
Overview of 2009

The Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) is the major government agency in charge of intellectual property (IP) matters in Korea. We are doing our utmost to enhance technological innovation and industrial development by facilitating the creation, utilization, and protection of IP and by implementing diverse policies focused on timely, high-quality examinations. In 2009, we received 364,990 applications for intellectual property rights (IPRs)-the fourth largest number in the world.

In 2009, our international patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) numbered 8,066, which is also the fourth largest number in the world, and the requests for international searches soared from 735 in 2006 to 13,978 in 2009. These results attest to the international reputation of our patent examination capabilities.

Internally, we undertook various measures to make our IP system more customer-oriented. For instance, a set of revisions to the Patent Act, which came into effect in July 2009, simplified the patent procedures and improved the convenience of customers. We also simplified the process of renewing trademark registrations and allowed design applicants to submit 3-D illustrations of their design instead of 2-D drawings.

We implemented various measures to ensure that our examination service is of the highest quality. For instance, to harmonize our examination standards with those of other advanced countries, we established 39 examination guidelines on the basis of a comparative study of the examination standards and practices of the five major IP offices (IP5), namely the offices of Korea, the US, Europe, Japan, and China. We also changed our six-step method of evaluating examinations with a new approach based on six perspectives. The perspective approach has led to improvements in the overall quality of examinations.

Laying the groundwork for expanded international cooperation on examinations has been another major objective. Thus, following the success of establishing a Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) with Japan in 2006 and with the US in 2008, we took further steps in 2009 to implement bilateral PPH agreements with Denmark, the UK, Canada, and Russia. A PPH enables each participating country to use the examination results of other countries in its own examination process. We also formed a partnership with the US in implementing a project called Strategic Handling of Applications for Rapid Examination (SHARE). A one-year trial of the SHARE project for fuel cell and semiconductor applications commenced on September 1, 2009. Under this project, whenever the two offices examine common patent applications, we can share relevant information such as prior art and examination results.

Another example of international cooperation was our successful hosting of the inaugural IP5 Examiners Workshop in October 2009. The aim of the workshop was to promote a balanced standard of judgment among the IP5 offices so that patent applicants could expect consistent examination results from the world's major IP offices. The participants analyzed examination processes and results of common applications, compared their examination practices, and shared their examination know-how with one another.

IP5 working group meeting



We also held meetings with the heads of offices from China, Japan, the UK, Russia, Canada, Europe, the US, and so on to facilitate interoffice work-sharing on patent examinations. To help narrow the gap in global development, we are preparing IP-based forms of official development assistance. That means providing developing and least developed countries with appropriate technology to improve their quality of life and with brand strategies to market their goods. At present, we are endeavoring to provide African countries with the technology of using sugar cane bagasse for the manufacture of charcoal. We are also collaborating with the international humanitarian and development NGO Good Neighbors in developing a brand for processed mango in Chad. All these efforts are fostering friendly international relations.

Various programs were developed as a strategy for open innovation and regional capacity building. First, our support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has changed to a consumer-oriented approach with a customized package of services.

Since 2008 we have been collaborating with the National Academy of Engineering of Korea in running the annual Campus Patent Strategy Universiade. During the Universiade, companies pose various patent-related problems and students endeavor to devise creative solutions. Thirty-six companies and 2,720 teams from 80 universities participated in the event in 2009. The Universiade is lauded as a new form of collaboration between the industrial, academic, and government sectors.

With stronger IP protection as a top priority, we strengthened our anticounterfeiting measures in a variety of ways. For example, we expanded the regional anticounterfeiting offices; we implemented a system of monitoring online distribution of counterfeit goods; we sought special judicial police authority for our IP enforcement staff, empowering them with full investigative rights and the right to search and seize; and we conducted campaigns in conjunction with civic consumer groups to raise public awareness of IP issues and IP protection systems.

In the current era, where knowledge is a major source of wealth and prosperity, IPRs are the key to securing national competitiveness and continual growth. We will use all our strength and resources to promote the importance of IPRs.



I Hot-wind dryer to produce dried mangoes in Chad

I Campus Patent Strategy Universiade
I Joint promotion with consumer groups

