

Preface



Since the patent system was first established in Venice in the fifteenth century, the modern intellectual property (IP) system has developed in every country around the world. The development of the intellectual property system is the crucial mission of every country, and in accordance with the rapid advancement of technology and the global expansion of international trade and investment, we acknowledge that the JPO's role to implement the IP system, both in Japan and abroad, is more significant than ever.

The Japanese government established the Intellectual Property Policy Headquarters led by the prime minister in 2003 and has revised the Intellectual Property Strategic Program every year thereafter. Based on the strategic programs, the JPO has taken several measures to realize a more effective and efficient examination system and to promote strategic IP utilization, paying special attention to international cooperation with foreign offices, the private sector and the international community.

Firstly, as the IP office which deals with about 400,000 patent applications a year, the largest number in the world, the JPO is promoting international work-sharing among major IP offices as a means for keeping pace with the increasing number of application filings worldwide. To successfully carry out work-sharing with other IP offices, the JPO has launched Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) Pilot Programs with the USPTO and the UKIPO, as well as a fully-implemented PPH with the KIPO. The PPH reduces the patent examination workload and improves the quality of patent examination. To alleviate the procedural burden on an applicant involved in filing an application and to reduce the examination workload in an IP office, we will cooperate and negotiate with other governments to realize the international harmonization of IP systems.

Secondly, as a country that has achieved economic development utilizing the IP system, Japan closely cooperates with WIPO (World Intellectual Property

Organization) 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. Japan has received more than 2,500 IP trainees and dispatched IP experts, in addition to assisting other IP offices with their office modernization efforts using IT and holding workshops for the purpose of disseminating and promoting IP systems.

Regarding the efforts to combat counterfeiting and piracies which attract global concern, the JPO endeavors to raise public awareness of IP infringement and collaborates with customs and police authorities in the area of IP enforcement through close cooperation with right holders, foreign governments and international organizations. Appropriate IPR protection in developing countries through our continuous efforts to assist in capacity building and the establishment of IP systems is essential to halting the global proliferation of counterfeits and piracies.

The JPO has also targeted the realization of more expeditious and effective patent examination, which contributes to the enlargement of R&D earnings and the protection of IPR in Japan. We are aiming to reduce the first action period to 11 months by the year 2013 by means of attaining fixed-term examiners and outsourcing prior art searches to registered search organizations.

Lastly, we are supporting the strategic management of IPR in the private sector in order to enhance technology management in accordance with the business and R&D strategies of companies. We are especially focusing on providing support for SMEs and local companies in the areas of strategic IP exploitation and the adequate protection of local brands.

This Annual Report 2007 provides a look at the broad range of our current efforts to realize IPR protection and reform examination in Japan. We hope this report serves as a reference and contributes to the discussions of those who are related to the IPR profession.

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