

# REFORM OF THE PCT

The Committee on Reform of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) met for the first time from May 21 to 25



in Geneva to launch a process aimed at streamlining and simplifying the highly successful PCT international filing system for patents. The PCT enables inventors to apply for patent protection in up to 112 countries by submitting a single international application. The Committee seeks to improve the efficiency of this global filing system and to facilitate the ability of inventors and applicants to obtain patents worldwide.

In his opening remarks, WIPO Director General Dr. Kamil Idris noted that the Committee was to take a fresh look at the PCT at a time when there was a prevailing dynamism for improving systems of obtaining patents internationally. In this regard, he made specific reference to the recently concluded Patent Law Treaty (PLT) and current discussions in the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents (SCP) to achieve greater international harmonization of the substantive aspects of patent laws.

It is recalled that the remarkable success of the PCT in terms of the number of applications filed (nearly 91,000 in 2000) and the number of member States (112) had led to difficulties for international search and examination authorities to meet the demand for their services.

The Committee agreed that reform of the PCT system should pursue these general objectives:

- Simplification of the system and streamlining of procedures;
- Reduction of costs for applicants, bearing in mind the differing needs of applicants in industrialized and developing countries, including individual inventors and small and medium-sized enterprises as well as larger corporate applicants;
- Assurance that PCT authorities can handle their workload while maintaining the quality of services provided;

- Avoidance of unnecessary duplication of work carried out by PCT authorities and by national and regional industrial property offices;
- Assurance that the system works to the advantage of all offices, regardless of their size;
- Maintenance of an appropriate balance between the interests of applicants and third parties, also taking into account the interests of States;
- Expansion of programs for technical assistance to developing countries, especially in the area of information technology;
- Assurance that maximum advantage is taken of modern information and communications technology, including the establishment of common technical and software standards for electronic filing and processing of PCT applications;
- Coordination of PCT reform with ongoing substantive harmonization work being undertaken by WIPO's Standing Committee on the Law of Patents and alignment of the PCT, as far as possible, with the provisions of the PLT.

