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SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

Activities of the relevant organs, organizations  
and bodies of the United Nations system in the  
field of new and renewable sources of energy

Addendum

Report submitted by the  
World Intellectual Property Organization \*

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Comprehensive Report prepared by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), for the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

## I Introduction

1. The Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy recommended, at its second session, "that all the relevant ... organizations ... of the United Nations system should submit comprehensive reports on their activities in the field of new and renewable sources of energy, including on the provision of technical assistance to developing countries, ... in time for the third session of the Preparatory Committee."

2. WIPO is one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The agreement to this effect, concluded by the general assemblies of the two organizations in 1974, recognizes WIPO as being responsible for promoting creative intellectual activity and facilitating the transfer of technology related to industrial property to the developing countries, in order to accelerate economic, social and cultural development.

3. "Intellectual property" includes legal rights resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields. The main examples are industrial property (patents and other rights in inventions, rights in trademarks and industrial designs, etc.) and copyright and neighboring rights (chiefly in literary, musical and artistic works, in films and broadcasts).

## II Activities

4. The activities of WIPO in the field of new and renewable sources of energy are concerned primarily with the technologies used, or to be used in the future, for the exploitation of such sources. The technical assistance provided by WIPO for developing countries in this field takes the form of cooperation in the establishment or modernization of effective industrial property systems, to encourage inventiveness and the application of new technologies, and in improving access to the technological information contained in patent documents.

5. Industrial property systems. The main purposes of the patent system are to encourage technological inventiveness, to make new technologies known to the world and to promote their industrial application. The system, therefore, is aimed at contributing both to the development of indigenous technological capacity and to the effective transfer of technology; it is one of the links between the producers and the users of the results of research and development, promoting, through incentives, the investment of skill, time and money in both the creation and the application of technology.

6. The incentives provided by patent laws take the form of legal rights to control the exploitation of disclosed, published technological inventions. These rights are limited in time; when the time limit expires (or before, if the rights are not renewed), the published invention is free for all to use. The rights are limited also territorially: they exist only within the jurisdiction of the country or countries under whose laws they are applied for and granted. The rights are usually limited also by controls against their abuse, controls provided, in the public interest, both in the patent laws themselves and in other legislation governing business practices.

7. In 1980, the following 36 countries requested and received cooperation from WIPO in the improvement of their intellectual property laws and administration:

Africa: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Swaziland, Upper Volta, Zaire, Zimbabwe

Asia and the Pacific: Bangladesh, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam

Latin America and the Caribbean: Barbados, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago

Western Asia: Iraq.

8. Technological information in patent documents. The worldwide patent information network operates as a multidisciplinary, source-oriented network, under the responsibility of the respective Industrial Property Offices. Due to the very heterogeneous and multidisciplinary nature of the problems related to new and renewable sources of energy, this polytechnical and not primarily branch-oriented approach, together with the high value of patent documents as sources of information on technically advanced solutions and on the possibilities of their practical implication, gives the patent information system a high potential importance in this field. On the other hand, there is, at present, in developing countries, a certain lack of both patent documentation and methodological skill to use such documentation.

9. At present, WIPO devotes about 20% of its budget to activities aimed at improving the transparency of patent documentation and the access to technological information contained in patent documents, including, but not limited to, information on technologies relating to new and renewable sources of energy. It is promoting the creation of regional industrial property organizations and of regional centers of patent documentation in developing countries, in close cooperation with UNDP and national sponsoring organizations. In addition to this long-term oriented activity, WIPO is assisting users from developing countries to have access to the accumulated knowledge contained in the existing voluminous files of patent documents.

10. WIPO, at present, is sponsoring (together with UNDP)  
the creation and maintenance of a national patent documentation center in Brazil,  
the creation and maintenance of a patent information center for OAPI (Organization africaine de la propriété intellectuelle),  
the creation of a patent information network for English speaking Africa (ESAPADIC).

11. WIPO is providing to users in developing countries documentary search reports on the existing "state of the art" with regard to technical problems specified by the user, as reflected in search files of Industrial Property Offices. The searches are carried out, on the basis of agreements concluded by WIPO with the national Industrial Property Offices of several industrialized countries, by competent specialists of those Offices. The cost of the search reports itself is financed outside the WIPO budget by voluntary contributions, whereas WIPO covers the necessary staff costs for the preparatory and monitoring work, those costs being about one third of the total costs of the program. Nearly 1000 search reports have been delivered during the last five years.

12. The search reports identify the key patents representing the different solutions known in the field according to a detailed search request drawn up by the user. Copies of the documents referred to in the search reports are provided with the reports. Details of the search request and the intended use of its results are treated as confidential.

13. The percentage of search requests dealing with new and renewable sources of energy is increasing and is, at present, about 10% of the total. The large majority of these requests are in the fields of biomass conversion and of solar energy.

14. WIPO has discussed with several Industrial Property Offices the possibilities of providing comprehensive evaluation studies on the technological developments and trends as reflected in Industrial Property Office search files with regard to new and renewable sources of energy. As a result of these discussions, corresponding monographs are under preparation on wind energy, geothermal energy and ocean energy.

15. WIPO is running a widespread program of methodological aid and training, for users from developing countries, in access to and the use of patent literature. In general, this program is not specific to the fields of new and renewable sources of energy, because the special conditions and features of patent information apply also to other technical fields.

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