

Preface

An intellectual property (IP) system is one of the best ways of protecting, and thereby preserving, human creativity. Since the first patent system was established in Venice in the fifteenth century, an IP system for enhancing innovation has been established in almost every country. However, modern IP systems are facing new challenges, including economic globalization, sophisticated advanced-technology, and open-innovation.

Discussions have been held all around the world on creating IP policy that will keep pace with rapid change. The Japan Patent Office (JPO) established the Policy Committee on Innovation and Intellectual Property (PCIIP) in December 2007 to discuss desirable IP policies for Japan, and the PCIIP recommended the establishment of a new IP system for promoting innovation that keeps pace with globalization and technological development.

Among patent applicants, there is growing need to protect one invention globally and efficiently as Intellectual Property Right (IPR). To meet their needs, as one of the policy recommendations of the PCIIP, we believe it important to construct a more substantive international patent collaboration as the “Virtual Global Patent Office.” The JPO will continue to pursue with other countries the international harmonization of the patent system and the establishment of a global IP infrastructure.

In order for applicants to efficiently obtain patents worldwide, the JPO has been promoting work sharing among developed nations in the area of patent examination and promoting the provision of patent examination results to developing countries. For instance, the JPO has expanded the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) network and launched “JP-FIRST” (JP-Fast Information Release Strategy).

The JPO has also targeted the realization of more expeditious and effective patent examination while flexibly meeting various needs of applicants. As one of the specific measures, the JPO has decided to establish the super accelerated examination system.

In order to streamline the patent examination process, the JPO has been outsourcing a greater number of prior art searches and enhancing its utilization of information technology. A quality management system was established to maintain and improve the quality of patent examination.

For the construction of a global IP infrastructure, it is important for developing countries to enhance their IP human resources and IP infrastructures. As a country that has achieved economic development utilizing the IP system, Japan closely cooperates with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to develop IP cultures and implement IP systems in developing countries and to extend various forms of assistance to establish IP systems in those countries. For example, Japan has received more than 2,800 IP trainees from primarily Asian countries and dispatched IP experts to those countries. Japan will also work closely with WIPO to provide IP assistance to African countries.

The JPO has been increasing its efforts to raise public awareness of IP infringement and to collaborate with right holders, foreign governments and other international organizations to halt the global proliferation of counterfeits and piracies, which have a negative impact on innovation.

The JPO is supporting SMEs and local companies in the areas of strategic IP exploitation, adequate protection of local brands, and utilization of their IPRs to generate capital for future innovation.

JPO Annual Report 2008 provides a look at the broad range of JPO efforts to realize IPR protection and reform the patent examination process in Japan. We hope that this report serves as a reference for IPR professionals and contributes to their discussions on IPR.

Handwritten signature of Takashi Suzuki in Japanese characters: 鈴木隆史.

Takashi Suzuki

Commissioner