

Message from the Commissioner

Amidst the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), intellectual property (IP) has become the necessary swords and shields of business management. Being the Republic of Korea's principal governmental agency of intellectual property rights (IPRs), the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) has dedicated efforts to lead industrial innovation based on the creation of strong IP by providing effective IP protection and utilization. On a global aspect, new and existing relationships have been established and strengthened with foreign IP offices and international organizations.

Throughout the year 2018, many endeavors were carried out to raise the level of Korea's IP administration. Most notably, a significant step was taken to deter IPR infringement and protect right holders through enforcing punitive damages. Last December, an amendment to the Patent Law was approved to award a compensation amount up to three times the damages for patent and trade secret infringements.

Furthermore, there had been considerable success with investigations and seizures carried out by the Special Judicial Police, which is KIPO's enforcement authority on trademark violations. Thus, the relevant law was revised to grant policing authorities on trademark, patent, design and trade secret infringements for the greater protection of IPR.

At the same time, we worked to set up a system that helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) secure IP-based financing that allows their patents and technologies to be used as guarantees and collateral for loans. Aiming to create an environment where IP is properly valued in the market, KIPO jointly announced with the Financial Services Commission the establishment of comprehensive actions for an IP financing system focused on SMEs.

For IP creation, we endeavored to link government research and development (R&D) projects with IPRs. Patent information was utilized to perform analyses on technology trends. The analysis results gave directions for R&D projects to create high value-added standard-essential patents (SEPs) and support industrial development based on strong and valuable IPRs.

One of KIPO's steadfast pursuits is to ensure high-quality IP services to our users, especially in patent, trademark and design examination. To improve the efficiency and accuracy of the examination process, we expanded our various cooperative examinations, mainly regarding prior art search outsourcing and consultative examinations. In terms of overall quality management, we restructured our monitoring system to allow each examination division to have more involvement in managing the quality of its performances with greater responsibility.

Also, we made available an accelerated examination track for seven major technology fields of the 4IR, including AI and big data. Recognizing the rapid development of technology, we worked to satisfy the changing needs of our users by providing appropriate services in a timely manner.

Harnessing our experiences, KIPO has been doing its part to lead the global advancement of the IP system which requires active engagement in multilateral and bilateral cooperation. Last year, the heads of the world's five largest patent offices (IP5) gathered for the 2018 IP5 Heads Meeting held in the US. The five patent offices (KIPO, CNIPA, EPO, JPO and USPTO) agreed to collaborate towards enhancing the IP5 cooperation especially in the field of examination.

In addition to the participation in international forums, bilateral activities

were also continued for strengthening cooperative relationships regarding IP. We worked with ASEAN and other countries such as China, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Brazil in the areas of IP system establishment, examination quality improvement and international IP protection.

Lastly, various contributions were made to assist developing countries in advancing their IP capacity. We accomplished several projects for appropriate technology and brand development to support the sustainability of local communities. Also through the WIPO Korea Funds-in-Trust, educational programs were conducted to enhance the awareness of IPRs, ultimately, fulfilling our international responsibilities as one of the leading countries in IP.

These achievements would not have been possible without the continued interest and support of our IP service users, both foreign and domestic. There are still numerous activities undertaken by KIPO that I have not mentioned. I hope this report serves to give you a better understanding of our recent policies and projects.

It is my great pleasure to present to you the 2018 Annual Report.

“ KIPO has dedicated efforts to lead industrial innovation based on the creation of strong IP by providing effective IP protection and utilization. ”

Park Wonjoo | Commissioner

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