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EPO AND USPTO HEADS MEET IN MUNICH, GERMANY

On September 12, 2019, the President of the European Patent Office (EPO), Mr. António Campinos, and the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Mr. Andrei Iancu, met in Munich, Germany. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss cooperation between the EPO and the USPTO, as well as the latest developments in intellectual property.

Mr. Campinos and Mr. Iancu addressed the strategic plans of their respective Offices. Indeed, the EPO published its strategic plan for 2023 earlier this year, noting that in its four decades of existence it has built up specific capabilities that have resulted in its becoming one of the world's major IP Offices, thanks to its expert staff who draw on the Office's wide-ranging patent literature collection; a continuously increasing network of states, users and policymakers; and the successful changes made to adapt to the needs of the constantly-changing European and international patent systems.

The two Office heads discussed the increasing significance of artificial intelligence with respect to the process of examining patent applications and to the actual subject-matter of patent applications. They also talked about developments in the ongoing project relating to the unitary patent and Unified Patent Court. In addition, they addressed activities in the trilateral cooperation between the EPO, the USPTO and the Japan Patent Office, cooperation among the IP5, i.e. the five largest intellectual property Offices in the world, and cooperation on Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC), which is now an international classification standard adopted by nearly 30 Offices after starting out as a bilateral EPO/USPTO project.

The heads of the EPO and of the USPTO both agreed that it is very important that the two Offices continue to cooperate in order to strengthen the patent system beyond the United States and the countries adhering to the EPO system, in addition to benefiting stakeholders in the United States and Europe.

The meeting included discussion of CPC International, an information technology project launched in August 2019 with the goal of updating the CPC infrastructure and the manner in which CPC data originating from national Offices is stored, displayed and searched. This project is a source of great satisfaction for the EPO President, and the fruit of effective cooperation between the Offices.

The meeting between the heads of the EPO and USPTO in September 2019 is just one of many past and future meetings. This shows that the EPO is eager to continue expanding its knowledge and resources by cooperating with the other major world Offices, be they in the US or in Asia, so as to address the concerns of all users of the EPO system and offer a continuously improving and up-to-date service.