

REPUBLIC OF KOREA CREATES FUNDS-IN-TRUST TO ENHANCE COOPERATION

WIPO Director General Kamil Idris met the Commissioner of the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO), Mr. Jong-Kap Kim, on October 1 to finalize a cooperation agreement for strengthening intellectual property (IP) systems in developing and least developed countries. Under the agreement, KIPO committed an amount of one billion Korean Won (over one million Swiss Francs) for these activities in the 2004-2005 biennium. This will take the form of a funds-in-trust (FIT) with WIPO.



Photo: Mercedes Martinez Dozal

The Director General meets with the KIPO delegation

As part of the arrangement KIPO, in collaboration with WIPO, will make specialized software available to national IP offices in developing countries, which receive international patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). The software will facilitate the handling of these applications in both electronic and paper form. The deployment of the system, known as PCT-Receiving Office Administration (PCT-ROAD), is expected in the first half of 2005.

"We welcome the Republic of Korea's offer to make available, free-of-charge, this software which will make the system more accessible to applicants from developing countries," said Dr. Idris. Commissioner Kim said that PCT-ROAD had resulted in significant efficiency gains for KIPO. "We look forward to sharing this product with our counterparts in other countries to support them in the delivery of their services," he added.

Assisting developing countries with e-filing

In February 2004, PCT-SAFE client software, available free-of-charge from WIPO, made PCT e-filing accessible to users worldwide. PCT applicants who use the software also benefit from a reduction in e-filing fees of up to 300 Swiss francs (CHF). Nevertheless, many PCT contracting states from developing countries have been unable to take advantage of electronic filing due to limitations in their resources and information technology infrastructure. As a result, applicants using the PCT receiving offices in these countries have not been able to enjoy the benefits of electronic filing.

In a move to ensure timely delivery of its service, KIPO has developed its own receiving system for e-filing and its own business processing system. Both have been available to Korean applicants since January. KIPO, in cooperation with WIPO, is now adapting its system to make it available to all PCT receiving offices, thereby making PCT e-filing accessible to all IP offices. Once PCT-ROAD is fully operational, all IP offices will be able to download the free software from the websites of WIPO and KIPO.

PCT-ROAD is a stand-alone system designed to handle electronic international applications filed on physical media, such as CD-R or floppy diskette, while also preserving the option of filing on paper or using PCT-EASY. Once PCT-ROAD is installed in patent offices, PCT applicants will be able to benefit from the CHF 300 e-filing fee reductions when filing with their own receiving office.

Major features of the system include its ability to:

- ▶ process PCT electronic filings received on physical media or other means;
- ▶ check that the international application conforms to the legal and technical requirements under the PCT;
- ▶ assign a receipt number and issue confirmation of receipt of an international application;
- ▶ upload filings from physical media such as a CD-R to a database on a PC workstation, so that the Home Copy and Record Copy requirements can be met; and
- ▶ process international applications (Home Copy).

