

AGREEMENT

between the United States Patent and Trademark Office
and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization

in relation to the functioning of the United States Patent and Trademark Office
as an International Searching Authority
and International Preliminary Examining Authority
under the Patent Cooperation Treaty

(as in force from January 19, 2025)*

* Done at Geneva on October 30, 2017, last amended with effect from January 19, 2025 (see *Official Notices (PCT Gazette)* dated January 18, 2018, page 152 *et seq.*, March 29, 2018, pages 225 and 226, December 6, 2018, page 360, July 4, 2019, page 97, August 27, 2020, pages 177 and 178, December 9, 2021, page 215, February 9, 2023, pages 49 and 50, and December 5, 2024, pages 227 and 228).

This consolidated text has been prepared by the International Bureau of WIPO on the basis of the original Agreement, which exists in English.

Preamble

The United States Patent and Trademark Office and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization,

Considering that the PCT Assembly, having heard the advice of the PCT Committee for Technical Cooperation, has appointed the United States Patent and Trademark Office as an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty and approved this Agreement in accordance with Articles 16(3) and 32(3),

Hereby agree as follows:

Article 1 Terms and Expressions

- (1) For the purposes of this Agreement:
 - (a) “Treaty” means the Patent Cooperation Treaty;
 - (b) “Regulations” means the Regulations under the Treaty;
 - (c) “Administrative Instructions” means the Administrative Instructions under the Treaty;
 - (d) “Article” (except where a specific reference is made to an Article of this Agreement) means an Article of the Treaty;
 - (e) “Rule” means a Rule of the Regulations;
 - (f) “Contracting State” means a State party to the Treaty;
 - (g) “the Authority” means the United States Patent and Trademark Office;
 - (h) “the International Bureau” means the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

(2) All other terms and expressions used in this Agreement which are also used in the Treaty, the Regulations or the Administrative Instructions have, for the purposes of this Agreement, the same meaning as in the Treaty, the Regulations and the Administrative Instructions.

Article 2 Basic Obligations

(1) The Authority shall carry out international search and international preliminary examination in accordance with, and perform such other functions of an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority as are provided under, the Treaty, the Regulations, the Administrative Instructions and this Agreement.

(2) In carrying out international search and international preliminary examination, the Authority shall apply and observe all the common rules of international search and of international preliminary examination and, in particular, shall be guided by the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a quality management system in compliance with the requirements set out in the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

(4) The Authority and the International Bureau shall, having regard to their respective functions under the Treaty, the Regulations, the Administrative Instructions and this Agreement, render, to the extent considered to be appropriate by both the Authority and the International Bureau, mutual assistance in the performance of their functions thereunder.

Article 3 Competence of Authority

(1) The Authority shall act as International Searching Authority for any international application filed with the receiving Office of, or acting for, any Contracting State specified in Annex A to this Agreement, provided that the receiving Office specifies the Authority for that purpose, that such application, or a translation thereof furnished for the purposes of international search, is in the language or one of the languages specified in Annex A to this Agreement and, where applicable, that the Authority has been chosen by the applicant and that any other requirements regarding such application as specified in Annex A to this Agreement have been met.

(2) The Authority shall act as International Preliminary Examining Authority for any international application filed with the receiving Office of, or acting for, any Contracting State specified in Annex A to this Agreement, provided that the receiving Office specifies the Authority for that purpose, that such application, or a translation thereof furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination, is in the language or one of the languages specified in Annex A to this Agreement and, where applicable, that the Authority has been chosen by the applicant and that any other requirements regarding such application as specified in Annex A to this Agreement have been met.

(3) Where an international application is filed with the International Bureau as receiving Office under Rule 19.1(a)(iii), paragraphs (1) and (2) apply as if that application had been filed with a receiving Office which would have been competent under Rule 19.1(a)(i) or (ii), (b) or (c) or Rule 19.2(i).

(4) The Authority shall conduct supplementary international searches in accordance with Rule 45*bis* to the extent decided by it, as set out in Annex B to this Agreement.

Article 4 Subject Matter Not Required to Be Searched or Examined

The Authority shall not be obliged to search, by virtue of Article 17(2)(a)(i), or examine, by virtue of Article 34(4)(a)(i), any international application to the extent that it considers that such application relates to subject matter set forth in Rule 39.1 or 67.1, as the case may be, with the exception of the subject matter specified in Annex C to this Agreement.

Article 5 Fees and Charges

(1) A schedule of all fees of the Authority, and all other charges which the Authority is entitled to make, in relation to its functions as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority, is set out in Annex D to this Agreement.

(2) The Authority shall, under the conditions and to the extent set out in Annex D to this Agreement:

- (i) refund the whole or part of the search fee paid, or waive or reduce the search fee, where the international search report can be wholly or partly based on the results of an earlier search (Rules 16.3 and 41.1);
- (ii) refund the search fee where the international application is withdrawn or considered withdrawn before the start of the international search.

(3) The Authority shall, under the conditions and to the extent set out in Annex D to this Agreement, refund the whole or part of the preliminary examination fee paid where the demand is considered as if it had not been submitted (Rule 58.3) or where the demand or the international application is withdrawn by the applicant before the start of the international preliminary examination.

Article 6 Classification

For the purposes of Rules 43.3(a) and 70.5(b), the Authority shall indicate the classification of the subject matter according to the International Patent Classification. The Authority may, in addition, in accordance with Rules 43.3 and 70.5, indicate the classification of the subject matter according to any other patent classification specified in Annex E to this Agreement to the extent decided by it as set out in that Annex.

Article 7 Languages of Correspondence Used by the Authority

For the purposes of correspondence, including forms, other than with the International Bureau, the Authority shall use the language or one of the languages indicated, having regard to the language or languages indicated in Annex A and to the language or languages whose use is authorized by the Authority under Rule 92.2(b), in Annex F.

Article 8 International-Type Search

The Authority shall carry out international-type searches to the extent decided by it as set out in Annex G to this Agreement.

Article 9 Entry into Force

This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2018.

Article 10 Duration and Renewability

This Agreement shall remain in force until December 31, 2027. The parties to this Agreement shall, no later than July 2026, start negotiations for its renewal.

Article 11 Amendment

(1) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) and (3), amendments may, subject to approval by the Assembly of the International Patent Cooperation Union, be made to this Agreement by agreement between the parties hereto; they shall take effect on the date agreed upon by them.

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (3), amendments may be made to the Annexes to this Agreement by agreement between the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization and the Authority; and, notwithstanding paragraph (4), they shall take effect on the date agreed upon by them.

(3) The Authority may, by a notification to the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization:

- (i) add to the indications of States and languages contained in Annex A to this Agreement;
- (ii) amend the indications on supplementary international searches contained in Annex B to this Agreement;
- (iii) amend the schedule of fees and charges contained in Annex D to this Agreement;
- (iv) amend the indications on patent classification systems contained in Annex E to this Agreement;
- (v) amend the indications on languages of correspondence contained in Annex F to this Agreement;
- (vi) amend the indications on international-type searches contained in Annex G to this Agreement.

(4) Any amendment notified under paragraph (3) shall take effect on the date specified in the notification, provided that:

- (i) for an amendment to Annex B to the effect that the Authority shall no longer conduct supplementary international searches, that date is at least six months later than the date on which the notification is received by the International Bureau, and
- (ii) for any change in the currency or amount of fees or charges contained in Annex D, for any addition of new fees or charges, and for any change in the conditions for and the extent of refunds or reductions of fees contained in Annex D, that date is at least two months later than the date on which the notification is received by the International Bureau.

Article 12 Termination

- (1) This Agreement shall terminate before December 31, 2027:

- (i) if the United States Patent and Trademark Office gives the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization written notice to terminate this Agreement; or
- (ii) if the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization gives the United States Patent and Trademark Office written notice to terminate this Agreement.

(2) The termination of this Agreement under paragraph (1) shall take effect one year after receipt of the notice by the other party, unless a longer period is specified in such notice or unless both parties agree on a shorter period.

Annex A States and Languages

Under Article 3 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies:

- (i) the following States for which it will act:

so far as Article 3(1) is concerned:

United States of America, Bahrain, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, New Zealand, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago;

so far as Article 3(2) is concerned:

United States of America, and

where the Authority has prepared the international search report,

Bahrain, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, New Zealand, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago.

Where a receiving Office specifies the Authority under Articles 3(1) and (2), the Authority shall become competent for international applications filed at that receiving Office from a date to be agreed by the receiving Office and the Authority and to be notified to the International Bureau.

- (ii) the following language which it will accept:
English.

Annex B Supplementary International Search: Documentation Covered; Limitations and Conditions

The Authority does not conduct supplementary international searches.

Annex C
Subject Matter Not Excluded from Search or Examination

The subject matter set forth in Rule 39.1 or 67.1 which, under Article 4 of the Agreement, is not excluded from search or examination is the following:

any subject matter which is searched or examined under the patent grant procedure in accordance with the provisions of United States patent law.

Annex D
Fees and Charges

Part I. Schedule of Fees and Charges

Kind of fee or charge	Amount (United States dollars)
Search fee (Rule 16.1(a))	2,400 ¹
Additional fee (Rule 40.2(a))	2,400 ¹
Preparation of an international type search report on a United States national application	43
Preliminary examination fee (Rule 58.1(b))	
– where the international search fee has been paid on the international application to the Authority	705 ¹
– where the international search was carried out by another Authority	880 ¹
Additional fee (Rule 68.3(a))	705 ¹
Late furnishing fee for sequence listings (Rules 13 <i>ter</i> .1(c) and 13 <i>ter</i> .2))	345 ¹
Cost of copies (Rules 44.3 and 71.2) ²	
– US patent, per copy	3
Cost of copies (Rules 94.1 <i>ter</i> and 94.2)	
– US patent, per copy	3
– non-US patent document, per copy	27

¹ This fee is reduced by 60% in the case of filing by a “small entity” and by 80% in the case of filing by a “micro entity”. For further details on the entitlement to and the establishment of “small entity” status, see www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/s509.html#d0e30961 and 37 CFR 1.27 at: www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/consolidated_rules.pdf

For further details on the entitlement to and the establishment of “micro entity” status, see www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/s509.html#ch500_d1ff69_210b3_1ca and 37 CFR 1.29 at: www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/consolidated_rules.pdf
These details shall be subject to change by the Authority at its discretion.

² The applicant receives, together with the international search report, a copy of each cited document that is not a US patent document or a published international application. The applicant receives, together with the international preliminary examination report, a copy of each cited document not cited in the international search report that is not US patent document or a published international application. Electronic copies of these documents may be viewed at the USPTO’s website (www.uspto.gov/patents-application-process/search-patents) and printed for free. Copies can also be purchased online or obtained from the USPTO Office of Public Records.

Part II. Conditions for and Extent of Refunds or Reductions of Fees

(1) Any amount paid by mistake, without cause, or in excess of the amount due, for fees indicated in Part I shall be refunded.

(2) Where the international application is withdrawn or considered withdrawn, under Article 14(1), (3) or (4), before the start of the international search, the amount of the search fee paid shall be fully refunded.

(3) In the cases provided for under Rule 58.3, the amount of the preliminary examination fee paid shall be fully refunded.

(4) Where the international application or the demand is withdrawn before the start of the international preliminary examination, the amount of the preliminary examination fee paid shall be refunded, less a processing fee equivalent to the transmittal fee under Rule 14.1(b).

Annex E Classification

Under Article 6 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies the following classification system in addition to the International Patent Classification: the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC).

Annex F Languages of Correspondence

Under Article 7 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies the following language:
English.

Annex G International-Type Search

Under Article 8 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies the following extent of international-type searches:

The Authority conducts international-type searches as follows:

The Authority performs international-type searches in regularly filed non-provisional applications filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) (37 CFR 1.104(a)(3) and 1.413(c)(3)). The Authority will additionally prepare an international-type search report in national applications upon request and payment of a fee (37 CFR 1.104(a)(4)).