Recent developments at the EPO
European Patent Organisation

- Created in 1973
- 38 member states, including all EU = 600 million inhabitants
- 35 nationalities, 7,000 employees (4,250 highly specialised engineers & scientists) = 2nd largest European public service organisation
- Self financed budget via fees = €2 billion in 2014
Extension of the European patent system

Validation agreement with Morocco

- In force since 1 March 2015
- European patent can be extended to Morocco

- brings to 41 the number of countries for which patent protection can be obtained with a single European patent application
- pending ratification of two further validation agreements with Tunisia and Moldova
Meeting the challenges at the EPO

The EPO’s strategic priorities:

- Maintaining a strong focus on quality
- Improving efficiency
- Harmonising the global patent system
Quality and efficiency strategy

- To face the growing demand of patents, the EPO is modernising itself, putting a maximum effort on quality, controlling its costs and improving its timeliness in the delivery of products.
- The EPO is implementing a wide range of reforms in five key areas (IT, HR, Buildings, Quality, Co-operation).
- Result: a constant increase in productivity.
Quality in search and examination

- High specialisation and intensive training of EPO examiners (divisions of three examiners per file)
- State-of-the-art tools allowing efficient access by examiners (e.g. new Epoque)
- Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC): Implemented on 1 January 2013 at EPO and USPTO. KIPO, SIPO, INPI Brazil, ROSPATENT and 12 EPO Member States also classifying into the CPC
- Very comprehensive prior art coverage: over 90 million patent documents available to examiners
- EPO is the first IP5 office to be ISO 9001 certified (December 2014)
- Regular “Partnership for Quality” meetings with users in Europe, US, Japan, China and Korea
Enhancing quality to improve certainty

Global prior art search for higher certainty

- Enhance coverage of our patent databases including Asian data:
  - 35 million patent documents from China, Japan and Korea
  - 21% of cited prior art in EPO search reports come from Asia

Automated translation using Patent Translate

- Free on-the-fly translations of patents for 32 languages including Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian

“Early Certainty from Search” to improve timeliness

- Search reports and opinions on patentability within six months of filing

EPO Global Dossier

- Launch of EPO/SIPO data in June 2014, JPO and KIPO data in April 2015
PCT – a top priority for the EPO

- PCT is the work-sharing vehicle of choice for the EPO

- In 2014 the EPO established:
  - 80 725 International Search Reports (38.3% of the total)
  - 7 661 International Preliminary Examination Reports (55.7%)

- Improving the services to the users, e.g.:
  - PCT Direct (reuse at EPO of national work in the PCT phase) for applications where EPO is Receiving Office
  - Freezing of the international search fee until April 2016
  - EPO joined WIPO ePCT on 1 November 2014 and will join WIPO DAS in 2015-2016

- PPH with IP5 offices (January 2014) as well as with Canada, Israel, Mexico and Singapore (January 2015)
The unitary patent

- **Quality**: A European patent, granted by the EPO under the EPC

- **Flexibility**: An additional option for patent owners, alongside the existing European and national patent systems

- **Simplicity**: Unitary effect extends to the 25 EU member states currently participating, in one single administrative step by the EPO

- **Cost reduction**: Access to strong and large geographical protection with significant fee reduction

- **Legal certainty**: Uniform litigation system through the Unified Patent Court
Harmonising the patent system in Europe

The Patent Package

- Unitary patent protection (UPP)
- Unified Patent Court (UPC)

- Preparations on-going in the Select Committee (rules, fees) and in the Preparatory Committee (establishment of UPC)

- First UPC ratifications: Austria, France, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Malta

- Several countries indicated intention to ratify in 2015

- Entry into force of UPC Agreement will trigger start of operations of the new Court and start of unitary patent system
Harmonising the patent system in Europe

- On 5 May 2015, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) dismissed the actions brought by Spain against the Unitary Patent (cases C-146/13 and C-147/13)

- This should give new impetus on the ratification process concerning the UPC Agreement
The EPO – a European success story

- EPO: the European patent granting authority
  - Success for the users via strong commitment to quality and efficiency
  - Future perspective through the unitary patent and the Unified Patent Court
Thank you for your attention!