

**Press Release**  
**ASEAN Starts Project on Patent Cooperation**  
**Cha-Am, Thailand, 1 June 2009**

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Heads of ASEAN Intellectual Property (IP) Offices announced in Cha-Am, Thailand the launching of the first regional patent cooperation project that will make it easier for entrepreneurs, particularly SMEs and inventors to obtain patents on their innovations in the region.

“Known as the ASEAN Patent Examination Co-operation (ASPEC), the project marks an important milestone towards realising the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and is in line with the ASEAN collective objective of providing effective and efficient intellectual property protection,” said Mr. Kamel Mohamad, Director-General of the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia and outgoing Chairman of the ASEAN Working Group on the Intellectual Property Cooperation (AWGIPC).

According to Mrs. Puangrat Asavapisit, Director-General of the Thailand’s Department of Intellectual Property, the Project, which starts on June 15, 2009, “will not only support the “creative economy” in ASEAN but also boost SMEs in intra-ASEAN trade, especially exporters who will benefit from improvement in the current patent system. It aims to improve the turnaround time of processing patent applications and the quality of the search and examination reports among ASEAN IP Offices.”

Under the ASPEC, an applicant who files a patent application for the same invention in two or more ASEAN IP Offices can forward the examination report from the office that finished the examination earlier to the other IP Offices for their use as a reference in their examination process. The examiners of the other ASEAN IP Offices will not have to start the whole process of examination from scratch. This Project is a worth-while effort by the ASEAN IP Offices to increase their efficiency as well as avoiding the application backlogs. It neither requires any change to the existing law nor any signing of diplomatic documents. The findings of one ASEAN IP Office, however, does not bind the others.

ASPEC was first proposed by Singapore in 2008 at the 30th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Intellectual Property Cooperation (AWGIPC) in Hoi An, Vietnam and drew participation of Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam IP Offices. Brunei Darussalam will be joining the Project as soon as its Patent Act is implemented.