

Preface

Due to economic globalization in recent years, the landscape surrounding intellectual property has been greatly changing. Under the current situation, with the number of patent applications worldwide exceeding two million, international cooperation in the intellectual property field is becoming increasingly more important.

The year 2012 marked the 30th anniversary and a historical transition for the international cooperation established in 1983 among the JPO, USPTO and EPO (the Trilateral Offices) to solve relevant problems all the offices faced in handling a rapidly increasing number of applications. The SIPO and KIPO also, along with the JPO, USPTO and EPO, have been receiving a significantly larger number of applications. The IP5 Office framework was thus created with the addition of the SIPO and KIPO to the existing Trilateral Offices. After 2007, within this IP5 framework, the issues of patent harmonization, the global dossier, and others have been actively discussed in order to promote global measures in the field of intellectual property.

In addition, another new cooperative relationship has been created in the fields of trademarks and designs. In October 2012, in this connection, the first Trademark 5 (TM5) annual meeting was held, where relevant offices have agreed to enhance international cooperation in the fields of trademarks and designs.

Furthermore, in February 2012, the JPO established the framework of the ASEAN-Japan Heads of IP Offices Meeting between the JPO and ASEAN IP offices that have strong ties with Japan. In April this year, the third ASEAN-Japan Heads of IP Offices Meeting was held in Kyoto, where the new ASEAN-Japan Action Plan was formulated, with the offices continuing to strengthen their mutual cooperative relationships.



Various international cooperation activities in the field of intellectual property have thus been developed within different frameworks, in which the JPO has been proactively contributing to relevant discussions.

Added to the above mentioned multilateral international cooperation, the JPO has also been aggressively dealing with issues on examination practices on a bilateral basis, in order to enhance work sharing among IP offices. Currently, more than 25 countries are involved in the implementation of the Patent Prosecution Highway program with Japan. Accordingly, more than 90% of all international applications from Japan can use this program.

On the other hand, the JPO has also been dealing with various measures within the country to further enhance convenience for applicants. For example, in order to speed up the examination process and reduce the average first action pendency to 11 months by the end of FY2013, the volume of prior art searches that are being outsourced has grown. Also, in this connection, collective examination procedures involving the examination processes and the granting of patents based on corporate business strategies, and which are based on a cross-sectional range of fields, have been timely and appropriately conducted.

The government drew up its Vision for Intellectual Property Policy in June this year with a view to looking ahead at Japan's approach to intellectual property for the next 10 years, summarizing the previous 10 years. The policy outlined in this Vision states that Japan should support emerging countries to set up their own high-quality, intellectual-property systems, working in cooperation also with other countries that have their own advanced intellectual property systems in place. Going forward, the JPO will make every effort needed to respond to the intellectual property policies stated under this Vision.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the latest JPO policies and actions in and outside Japan. I hope that it will set the future direction on international cooperation that still needs to be achieved in the field of intellectual property.

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H i d e o H A T O
C o m m i s s i o n e r