



Bahamas Joins the PCT

The Bahamas deposited its instrument of accession to the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) with WIPO on May 19, 2026, becoming the 159th member of the PCT Union. The treaty will enter into force locally on August 19, 2026.

What this means practically:

From August 19, 2026, applicants and inventors in The Bahamas will be able to file international patent applications under the PCT and thereby seek protection across all PCT Contracting States, rather than filing separate national applications in each country of interest. Conversely, foreign innovators and companies will be able to use the PCT System to seek patent protection for their own inventions within the Bahamas by designating it in their international applications. This gives Bahamian innovators a more consolidated path to protecting inventions in key export markets, including the US, Canada and Europe.

Background:

This accession follows from a new IP laws that came into effect in the Bahamas on February 1, 2025, and notably the new Patent Law having already contemplated implementation of the PCT. In that sense, this move has effectively been telegraphed for over a year, and practitioners who follow the jurisdiction would have anticipated it.

Regional Significance:

The Bahamas becomes the 21st member of the Association of Caribbean States to join the PCT, a step described as strengthening economic integration and competitiveness across the region. This continues a broader regional trend of Caribbean and Latin American states progressively joining the PCT system to make their jurisdictions more accessible to international patent filers.

What is still unclear:

Practical details around national phase entry, documentary requirements, deadlines, and similar procedural specifics, have not been confirmed, though they are expected to largely follow standard PCT practice. Applicants planning Bahamas filing should watch for updates on this and budget for potential national phase costs once confirmed.

Bottom line:

This accession meaningfully expands the PCT's global footprint in the Caribbean and gives both Bahamian innovators and foreign applicants a more streamlined mechanism for cross-border patent protection.