

Message from the Commissioner

WE WILL CHANNEL OUR NATIONAL INNOVATIVE SPIRIT INTO A VAST CREATIVE ECONOMY THAT WILL USHER IN A NEW ERA WHERE CREATIVITY AND INVENTION ARE APPROPRIATELY VALUED AND REWARDED.

In the aftermath of the global economic crisis, countries throughout the world are seeking new growth engines and economic paradigms.

And yet, still we find ourselves faced with issues pertaining to torpid economic growth, unacceptable unemployment rates, diminished natural resources, and the necessity for economic sustainability.

What we need is to break free from outdated economic models and introduce new methods for achieving heightened productivity and profitability. With this in mind, the Republic of Korea is looking to the concept of “creative economy” in ferreting out innovative solutions.

Creative economy is a core economic strategy that, in addition to pairing industry with cultural innovations, creates new jobs and markets through a merging of creative ideas with science and information technology (IT).

Here at the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO), we establish intellectual property (IP)-based policies aimed toward the invigoration of a creative economy. In fact, last year, we focused our resources on the development of an economic climate favorable to a virtuous cycle of IP creation, utilization, and protection. We took great strides in making sure that innovative thinkers receive adequate compensation for their creative efforts.

We shortened our examination pendency and enhanced the quality by offering customer-oriented examination services, thereby encouraging the use of powerful IP rights (IPRs) for the rapid protection of assets resulting from creative endeavors.

Although applications for industrial rights continue to surge, we nonetheless reduced the average first action pendency for patent and utility model examinations (down to 13.2 months), as well

as that for trademarks and designs (down to 7.7 months and 7.4 months, respectively).

Another way we were able to increase the quality and efficiency of our examination was by undertaking the first holistic restructuring in our office’s history. By doing so, we removed technological barriers that existed among our various examination divisions, allowing us to take greater advantage of recent trends in technological convergence.

In order to help IPs flourish, we spent much of last year relentlessly promoting the vast array of benefits IP has to offer.

We started off by reinforcing our infrastructure, including patent trend analysis and the dispatch of IP experts to public R&D facilities for the creation of outstanding patents and the prevention of an overlap in governmental R&D investments.

We also worked hand-in-hand with the Korea Development Bank and the Korea Credit Guarantee Fund in assisting Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in attaining substantial loans through the use of IP as collateral. Now, innovative companies can freely exploit such alternative methods of IP financing.

We worked daily to help the general public transform creative ideas into new business start-ups and commercially viable IPRs through the utilization of an online platform called “Creative Economy Town.” We also held events like Korea Invention Day and the Design to Business Fair in order to get word out regarding the potential dividends of IP.

We also made great strides toward creating an environment that respects IPs, ensuring that people receive due compensation for their creative efforts. In conjunction with the Korea Customs Service, we worked tirelessly to stymie the influx of IPR violations.

We drew up new measures to ensure that creative ideas

remain profitable and properly safeguarded by improving upon regulations and procedures pertaining to the Patent Act and the Unfair Competition Prevention and Trade Secret Protection Act.

In addition to nation-wide campaigns to raise awareness of the need for IPR protection, we enhanced our departmental divisions to crack down on illegal goods through the use of state-of-the-art equipment and increased cooperation with the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office—ensuring better, more expedited results.

Internationally, we expanded our cooperative role in streamlining global IP examination and eliminating redundancies. We were proud to represent Korea in chairing last year’s annual TM5 meeting, and it was an honor to head up important discussions on harmonizing international trademark systems and improving their accessibility.

We enacted the Patent Prosecution Highway in collaboration with 14 other countries, including such recent additions as

Hungary, Singapore, and Austria. As of this writing, that number has increased to 21.

A sampling of multilateral meetings attended last year include: the General Assembly, the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents (SCP); and the Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs, and Geographical Indications (SCT) of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in which we strived for a confluence of global IPRs.

In collaboration with WIPO and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), we implemented IP-sharing projects to support key national allies through the provision of appropriate technologies and brand development.

Last year, we developed a local brand and produced an oil extractor for the Philippines, produced a bicycle-operated water pump for Papua New Guinea, and fashioned a grain brand called “Quinoa” for Bolivia.

Thanks to our country’s unique experience of having risen from aid beneficiary to aid donor, we are in an advantageous position to share our know-how with countries wishing to improve their economic growth through the exploitation of IPs.

Ours is a creative and inventive country that ceaselessly pursues innovation for improving the welfare and prosperity of its people. Examples of groundbreaking Korean inventions include: the Korean alphabet (Hangul), the Korean sundial (Angbu Ilgu), and the world’s first movable printing type.

We will channel this national innovative spirit into a vast creative economy that will usher in a new era where creativity and invention are appropriately valued and rewarded.



Kim Young-min | Commissioner