

'Astonishing' Chinese patent growth marks world recovery

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World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) headquarters in Geneva. Asia led a recovery in international patent applications last year, as "astonishing" growth in filings by innovative Chinese companies left US firms by the wayside, the UN patent agency said Wednesday.

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"We see a meteoric rise of northeast Asia: Japan, [China](#) and the Republic of (South) Korea," said Francis Gurry, director general of the UN's World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

"And the growth rate from China was an astonishing 56.2 percent -- astonishing because it's a growth rate that comes on a base that was larger than those of France or the United Kingdom," he told journalists.

While the United States remains the biggest source of international requests for [patent protection](#) -- 44,855 in 2010 -- its decline since the 2008 financial crisis continued. US filings fell by 1.7 percent in 2010, according to WIPO data.

Worldwide international filings under the WIPO [patent](#) cooperation treaty (PCT) grew by 4.8 percent in 2010.

"Overall PCT filings recovered from the economic crisis-induced drop in 2009, almost reaching their 2008 level," Gurry said.

While strong Asian growth has been a hallmark of a global shift in the past five years, the trend was "reinforced", he added.

China now ranks number four in the world behind the United States, [Japan](#) and Germany, while South Korea is fifth ahead of France and Britain.

Japanese electronics giant Panasonic remains the top of the global list of company filings in 2010, but Chinese telecoms group ZTE leapfrogged 20 places to second ahead of US rival Qualcomm.

Six of the top 10 corporations on the list are northeast Asian.

The WIPO listing only covers international patent applications, not national ones or the transformation of PCT applications into patents.

This only happens if 142 national authorities accept them as unprecedented innovations -- a process that takes several years.

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