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Joint message from the EPO and the KIPO on COVID-19

In the face of the unprecedented global challenges posed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) stand united in expressing their deepest sympathy with the families of the COVID-19 victims, and understanding for our users, who are experiencing hardships – whether directly or indirectly – in their daily lives.

South Korea and Europe have both been affected by the outbreak and spread of the disease. More recently, both our regions have witnessed a gradual decrease in the number of newly confirmed cases – in no small part due to innovative medical technologies and even IT solutions being deployed to help health workers, authorities and the public contain the spread of the virus.

The KIPO and the EPO firmly believe that innovation is the key to putting an end to the coronavirus pandemic and rebuilding the global economy and trade. Innovative companies and research centres across a wide range of medical fields are working hard on developing and testing COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. Others are keenly developing new unmanned or contactless technologies that could offer new hope for economic revival.

Over the past two decades, the KIPO and the EPO, through our individual and collective efforts, have strived to provide high-quality patent examination, to deliver reliable patents in a timely manner and to help innovators benefit from a variety of bilateral co-operation programmes. In addition, both of our offices manage patent databases that contain vast amounts of accumulated knowledge and technologies from around the world. These databases have been made accessible to the public free of charge so that innovators can easily gain the insights they need to build a better future.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, the KIPO and the EPO have taken remedial measures to maintain the drive for innovation by minimising the adverse impact of the crisis on our users. We extended the deadlines for certain applicant actions for their ongoing applications, such as required document submission and fee payment, to help them avoid unintentional non-

observance of time limits due to COVID-19 disruptions. We have introduced new online tools and services, which have also helped to ensure proceedings continue in an era of social distancing. In addition, both offices have made up-to-date patent databases available to innovators for coronavirus-related technologies including diagnosis, prevention and treatment.

In these challenging times, we are once again reminded of the importance of co-operation as a powerful driver for South Korea and Europe to navigate crises and move forward. The pandemic transcends borders and requires greater solidarity and co-operation. The KIPO and the EPO believe we will be able to overcome this crisis by continuing to work together to promote and utilise innovation. We will remain committed to strengthening our longstanding co-operation and supporting the innovation community.

Park Wonjoo

KIPO Commissioner

António Campinos

EPO President