

Message from the Commissioner



As the focus of the world's economy shifts from labor and capital to knowledge and innovation, the swiftness with which intellectual property rights are acquired and intellectual property disputes are resolved has emerged as a core factor of personal, commercial, and national competitiveness. The success of technological development depends on the swift acquisition and commercialization of intellectual property rights; and a crucial factor of this success is the early development and acquisition of international patents for new technologies. Accordingly, the Korean Intellectual Property Office plays a vital role in managing Korean policies on intellectual property rights.

For the Korean Intellectual Property Office, 2006 was a turning point for change and development. In May 2006, we became the first central government department to operate as a self-financing executive agency. To satisfy our customers, we also established a Customer Support Bureau and we improved the application system by combining and minimizing the required documentation. Moreover, we made great strides in managing change and innovation, especially by successfully promoting performance-based management and Six Sigma management.

In 2006, we successfully achieved our goal of providing a world-class examination and trial service, and we contributed to technological innovation and industrial development by expanding the basis for creating, utilizing and protecting intellectual property.

Our other accomplishments for 2006 include the following: First, our applications for industrial property reached 367,687, giving us a ranking of fourth in the world; and our international patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty reached 5,935, which is an increase of 26.6 percent over the previous year.

Second, in December 2006, we successfully reached our target of shortening the first action pendency period for patent examinations to 9.8 months-the fastest patent examination service in the world. The shortened pendency period is the result of endless efforts to make our examinations more efficient. Those efforts include increasing the examination performance of each examiner by an average of 47 percent over the previous year; recruiting additional examiners; improving the examination process; advancing the information system of patent administration; and expanding the work-at-home program. We also endeavored to maintain and improve the quality of examinations by standardizing the management of examination quality, enhancing the proficiency of examiners, and improving the examination assessment system.

Third, we facilitated the revision of various laws and systems to protect intellectual property holders and improve the convenience of applicants. For instance, we allowed applicants to postpone the submission of a claim until the disclosure of their application;

we simplified the level of detail required in patent applications; and we reinforced the rights of intellectual property holders by protecting all types of visually recognizable symbols and marks.

Fourth, we made continual improvements to our fully automated patent administration system, KIPOnet II, and these improvements have made us a world leader in patent information systems. The ubiquitous service of KIPOnet II enables our application and examination processes to be accessed anytime and anywhere. As a result, the portion of patent applications filed electronically in 2006 reached 97.2 percent, and our work efficiency and productivity were enhanced by the capability of at-home and on-line processing. Moreover, by transferring the know-how that we acquired from developing and operating the KIPOnet system to more than 30 countries, we have expanded our international cooperation in this field.

Fifth, we implemented policies that foster a beneficial intellectual property cycle with emphasis on the creation, utilization and protection of intellectual property. For instance, we promote the use of patent information to improve the efficiency of national R&D, and we operate a patent management advisor system and a Local Intellectual Property Center to reinforce the capability of universities, public research institutes, and local agencies with respect to the creation of intellectual property. We also started a patent management consultation service for small and medium-sized enterprises to promote the commercialization and trade of patented technology. On the protection front, we responded actively to intellectual property infringements inside and outside of the country by introducing an anticounterfeiting reward system and the Center for Overseas Protection of IPRs. We also participated in the formation of international standards for intellectual property rights by responding to free trade agreements and the World Trade Organization, and by cooperating with the World Intellectual Property Organization.

In the current era, where knowledge is a major source of wealth and prosperity, the key to securing national competitiveness and continual growth lies in intellectual property rights. The Korean Intellectual Property Office will use all its strength and resources to promote the importance of intellectual property rights.

I sincerely hope that the 2006 Annual Report offers insight into the activities and prospects of the Korean Intellectual Property Office and into the blueprints of the Korean intellectual property rights system and policies.

Sang-Woo Jun
Commissioner