

**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
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**ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL
DE LA PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL**



**ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ INTELLECTUELLE**

المنظمة العالمية للملكية الفكرية

**ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ СОБСТВЕННОСТИ**

C. SCIT 2451
03

May 28, 1999

Re: Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT)
Third Plenary Session (Geneva, June 14 and 15, 1999)

Madam,
Sir,

./ I have pleasure in sending you herewith a paper prepared by the International Bureau and which is proposed to be considered in connection with the establishing and approval of the SCIT Strategic Information Technology Plan at the above-mentioned session (please refer to paragraphs 3(h) and 5.2, last sentence, of Annex 1 to document SCIT/3/2).

Sincerely yours,

p/p *Markusson*

K.-P. Wittig
Deputy Director
Inter-Office Information Services Department

A REQUEST FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN
THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE IPC UNION AND
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

prepared by the International Bureau

1. At its twenty-eighth session, held in March 1999, the Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) agreed to seek close cooperation with the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (hereinafter referred to as “the SCIT”) as regards the Committee’s projects concerned with information technology. In addition, the Committee agreed to:

- draw the SCIT’s attention to the importance of the International Patent Classification (IPC) to the Intellectual Property Digital Libraries (IPDL) project;
- make the SCIT aware of the Committee’s efforts to reform the IPC with a view to better accommodate the Classification to functioning in the electronic environment; and
- express the need, in order to support those efforts, for priority allocation of resources to IPC-related projects under WIPO Program 12 for the 2000-01 biennium.

In order to inform the SCIT of the Committee’s projects and respective decisions, the International Bureau was asked to prepare this request (see document IPC/CE/28/5, paragraph 25).

2. Since 1975, the Committee has been active in maintaining and updating the IPC—a classification scheme facilitating the retrieval of relevant patent information through selection of information bearing appropriate classification symbols. In its seventh edition, which will enter into force on January 1, 2000, the IPC will contain more than 70,000 different entries for information selection purposes.

3. The IPC has never been the only search tool used in the process of selecting relevant patent information. The IPC first of all serves the purpose of identifying the potentially relevant information from the mass of irrelevant information contained in patent document collections. Having identified the potentially relevant patent information, a further selection as to relevance may then be made by using other search tools, for example, key words, drawings, chemical formulae.

4. Increasingly, as patent information became more and more available in electronic form, these other search tools have been adapted for use in electronic searching. Although this development does influence the role of the IPC in the selection process as a whole, it does not remove the need for maintaining and updating the IPC. In this context, the Committee noted that word searching systems have serious restrictions in information retrieval because of the language dependence, and inconsistent and frequently changing terminology. These restrictions are overcome by a language-independent classification system. Yet, even though the IPC continues to play a critical role in effective patent searching, it—among all search tools—has not been adapted for effective use in an electronic environment.

5. Consequently, at its twenty-eighth session, the Committee considered and endorsed the results of a yearlong review of the current status and future potential of the IPC. Principal among those results are recognition that:

- the IPC is the only patent classification used worldwide;
- given the limitations of alternative means, for example, text searching tools, the value of the IPC as a universal, language-independent search tool is of basic importance to the success of any patent information search system intended to be made available worldwide; and
- the current state of the IPC and methods of its revision and use limit its potential, especially in an electronic environment, and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

6. The Committee, therefore, agreed to launch a multifaceted reform aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the IPC in the electronic age. To achieve this objective, the Committee decided that consideration of the required changes to the IPC itself and to methods of its revision and use should start immediately and be carried out during a transitional revision period covering the years 1999 to 2002.

7. The Committee noted that information technology will play a vital role in the reforming of the IPC. Specifically, it is foreseen that an integral part of the IPC reform will be the development of new computer- and Internet-based tools to increase the ease and efficiency of the IPC use and revision, and to facilitate accurate and consistent IPC application.

8. One of the major SCIT activity areas concerns improved access to intellectual property information. To enable the user to limit the large amount of available information to a reasonable amount of pertinent data, appropriate search resources are needed. These resources will be seriously deficient without an effective IPC. Therefore, the Committee agreed that a close cooperation between the Committee and the SCIT should be pursued so as to insure that the reformed IPC will make maximum contribution to the search resources available in the IPDL.

9. The Committee seeks cooperation with the SCIT as regards several information technology-related tasks viewed as essential for the success of the IPC reform. These tasks include the introduction in the Classification of electronic data illustrating the contents of IPC entries, the study of automated classification and indexing tools facilitating, in particular, the reclassification of backlog files, and the development of modern Internet-based training techniques. These tasks are planned for elaboration by conducting pilot projects with the engagement of external contractors. The Committee feels that, in the course of those projects, a need could arise for technical assistance from the SCIT.

10. The Committee also seeks continuing liaison with the SCIT so as to insure mutual compatibility and adherence to a common platform as the IPC reform and the IPDL project proceed.

11. At the same time, the Committee could collaborate with the SCIT, by providing advice of its search and classification experts, on IPDL search tools development. In particular, the Committee could provide advice on the work planned under the SCIT Work Program Task No. 41 (“Investigate the possibility of enhancing and extending the natural language search and classification system of INPI (France) to cover the official UN languages and the utility of such technologies for automatic search enhancement and classification systems”).

12. The Committee fully realizes that the IPC reform and the time frame established for its completion are ambitious and will require resources beyond those currently allocated. The Committee further notes that the draft WIPO program and budget for the 2000-01 biennium includes Main Program 12 which covers program activities relating to information technologies and intellectual property information services, including the development of the international classifications. An implementation plan of these activities under Main Program 12 should be prepared and determined by the SCIT. In this context, the Committee agreed to seek the support of the SCIT, in view of the importance of the IPC and of its reform to SCIT projects, for the priority allocation to IPC-related projects of resources under that Program.

13. The member States of the IPC Union have expressed the view that a working relationship between the Committee and the SCIT can be mutually beneficial, contributing in important ways to achieving both effective IPC reform and effective IPDL functioning. The Committee, therefore, urges favorable consideration by the SCIT of this request for cooperation, collaboration and mutual support.