



Overview of 2010

The Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) is a major government agency in charge of intellectual property (IP) matters in Korea. Our mission is to further enhance technological innovation and industrial development through the creation, utilization, and protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs) such as patents, utility models, trademarks, and designs. In order to achieve this, we provide timely, high-quality examinations and approval services. Furthermore, we strive to create excellent IPs such as core technologies; commercialize patent technologies; protect IPRs at home and abroad; foster professional intellectual property personnel; and utilize and spread patent information.

In 2010, we received 362,074 applications for IPRs, the fourth largest number in the world. In addition, requests for PCT international searches grew quickly from 5,898 in 2006 to 20,810 in 2010 with an annual average growth of 38% over the past four years. Due to the continuously rising amount of examinations, we are increasing our efforts to provide fast and accurate examination and approval services.

Compared to key IP offices including the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), the Japan Patent Office (JPO), and the European Patent Office (EPO), we are maintaining a competitive first action pendency period of 18.5 months for patent and utility model examinations. To shorten the pendency period and satisfy applicants who require faster examinations, we recruited 69 examiners in 2010, and plan to recruit a total of 301 examiners by 2015. Moreover, to enhance the efficiency of examiners, we have developed the 3rd KIPO Office Automation System called G-KIPOnet.

Along with this, we have been implementing various measures to make our IP system more customer-oriented. Our three-track examination and two-track trademark, design examination system has been successfully established after only 2 years. This system improves the convenience of customers by allowing examinations to be requested at a desired time according to their patent strategy. Furthermore, a 3-D illustration design application system, enacted for the first time in the world on January 1, 2010, allowed the use of applications for design for 3-D illustrations essentially made during product development.

Since 2008, improvements in both systems and policies have resulted in increased examination quality as seen through various indexes. In an effort to provide more accurate examination and trial services this year, we fully amended the patent examination guidelines and have enforced evaluating examinations by five perspectives.

We are currently increasing collaboration with many nations to meet the international examination standards. We held over thirty bilateral meetings in 2010. At a trial-run of PCT collaborative search and examination, we co-authored a PCT international search report with USPTO and EPO. We are also working with major developing nations in Africa and South America to host head meetings with ARIPO (African Regional Intellectual Property Organization), a cooperative body in IPRs between regional African governments. Following the patent prosecution highway (PPH) with Japan in 2007 and the US in 2008, we are now implementing PPH programs with a total of eight countries including Finland and Germany.

Moreover, since the launch of IP5, a collaborative system in patents between EPO, JPO, SIPO, USPTO, and KIPO in 2008, we have carried out ten foundation projects for work-sharing. These include common classification, mechanical translation, training of examiners by utilizing three working groups on common hybrid classification, IT-supported business processes, and examination practice-related projects.

In addition to cooperation in examinations, we are carrying out 'Knowledge-Based Official Development Assistance (ODA)' utilizing IPRs. In other words, we are providing the world's developing and least developed countries with the suitable technology and support for not only improving their way of life, but also assistance with branding for the optimal trading of their products. Two of our projects: the 'IP and Product Branding' project and the 'Capacity Building in the Use of Appropriate Technology' project were adopted at the 5th WIPO CDIP conference in April 2010. Moreover, we held a seminar in Seoul for 3 days from June 23, 2010 to June 25, 2010 with the theme 'The Role of Brands and IPRs and Ways to Utilize them in Regional Products' and invited related experts from international organizations and NGOs from 21 APEC member countries and WIPO.

Beyond cooperation between countries, we are exerting every effort to narrow the gap in global development through various projects. One such project includes providing African countries with the customized technology to manufacture charcoal from sugar cane bagasse, a local resource. We are also collaborating with Good Neighbors, an international humanitarian and development NGO, in developing a brand for dried mango in the Republic of Chad. Our efforts also extend to Kurinalia, Nepal, where we are endeavoring to improve the residential environment using appropriate construction technologies.

To build IP capacity, we are implementing policies that foster specialized personnel and support the use of IP. We are jointly running a curriculum on IPRs with prominent universities in KOREA such as Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) and Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) to foster creative talent. We are also providing consultations for small and medium sized enterprises in the area, based at the Regional Knowledge Center. Throughout 2010, we held intellectual property strategy forums in a total of six cities as the Regional Knowledge Center toured the country.

We successfully hosted the 'Korea International Women's Invention Exposition' (KIWIE2010) in collaboration with the Korea Women Inventors Association (KWIA) and the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO). Over 70,000 visitors and 450 female inventors from thirty countries participated in the event.

In 2010, our efforts for protecting IPRs reaped significant results. The Special Judicial Police Squad for trademarks was launched in September 2010 and resulted in three times the number of arrests and more than ten times the number of confiscated goods compared to before the squad. We have engaged in powerful anti-counterfeiting measures while conducting a clean campaign in conjunction with civic consumer groups to create a culture that respects and protects IPRs. Through consumer education, we are also working hard to foster responsible consumers who choose to only purchase genuine products.