

C. PCT 1546

October 24, 2018

Madam,
Sir,

This Circular is addressed to your Office in its capacity as an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

1. *Annual Reporting on Quality Management Systems*

At the eighth informal session of the Quality Subgroup held in Madrid, Spain on February 19 and 20, 2018, the Subgroup discussed the reports on quality management systems under Chapter 21 of the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines prepared by International Authorities. For future reporting, the Subgroup made the following recommendations (see paragraphs 11(a) and (b) and 17 of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13):

“11. The Subgroup recommended:

“(a) to continue reporting on existing Quality Management Systems of Authorities using the present reporting mechanism, indicating changes from the previous report and including these changes in a summary along with other matters of likely interest as part of the introduction to the report;

“(b) that Authorities should have the option to include process charts in the reports, as discussed in paragraphs 15 to 17 (of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13), below;”

/...

“17. The Subgroup recommended that:

...

“(b) Authorities should have the option to include process charts in the reporting on their quality management systems if this would facilitate the understanding of an aspect of the report by other Authorities.”

Your Office is therefore invited to submit an annual report on its quality management system in accordance with Chapter 21 of the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines in the form of a full report, indicating the changes from the report submitted in the previous year, along with a summary in the introduction to the report with all the changes to the quality management system that have taken place in the previous report and other matters of likely interest. In addition, Authorities may include process charts if they believe that this would facilitate the understanding of the report. A template to complete the report can be found on the electronic forum of the Quality Subgroup, if needed. This template takes into account modifications to Chapter 21 that were proposed in Circular C. PCT 1523, dated January 8, 2018, in particular, changes relating to the removal of the term “Quality Manual” as part of the reference material to document quality procedures and processes since this term is not referred to in ISO Standard 9001:2015. The International Bureau intends to promulgate these modifications in the next version of the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines expected to be issued on July 1, 2019. However, as the modifications have not yet formally entered into force, Authorities are free to use the previous template if they prefer. Details on how to join the forum can be found on the main page of the PCT/MIA Electronic Forum at www.wipo.int/pct-mia (username: `pctmia`; password: `miaforum`).

The reports should be submitted by November 30, 2018, preferably by uploading them directly to the appropriate page of the electronic forum of the Quality Subgroup, or alternatively, by sending them by e-mail to pct.mia@wipo.int.

2. Discussion of Quality Management Systems during the Ninth Informal Session of the Quality Subgroup

At the eighth informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup, the State Intellectual Property of the People’s Republic of China, the European Patent Office, and the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore presented aspects of quality management at their respective Offices. The Subgroup found these presentations to be helpful as practical examples at Authorities of different sizes facing their own particular challenges in the search and examination of patent applications (see paragraph 4 of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13). These presentations followed an overview presented by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office of its Quality Management System at the seventh informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup in 2017. In response to the presentations at the eighth informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup, the Subgroup made the following recommendation (see paragraph 11(c) of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13):

“11. The Subgroup recommended:

...

“(c) that other Authorities should present overviews of their Quality Management Systems to future meetings of the Subgroup.”

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Your Office is therefore invited to consider presenting an overview of your Quality Management System at the ninth informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup, which is planned to take place in Cairo, Egypt, on February 11 and 12, 2019. If you wish to make a presentation of your Quality Management System, you can upload the presentation to the meeting page of the electronic forum for the session, or you can send the presentation by e-mail to pct.mia@wipo.int. It would be appreciated if you could let us know if you intend to make a presentation related to your Quality Management System by sending an e-mail to this address by December 14, 2018 if possible, but the presentation can be sent up to the week before the meeting of the Subgroup.


3. *Paired Review of Quality Management Systems of International Authorities*

At the eighth informal session of the Quality Subgroup, six International Authorities participated in a paired review pilot of their quality management systems (see paragraphs 27 to 30 of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13). In concluding the discussions by the Subgroup on this matter, the Subgroup made the following recommendation (see paragraph 30 of Annex II to document PCT/MIA/25/13):

“30. The Subgroup noted the feedback from the paired review exercise and recommended that interested Authorities should perform a paired review of reports of Quality Management Systems at the next meeting. The International Bureau would invite Authorities to participate through the Circular requesting reports on the Quality Management Systems with a deadline to allow participating Authorities to make contact with the Authority they would be reviewing and share questions if desired.”

Your Office is invited to participate in the paired review of Quality Management Systems at the ninth informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup on February 11 and 12, 2019. At the eighth informal meeting, some Authorities stated that they would have appreciated having about four weeks to review the report of the Authority whose Quality Management System they were reviewing, and some questions to the Authority could be sent in advance of the meeting to allow internal consultations. In order to allow adequate time for participating Authorities to review the Quality Management System report of the Authority that they have been assigned and provide an opportunity for correspondence before the meeting itself, you are invited to indicate whether your Office wishes to participate in the paired review at the same time as submitting the annual report on your Quality Management System discussed above, or by sending an e-mail to pct.mia@wipo.int by December 14, 2018, at the latest.

Yours sincerely,



John Sandage
Deputy Director General