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

ASSEMBLY

**Twenty-Ninth (17th Ordinary) Session
Geneva, September 22 to October 1, 2009**

REPORT OF THE IPC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

prepared by the Secretariat

1. The Assembly of the International Patent Classification (IPC) Union at its seventeenth (12th ordinary) session, held in September 1999, approved the recommendation made by the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union to launch IPC reform in order to accommodate the Classification to the use in the electronic environment (document IPC/A/17/1 and paragraph 12 of document IPC/A/17/2). The Assembly considered the IPC reform progress reports and took note of them at its nineteenth (13th ordinary) session, held in September – October 2001, twenty-first (14th ordinary) session, held in September – October 2003, twenty-second (8th extraordinary) session, held in September – October 2004, twenty-third (15th ordinary) session, held in September – October 2005, and twenty-fourth (16th ordinary) session, held in September – October 2006 (documents IPC/A/19/1, IPC/A/19/2, IPC/A/21/1, IPC/A/21/2, IPC/A/22/1, IPC/A/22/3, IPC/A/23/1, IPC/A/23/3 and IPC/A/24/1).

2. The Annex to this document contains the status report on the work of the Committee of Experts of the IPC as of June 2009, prepared by the International Bureau.

3. The Assembly of the IPC Union is invited to take note of the contents of this document and its Annex.

[Annex follows]

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ANNEX

REPORT OF THE IPC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

1. It is recalled that, on January 1, 2006, the IPC reform was completed and the new, eighth edition of the IPC incorporating the changes resulting from the reform entered into force (see the last report submitted to the IPC Union Assembly in 2006; IPC/A/24/1).
2. On February 4 and 5, 2008, WIPO organized a Workshop aimed at discussing the experiences of using the reformed IPC, during its first two years of application by IPC users in patent offices and in industry. Experts in classification from IP Offices, commercial providers of patent information, users of the IPC in industry and other experts on patent information participated in this Workshop.
3. One of the conclusions of the Workshop was that the creation of the core level did not have the success as it had been expected in view of the number of documents classified therein or the number of copies sold of the printed core level publication. On the other hand, the division between core and advanced levels, with the requirement for compatibility and the different revision cycles, had introduced many complications in the revision and the publication procedures, thus the increase in efficiency that had been anticipated was not achieved. Furthermore, the conclusion of the Workshop also emphasized that there is a need for simplification, for example, by synchronizing the publication of the two levels and by using a unique revision procedure. A simplification of the division between the two levels should also be considered, based on the needs of the offices using the core level for classification.
4. The Committee of Experts at its 40th session, which took place from February 6 to 8, 2008, immediately after the above mentioned Workshop, decided to discontinue the publication of the core level in printed form and to review issues such as the complexity of the Classification with its two levels, their independent revision and publication cycles, as well as their different revision procedures, aiming at a simplification of the interaction between the two levels and bodies, in order to improve the efficiency of the revision process. A Task Force was created and an extensive discussion took place.
5. Following this discussion, the Committee of Experts took the following decisions at its 41st session, held from March 16 to 18, 2009:
 - (i) After a transitional period, during the calendar year 2010, the maintenance of two separate and autonomous levels of the IPC, i.e., of the core and of the advanced levels, will be discontinued. Only one text of the Classification will be maintained and published. The use of terms “core level” and “advanced level” will be discontinued, since they have led to confusion.
 - (ii) Small Offices with limited resources or expertise for classification may classify their documents either at subclass level (as foreseen in Article 4(4) of the Strasbourg Agreement) or using the main groups of the IPC. Offices using only main groups will fulfill their obligations as foreseen in Article 4(3) of the Strasbourg Agreement. Those

Offices whose patent collections belong to the PCT minimum documentation are required to use the full Classification. Offices should notify the International Bureau (IB) whether they will classify by using subclass, main groups only or the full Classification. The IB will publish a list which will be regularly updated, with the indication of above use.

(iii) The IPC will be published once a year, in electronic form only, and enter into force on January 1 of each given year. The Committee will review, at its next sessions, whether the number of publications should be increased to twice per year. The master files and the early Internet publication will be published six months before the electronic form enters into force. The IB will, in the meantime, review the IT tools available to offices for the translation and preparation of national versions of the IPC, including definitions, so as to increase their effectiveness. The "PDF" version will become available, at the latest, on the day of entry of the new version of the IPC. Only one version of the master file and "PDF" files will be published corresponding to the full IPC. To view the main groups alone will still be possible, as an alternative to view the full text of the IPC Classification. In addition the IB will assist Offices with limited Internet resources to provide, upon request, a version of the IPC which is adapted for their working environment.

6. The Committee also agreed to improve the efficiency of the revision process. In that respect it was decided to unify the revision procedure with a wider participation of offices. All revision projects will be first considered by the IPC Revision Working Group (IPC/WG) and after completion they will be forwarded to the Committee for final adoption. In order to achieve efficient consideration of the revision projects, the work of the IPC/WG will be limited to the projects concerning revision, definition and maintenance, with priority being given to revision projects and to the corresponding definition projects. Discussions through the IPC e-forum will be encouraged and enhanced.

7. The Committee further agreed that:

(i) Every effort should be made to reclassify the relevant PCT minimum documentation before the date of entry into force of a revised scheme. If such complete reclassification cannot be achieved, the Committee may decide, in particular, in case of active technologies, to publish the relevant scheme in order to allow front file classification.

(ii) A centralized system will be created at WIPO in order to organize, facilitate and monitor reclassification and to allow a wide participation of offices in reclassification.

(iii) Concerning the use of standards ST.8 and ST.10C and the use of master files, there will be no major modifications and only minor editorial amendments will be anticipated.

(iv) All projects completed and adopted by the Committee at its 41st session and by the Advanced Level Subcommittee at its sixth and seventh session will enter into force on January 1, 2010, in both the core and advanced levels. The new structure will enter into force with the relevant publication of the IPC on January 1, 2011.

(v) The International Bureau was requested to take action for the promotion of the new simplified structure and procedure to IPC users with the second workshop for IPC users, to be convened for February 2010.

[End of Annex and of document]