretariat indicated that for the Data Entry Interface some alignments should be done in the near future. Most probably the Java-based line editor approach should be revised and a Rich Text editing environment should be offered. To minimize the risks of the alignment, an MS-Word template-driven data entry facility should also be developed.

#### NEXT SESSIONS OF THE WORKING GROUPS OF THE COMMITTEE

60. The Committee noted the dates for the sessions of its Working Groups in the first half of 2002:

ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group: seventh session: May 13 to 17, 2002

IPC Revision Working Group: seventh session: June 10 to 21, 2002.

*61. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its closing meeting on March 1, 2002.*

[Annexes follow]