

Message from the Commissioner

As the Korean governmental agency primarily responsible for overseeing intellectual property rights (IPRs), the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) strives to conduct its intellectual property (IP) administration in accordance with the national paradigm of creative economy, which seeks to foster innovation and new engines of economic growth to drive Korea’s future prosperity.

Domestically, KIPO has put as great an emphasis as possible on further developing its examination services, as well as promoting economic sustainability through a virtuous cycle of IP creation, utilization, and protection. On the international front, we strengthened our cooperative ties with foreign IP offices and other international organizations we regularly interact with.

We took actions to enhance work efficiency within our examination departments. One such action was to assign additional manpower to these departments in order to better ensure high-quality examination and trial services, and another was to enable examiners to maximize their time by helping them stay focused on their examinations.

This has resulted in some significant changes. For example, despite receiving an ever-increasing number of IPR applications, we nevertheless reduced our average first action pendency to only 10 months for patents/utility models and 5 months for trademarks/designs. Furthermore, signs indicate that the quality of our examination is increasing.

The year 2015 marked the 50th occasion of Korea’s Invention Day, encouraging us to reflect upon achievements made during the past half century and to look ahead to what might be achieved over the next fifty years. In celebration of this day, KIPO hosted an event in which past inventions were exhibited and inventors who made significant contributions to society were honored.

In addition, we prepared a blueprint for a nation-wide patent strategy,

and we conducted patent trend surveys covering more than 2,800 Korean governmental R&D projects. We also provided support for the creation of high value-added standard-essential patents(SEPs), as well as for product development that takes into account IP rights and incorporates patenting, branding, and design.

To help support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) possessing outstanding patents and cutting-edge technology, we established an IP financing system that allows them to use their IP as collateral for attaining substantial loans. In 2015, we expanded this system to include participation from private sector banks, rather than limiting it solely to the public sector. The result was a cumulative sum of around USD166 million lent to a total of 402 SMEs.

Moreover, 196 KIPO-funded Invention Education Centers throughout the nation provided IP education to around 250,000 primary, middle, and high school students, thereby contributing to increased public IPR awareness and the fostering of a new national talent pool of inventors.

To promote public participation in helping stamp out counterfeit goods, KIPO launched the nationwide “Counterfeits OUT, Originals IN” campaign and systematically cracked down on IP infringers. As a result, according to relevant foreign evaluation agencies, the level of Korea’s IPR protection has drastically risen.

Furthermore, we expanded our multilateral and bilateral cooperation in order to better improve the global IP system.

In April 2015, during the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)’s 15th meeting of the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property, KIPO presented a launching event for IP- IGNITE, a multimedia toolkit focusing on global IP issues. During the event, this and other of our global IP education programs received support and praise from WIPO members. Furthermore, we will continue to expand cooperative ties

with our fellow WIPO members in order to come up with innovative new avenues of IP education as we move forward into the future.

Also noteworthy was the KIPO-WIPO Appropriate Technology Grand Symposium in April 2015. This symposium was held to provide a venue for KIPO to share with developing countries and international organizations its experience in overseeing appropriate technology (AT) development projects and to promote further such projects for the future.

On a related note, in December 2015, KIPO jointly held an AT competition in Mongolia to assist local companies struggling due to lack of proper brand development. Thanks to this competition, we were able to help local businesses create added-value for their brands.

Last but not least, during the IP5 heads meeting held in China in May 2015, the framework for the Global Dossier was completed, and a joint statement was adopted that laid the groundwork for future stages of inter-office cooperation and expressed the IP5 offices’ firm commitment to providing better services.

Last year’s achievements would not have been possible were it not for the continued interest and support shown by our numerous stakeholders and IP service users, both foreign and domestic. We at KIPO remain steadfast in our resolve to facilitate economic innovation and the realization of a creative economy.

It is my great pleasure to be involved with publishing this year’s annual report, which contains information on KIPO’s primary activities and overall performance results for 2015. I hope it serves to provide you with a better understanding of our recent projects and overarching vision for the future.

Choi Donggyou | Commissioner

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