

Preface



Our nation's economy is displaying positive signs of recovery. In an effort to solidify the recent trend into steadfast economic strength, it is essential to further advance science and technology, which is one of our nation's strengths. In order to unite the results of such scientific and technological advances to the creation of internationally competitive new industries, the strategic protection and exploitation of intellectual property is indispensable.

Expectations for regulatory action in intellectual property management have been rising and to have been placed at the core of such activities. I believe that the establishment of an "intellectual creation cycle" (which consists of the creation of intellectual property through research and development, the protection of IP, and the exploitation of IP-related products) is an essential element in transforming our nation into a "nation built on intellectual property" and that becoming such a nation is required for the continual growth of our economy.

Towards the realization of a "nation built on intellectual property" on May 27 of this year, the government announced the "Intellectual Property Strategic Program 2004" which defined concrete measures the government should take and prioritized strategic policies. The "Nakagawa Report-Toward a sustainable and competitive industrial structure" established by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, furthermore, stipulates intellectual property policies as a priority. As the organization that bears the main burden of such policies, the JPO will concentrate all of its efforts to realize these objectives.

We also plan to increase the number of fixed-term examiners, with the objective being 500 such examiners in total, and aim to implement comprehensive measures, which include the "Patent Law Amendment Reducing Patent Pendency," to attain "eliminating pendency until first action". For the promotion of efficiency in research and development efforts, we will facilitate access to patent information of

approximately fifty million items that have been accumulated in the world's fastest computer under our digitization effort and to our retrieval system of prior arts accumulated over our years of examination expertise.

Furthermore, we will support the global market penetration efforts of Japanese industry by promoting the establishment of environments where intellectual property is protected in all the nations of the world. To achieve this end, we will transmit examination results quickly to facilitate their utilization in examinations in the patent offices of various nations. Such measures will place our nation in a leadership position in patent examination.

We will continue to support international cooperative efforts, assisting with the development of human resources in the developing nations of Asia and cooperating in patent examination with the advanced nations of the West. We will also further promote anti-counterfeiting measures in close cooperation with domestic civilian organizations as well as with the US and the Western European nations.

In addition, toward achieving regional revitalization, we will provide support from the viewpoint of intellectual property by reviving shelved intellectual property, so that regional level creation of new industries might be facilitated.

We cannot exclude the support of small-and medium-sized enterprises. In venture industries, the management of intellectual property is often insufficient. Such a disparity (intellectual property management divide) must be eliminated, and we will give comprehensive support by working closely with SMEs.

Finally, to meet the recent increase in the need for protection of designs and to create strong and unique brands that are effective for the development of value-added, discriminative merchandise and services, we must review the design and trademark registration systems.

This report introduces the intellectual property policy of the JPO. We desire that this report contributes to the international deliberations relating to intellectual property policy.

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