

# Gabe on EDA

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## **DASC approves low power format PAR -- IEEE IP protection -- Magma exits the Si2 Low Power Coalition.**

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Mar 22 2007 - 5:14pm

Venice, Florida — Victor Berman, Chair of the IEEE Design Automation Standard Committee (DASC) and President and CEO of Improv Systems, has announced that the membership of the DASC has approved the Project Authorization Request (PAR) to develop a low power format standard for use by the EDA industry. The DASC, as a standard development body, operates under the IEEE Standards Association (IEEE-SA). The favorable vote clears the way for the Low-Power study group to form a Working Group and develop a standard once the IEEE-SA New Standards Committee (NesCom) approves the PAR. NesCom members are experts in various disciplines in the electronics industry. The committee sanctions all new standard development work and monitors the progress of the respective Working Groups

At present the standard will be developed based on the Unified Power Format (UPF) contributed by Accellera although other contributions would be welcomed. This document unifies the technical contributions of six companies, both vendors and users of EDA power analysis and design tools. Steven Bailey, Chair of the IEEE Low Power study group, has expressed the desire that Cadence and Si2 would reverse their decisions not to contribute the Common Power Format (CPF) document to the IEEE. (See [www.edadesignline.com/news/198000402](http://www.edadesignline.com/news/198000402)). He also pointed out that Cadence has been involved in the workings of the study group, is represented in the DASC membership and thus has first hand knowledge of its activities.

In justifying their decision, Cadence and Si2 find that the IEEE provisions for IP protection are weaker than those of Si2 (see article referenced above). Commenting on their position, Rich Goldman, vice president, Strategic Market Development, at Synopsys remarked: "Since the inception of Synopsys over 20 years ago, we have been implementing tools that support IEEE standards. The IEEE has been developing global standards for more than a century and today has about 1,300 standards either completed or in development. With this impressive track record of proven success in standards, we have confidence in the IEEE's standard-making processes and policies." IEEE-SA standards apply to all aspects of the electrical and electronics industries. They range from control systems in nuclear power plants to electrical transmission lines, from wireless communications to nanotechnology.

The existing IEEE patent and IP protection policies can be found in clause 6 of the IEEE-SA Standard Board Bylaws and clause 6 of the IEEE-SA Operation Manual. The DASC is bound to observe and implement those policies in all of its standard development work. The policies require that the IEEE-SA receive an assurance from the holder of any potentially essential patent claim or patent application. The assurance can take either of two forms:

- 1) A statement that the holder will not enforce any of its present or future patent claim(s) whose use would be unavoidable in a compliant implementation of either mandatory or optional portions of the proposed IEEE standard against any person or entity complying with the standard; or

2) A statement that the holder will license any essential patent claims without compensation or under reasonable rates, with reasonable terms and conditions that are demonstrably free of any unfair discrimination (RAND).

### **IEEE to update IP protection policy**

In an industry that is growing rapidly, as the electronics industry, policies and procedures must be updated from time to time. Steve Mills, Chair, IEEE Standards Association Standards Board remarked: "The IEEE-SA current patent policy, with numerous years of utilization by all IEEE-SA standards groups, is well known, respected and proven effective. To drive greater transparency and certainty into the standards process, the IEEE-SA undertook and successfully concluded a multi-year project to review and improve its patent policy. The next-generation IEEE-SA patent policy becomes effective on April 30, 2007. Unlike many other standards organizations that continue to operate under an older style and somewhat vague "RAND" policy, this next-generation policy will better enable standards participants to make sensible cost comparisons between alternative technologies by permitting patent holders to commit to specific, not-to-exceed 'reasonable' rates. Included in this new policy is the ability of a patent holder to include licensing terms (including reciprocity) as a part of its licensing commitment."

The revision to the IEEE-SA's Patent Policy has four key elements:

- 1) It permits and encourages the optional and unilateral "ex ante" disclosure of royalty rates and other license terms - that is, disclosure before a patented technology is included in an approved standard.
- 2) It improves the mechanisms for making sure that a patent holder's assurance (which is irrevocable) will fully and effectively bind subsequent owners of the patent by requiring the patent-holder to provide notice of the existence of the assurance.
- 3) It strengthens provisions for binding the submitter's affiliates to the terms of the policy, making clear that affiliates are bound unless the submitter identifies affiliates it does not wish to bind.
- 4) It clearly specifies the duties and responsibilities of standards development participants as well as of the holders of potentially essential patents or patent application claim(s).

### **Si2 Low Power Coalition found one-sided**

Yatin Trivedi, director of industry programs at Magma Design Automation, has explained his company refusal to sign the Si2 RAND and instead join the IEEE standardization effort, by noting that the document approved by the Si2's Low Power Coalition (LPC) is substantially the same as the one offered by Cadence since it contains no technical contributions by any other member of the LPC. Therefore, Yatin points out, only Cadence would benefit from any other technology donated by another member of LPC. He speculates that should Magma want to negotiate for the rights to the CPF technology, it would be more effective to do so directly with Cadence, without having to go through a third party. Mentor Graphics, a strong supporter of the work by both Accellera and the IEEE-SA to develop a Low Power format standard, has consistently pointed out that, throughout the work of the LPC group, Cadence has maintained ultimate control over the contents of the working document and has not allowed any independent modification to the CPF by other member company. Attempts to obtain any statements from Cadence on the matter for this article have gone unanswered.

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