

## **PROPOSAL FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (SCIT)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. At its fifth Plenary session, held in Geneva from July 10 to 14, 2000, the SCIT tasked the Secretariat with producing, for consideration at its next meeting in January 2001, a paper on restructuring of the SCIT. Six main areas for study were identified, namely the need to:

(a) define the mandate, objectives, and responsibilities of the SCIT Plenary, including any budget responsibility;

(b) determine the number and frequency of its meetings;

(c) define the mandate and processes for the creation and use of working groups and/or task forces, including their relationship with the SCIT Plenary, their size and composition, the use of electronic communication methods, the frequency of meetings and a representative membership;

(d) define and accelerate the process for establishing standards, including their integration into projects;

(e) define the process for initiating new projects; and

(f) review and establish priorities, including their resourcing and a definition of where the responsibility for them lies.

2. The Secretariat has produced the following proposal for consideration by Member States. Any comments received will be duly taken into consideration. A further draft document will be prepared and posted on the SCIT web site by October 13, 2000. The deadline agreed by the SCIT for Member State comments on this first proposal was September 29, 2000.

### **BACKGROUND**

3. In 1998, when the SCIT was formed, it was acknowledged that Information Technology (IT) within the Secretariat had not reached the level of maturity and responsiveness expected by Member States. In 1999, the Director General commissioned two comprehensive studies of IT within the Secretariat by a consultancy specialized particularly in the IT projects management which highlighted a significant number of organizational and structural deficiencies within the Secretariat's IT area and concluded with a total of 68 recommendations. Today, all of the recommendations relevant to IT proposed by the consultancy have been appropriately implemented. The Director General remains committed to modernizing and updating the Organization's IT and bringing it into line with internationally accepted standards, both in terms of efficiency and competence. Indeed, at the last meeting of the SCIT in July 2000, this commitment was evidenced in the fact that the Secretariat was able to report that it has adopted internationally recognized standards for project management, restructured its internal IT management and has successfully launched, and is in the process of delivering, five major IT projects (see documents SCIT/5/2 to 5).

4. It is against this background of rapid progress and change within the Secretariat's IT area that any new proposal on the role of SCIT and its subsidiary bodies has to be considered.

5. In order for SCIT to be successful and meet the expectations of the Member States and the Secretariat, its structure and mandate need to be relevant to the current situation of IT within the Secretariat and, to the extent possible, within Member States.

6. To illustrate this, it is worth recalling the original mandate of the SCIT as contained in document A/32/3 dated February 1998, was that it would:

*“...serve as a forum to discuss issues, facilitate coordination and provide guidance concerning the implementation of the WIPO global information network and the provision of intellectual property information services on the network. It will formulate recommendations and policies regarding the proposed network and related matters, and will submit its recommendations and policies to the WIPO General Assembly for approval. It will address issues pertinent to the process of providing intellectual property information, including both industrial property and copyright information, in a digital networked environment.”*

7. The above mandate is quite limited in its scope and clearly does not address some of the more general issues outlined in paragraph 1.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

8. In reviewing the mandate and role of the SCIT, the following general principles should be taken into consideration:

- (a) avoid duplication between the SCIT and other WIPO organs;
- (b) the SCIT should be competent to give technical advice and policy guidance on the overall IT strategy of WIPO, including matters related to the deployment of the required IT infrastructure both within and outside the Secretariat;
- (c) input from the SCIT should be taken into consideration by the Director General when formulating the WIPO Program and Budget; and
- (d) all standards, guidelines and other international cooperation of a technical nature in the area of industrial property information and documentation should be separate from the main SCIT mandate.

9. In order to encompass these guiding principles and to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing IT and intellectual property environment, the Secretariat proposes that two Member State bodies be established; namely, a Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation and an Advisory Group on Information Technology which, in effect, would supersede the existing SCIT.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND DOCUMENTATION

10. It is recognized that the intellectual property system is reliant on close cooperation between the Member States and their adoption and use of internationally agreed standards relating to intellectual property data, data dissemination and documentation.

11. Given the pace of change affecting the intellectual property community, including that resulting from the impact of IT-related developments, and the importance of this to WIPO's work, it is proposed to create a Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation, reporting directly to the WIPO General Assembly. A major benefit of this would be that the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation, having approved a new or amended standard, could promulgate it immediately or, in exceptional circumstances only, refer the matter to the WIPO General Assembly.

12. The mandate of the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation would be to adopt new or revised WIPO Standards. The Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation would meet at least once a year.

13. As an initial activity, the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation would review the current list of tasks in the present SCIT Work Program and determine, in respect of those relevant to the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation, whether and how they should be progressed. The Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation would similarly determine the inclusion of any new tasks into the work program and how work on these tasks would proceed.

14. The Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation would be empowered to establish or dissolve working groups and/or task forces as required, define their mandate, composition, rules of procedure and duration. Such working groups and/or task forces should replace the existing working group(s) and/or task force(s) of a permanent nature that currently report to the SCIT Plenary. The streamlined, ad hoc and dynamic approach as outlined above should best respond to the need to facilitate effective and timely preparation and implementation of standards.

15. The working practices associated with task resolution would focus on the use of working groups and/or task forces whose size and membership would be aimed at ensuring efficiency of effort while paying attention to representational balance and the tasks allotted to it. Emphasis would be on the use of electronic working methods but the use of physical meetings would not be precluded. The creation and dissolution of such task-related working groups and/or task forces would be flexible enough to reflect the importance and urgency of the matters under consideration.

## ADVISORY GROUP ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

16. Further to the establishment of the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation, it is proposed that an Advisory Group on Information Technology be established.

17. The role of the Advisory Group on Information Technology would be to give technical advice and policy guidance to the Director General on the overall IT strategy of WIPO, including matters related to the deployment of the required IT infrastructure both within and outside the Secretariat, and priority setting within WIPO's IT Strategic Implementation Plan.

18. The composition of the Advisory Group on Information Technology would be open to all WIPO Member States and relevant Organizations that express an interest in participating. The working methods regarding the use of working groups and/or task forces would follow those outlined in paragraph 15, above, thus enabling access to specialized representation when required.

19. To enable the Advisory Group on Information Technology to carry out its mandate, it would receive status reports on all WIPO's IT activities together with the relevant budgetary information and would be kept abreast of any new proposals within WIPO's IT Strategic Implementation Plan.

20. The Advisory Group on Information Technology would meet at least once a year or at the invitation of the Director General, and the timing of the meeting would be such that any recommendations to the Director General could be taken into consideration during the preparation of the Program and Budget.

#### WIPO FUNDING OF MEMBER STATE PARTICIPATION

21. Funding of Member State participation in both the Standing Committee on Technical Standards and Documentation and the Advisory Group on Information Technology will be elaborated once the final structure is established.

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