

GROUP B+ PLENARY MEETING

Geneva, 8th July 2026

MEETING STATEMENT

On Wednesday 8th July 2026, the Group B+ held a two-part in-person plenary meeting in Geneva. The Director General of the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), Mr. Pascal Faure (FR), chaired, and the EPO, in its capacity as Secretariat of the Group B+, hosted the meeting.

Part I – Meeting of the Group B+ delegations with user associations

The Group B+ delegations met with representatives of: the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI), the International Federation of Intellectual Property Attorneys (FICPI), the American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA), the Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO), BusinessEurope, the IP Federation, the Japan Intellectual Property Association (JIPA) and the Korean Intellectual Property Association (KINPA).

The AU delegation, chairing the Core Group on client-attorney privilege, reported on the work achieved by the group this year. Users presented their views and asked the group to continue its work. One international user association indicated that they intended to propose an agreed model law within the coming year, which could then dovetail with the work of the Core Group in drawing up an agreement, which many stakeholders agreed should be of a binding nature.

Regarding Substantive Patent Law Harmonisation (SPLH), KINPA and IPO/AIPLA gave presentations and BusinessEurope made a statement, all of them underscoring their commitment to SPLH and how important this work was for users globally. The UK delegation, chairing the B+ Working Group on SPLH (B+ WG), presented the Group's Report on Prior User Rights, including the input gathered from users during stakeholder meetings this year.

Part II – Meeting of the Group B+ delegations

The Chair thanked the AU delegation, which was stepping down from chairing the Core Group, for all their hard work. It was announced that the Core Group would now be co-chaired by FR and IS and would focus on whether any proposed agreement should be of a binding nature or not.

The UK Chair of the B+ WG, presented the workplan for the next work cycle 2026-2027, which had previously been discussed with users, earning their unequivocal support. Two tasks were envisaged: succinctly defining norms, particularly where a convergence of views on SPLH topics had been identified, which could form the basis of an SPLH package. Further, where divergences remained, the B+ WG would propose a limited number of coherent SPLH packages containing combinations of viable options, which also balanced the interests of the Group B+ regions represented and would enable the testing of priorities and flexibilities. This roadmap was endorsed by the Group B+ members.

The Group B+ members also agreed that both the Report on prior user rights and the Summary of the stakeholder meetings would be published on the Group B+ website.

It was agreed that the CA/UK/US co-chairs of the International Standard Essential Patents Network would present an update of their work to the Group B+ at next year's Plenary.

The EPO was thanked for their work as Secretariat of the Group B+, and the Chair announced that the JPO would take over the Secretariat for the coming year.

The Chair announced that he would be leaving the chairmanship of the Group B+ to pursue new responsibilities as Deputy Director General at WIPO, responsible for Copyright, the Creative Economy and IP Governance Sector. He was warmly congratulated by the Group B+ members, who also expressed their gratitude for his inspired and dynamic leadership of the Group B+. A new Chair would be elected by the Group B+ members in due time through a written procedure.