



PRESS RELEASE

Patent Offices of United States, Europe, and Japan Reaffirm Their Commitments to Cooperation at 28th Annual Trilateral Conference

Three Major Patent Offices Make Significant Advances in Work Sharing

Alexandria, VA – Leaders of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), the European Patent Office (EPO), and the Japan Patent Office (JPO)—collectively known as the Trilateral Offices—met at USPTO headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, this week for the 28th Annual Trilateral Conference.

Building on more than a quarter century of cooperation, the Offices continued to focus on addressing global patent workload challenges, in particular, decreasing pendency and examination backlogs, improving patent quality, and leveraging IT solutions to simplify and speed up processing of patent applications. In this context, the Offices took a number of steps to advance reutilization of work among the offices—a concept known as work sharing. Through work sharing, the Offices can leverage work done earlier by another office to improve efficiency and quality of their own search and examination. The conference was preceded by a meeting between the Trilateral Offices and user associations from the three regions.

Of particular significance, the Offices agreed to:

- Expand existing Trilateral Office cooperation on both the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) and the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) to the IP5, which includes the Trilateral Offices plus the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) and the State Intellectual Property Office of China (SIPO), by inviting KIPO and the SIPO to participate in the ongoing PCT-PPH pilot, which leverages fast-track examination during PCT national or regional phase processing on the basis of claims indicated allowable in the international phase;
- Launch a pilot program for the USPTO's First Look Application Sharing (FLASH) initiative, the aim of which is to provide more USPTO search and examination results faster to the EPO and the JPO when the USPTO was the office where the first application was filed in order to enhance work sharing on commonly filed applications;
- Continue development of a Common Citation Document (CCD) to enable examiners and patent information users to see, in a single document, the prior art cited by each office for each patent family member. A Version 1 public release is targeted for November 2011.

“We are pleased to have made significant advances this week in the area of work sharing among the Trilateral Offices,” said Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO David Kappos. “We are grateful to our partners at the EPO and the JPO for their commitment to increasing work sharing because it enables us to reduce patent pendency and enhance patent quality for patent applicants around the world.”

"This year's Conference was a further testimony to the success of the Trilateral Cooperation," said Benoît Battistelli, President of the European Patent Office." I am particularly pleased with the real and practical progress on issues such as the establishment of a common database for citations coming from various offices working on the same applications and the Catalogue of differing practices between the three Offices. Progress on these and other initiatives is key to enhancing the quality at the Trilateral Offices and promoting the integration of the international patent system."

Commissioner Yoshiyuki Iwai of the Japan Patent Office said, “I believe that work sharing is the key to improve the quality, speed and efficiency of patent examination. Initiatives such as the PCT-PPH, FLASH, and CCD all contribute to better work sharing, and will benefit our users.”

Additional areas of focus at the meeting included enhancement of IT collaboration, cooperation on patent classification and information sharing.

More information can be found at www.trilateral.net and on the websites of the USPTO (www.uspto.gov), the EPO (www.epo.org) and the JPO (www.jpo.go.jp).

The 29th Annual Trilateral Conference will be hosted in Europe by the EPO in November 2011.

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