

**Council**

**C/54/14**

**Fifty-Fourth Ordinary Session  
Geneva, October 30, 2020**

**Original:** English  
**Date:** September 25, 2020

*to be considered by correspondence*

**MERGER OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BIOCHEMICAL AND MOLECULAR TECHNIQUES, AND DNA-PROFILING IN PARTICULAR (BMT) AND THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY ON AUTOMATION AND COMPUTER PROGRAMS (TWC)**

*Document prepared by the Office of the Union*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The purpose of this document is to present draft terms of reference for a possible single body to encompass the work of the Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs (TWC) and the Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques and DNA-Profiling in Particular (BMT).

2. The Council is invited to:

(a) approve the establishment and terms of reference for the TWM, to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT, as set out in paragraph 8 of this document;

(b) subject to the above, to:

(i) establish the TWM with the above terms of reference, to take effect from 2022; and

(ii) elect the Chairperson of the BMT to act as Chairperson of the TWM, ending with the fifty-seventh ordinary session of the Council, in 2023.

3. The structure of this document is as follows:

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ANNEX Terms of Reference of the Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs (TWC) and of the Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques, and DNA-Profiling in Particular (BMT)

4. The following abbreviations are used in this document:

- BMT: Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques, and DNA-Profiling in Particular
- TC: Technical Committee
- TWA: Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops
- TWC: Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs
- TWF: Technical Working Party on Fruit Crops
- TWO: Technical Working Party on Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
- TWPs: Technical Working Parties
- TWV: Technical Working Party for Vegetables

## BACKGROUND

5. The TC, at its fifty-fifth session, held in Geneva on October 28 and 29, 2019, considered the outcomes of organizing the sessions of the TWC and BMT in the same week (see document TC/55/25 "Report", paragraphs 136 to 138).

6. The TC noted the reports of the TWC and BMT on the duplication of content presented at both the TWC and BMT meetings and that the TWC and BMT had agreed there should be a single opening and introductory parts for both meetings at the same time. It further noted the challenge for the host of the joint sessions to hold two opening ceremonies and two receptions.

7. The TC noted the comments and proposals by the TWC and BMT on organizing the sessions in the same week and agreed to invite the Office of the Union to prepare draft terms of reference for a possible single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT for consideration at the TWC and BMT and reporting at the other TWPs, at their sessions in 2020. The possible terms of reference would then be considered by the TC, in conjunction with the comments of the TWC and BMT, in 2020.

## DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A POSSIBLE SINGLE BODY TO ENCOMPASS THE WORK OF THE TWC AND BMT

8. The following draft terms of reference are proposed for a possible single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT:

### Title:

Technical Working Party on Testing Methods and Techniques (TWM)

### Tasks:

As directed by the Technical Committee, to:

- (a) Consider methods relevant for the examination of DUS.
- (b) Review and provide guidance on software and equipment relevant for:
  - (i.) DUS trial design and data analysis
  - (ii.) Data recording and transfer
  - (iii.) Image analysis
  - (iv.) Biochemical and molecular data.
- (c) Consider matters relating to trial design and data analysis;
- (d) Consider the possible application of biochemical and molecular techniques in DUS testing;
- (e) Develop guidelines regarding the management and harmonization of databases;
- (f) If appropriate, establish guidelines for biochemical and molecular methodologies and their harmonization;
- (g) Review general developments in biochemical and molecular techniques;
- (h) Maintain an awareness of relevant applications of biochemical and molecular techniques in plant breeding;
- (i) Provide a forum for discussion on the use of biochemical and molecular techniques in the consideration of essential derivation and variety identification.

### Consideration by the Technical Working Parties

9. At their sessions in 2020, the TWV<sup>1</sup>, TWO<sup>2</sup>, TWA<sup>3</sup>, TWF<sup>4</sup>, TWC<sup>5</sup> and BMT<sup>6</sup> considered documents TWP/4/12 and BMT/19/7, respectively, "Organization of work of the BMT and TWC", including the draft terms of reference for a possible single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT (see documents TWV/54/9 "Report", paragraphs 100 and 101; TWO/52/11 "Report", paragraphs 75 to 77; TWA/49/7 "Report", paragraphs 85 to 87; TWF/51/10 "Report", paragraphs 92 and 93; TWC/38/11 "Report", paragraphs 81 to 86; and BMT/19/15 "Report", paragraphs 29 to 35).

10. The TWV, TWO, TWA and TWF, noted the draft terms of reference for a possible single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT.

11. The TWO agreed that the single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT should retain the possibility to have the participation of plant breeders, researchers and other relevant experts.

12. The TWA expressed appreciation for the work on biometrical methods developed by the TWC and that of the BMT for the development of potential applications of molecular techniques to DUS testing. The TWA agreed these activities should be promoted and continued.

13. The TWC and BMT agreed that the merger of the TWC and BMT would be an opportunity to address the topics of common interest to both groups. The TWC and BMT noted the range of elements covered in the draft terms of reference and agreed to caution against the reduction of depth in technical discussions. The TWC and BMT agreed that the new body should maintain the level of relevance on discussions to avoid reducing the interest for experts to participate.

14. The TWC and BMT agreed that new ways of conducting meetings could be considered to facilitate attendance by experts from different disciplines. This might incorporate the possibility to participate by remote means and creating working groups for specific topics. The TWC and BMT agreed to propose a regular review of the creation of a single body to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT to address any issues accruing from the merger.

15. The BMT agreed on the need to organize the agenda during the week for discussion on specific topics. The BMT agreed that the frequency of the meetings should be a consideration.

16. *The Council is invited to:*

(a) *approve the establishment and terms of reference for the TWM, to encompass the work of the TWC and BMT, as set out in paragraph 8 of this document;*

(b) *subject to the above, to:*

(i) *establish the TWM with the above terms of reference, to take effect from 2022; and*

(ii) *elect the Chairperson of the BMT to act as Chairperson of the TWM, ending with the fifty-seventh ordinary session of the Council, in 2023.*

[Annex follows]

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<sup>1</sup> at its fifty-fourth session, held from May 11 to 15, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> at its fifty-second session, held from June 8 to 12, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> at its forty-ninth session, held from June 22 to 26, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> at its fifty-first session, held from July 6 to 10, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> at its thirty-eighth session, held from September 21 to 23, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> at its nineteenth session, held from September 23 to 25, 2020.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY ON AUTOMATION AND COMPUTER PROGRAMS (TWC) AND OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BIOCHEMICAL AND MOLECULAR TECHNIQUES, AND DNA-PROFILING IN PARTICULAR (BMT)

Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs (TWC)

The TC at its eighteenth session, from November 17 to 19, 1982, established the Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs (TWC) (see document TC/XVIII/13 "Report of the eighteenth session of the TC", Geneva, November 17 to 19, 1982, paragraph 32):

"The first task of the Working Party would be to prepare an inventory of the existing programs and methods of data processing. Thereafter it would concentrate on the following two topics:

"(i) A study of the problem of codification and standardization of entries, in order to make an exchange of information compatible;

"(ii) The preparation of a comparative analysis of the methods used for cross fertilized plants in the testing of distinctness, homogeneity and stability and in the statistical interpretation of the data obtained and of a proposal for an improved common solution."

The Council at its seventeenth ordinary session, on October 14, 1983 approved the establishment by the TC of the TWC (see document C/XVII/15 "Report of the seventeenth ordinary session of the Council", Geneva, October 12 to 14, 1983, paragraph 116).

Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques, and DNA-Profiling in Particular (BMT)

The Council at its twenty-sixth ordinary session, on October 29, 1992, agreed to establish the Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques, DNA-Profiling in Particular (BMT) (see document C/26/15 Report of the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Council, Geneva, October 29, 1992, paragraph 27).

The TC at its thirty-eighth session, from April 15 to 17, 2002, agreed the future role of the BMT as follows (see document TC/38/16 Report of the thirty-eighth session of the TC, Geneva, April 15 to 17, 2002, paragraph 204):

The BMT is a group open to DUS experts, biochemical and molecular specialists and plant breeders, whose role is to:

- (i) Review general developments in biochemical and molecular techniques;
- (ii) Maintain an awareness of relevant applications of biochemical and molecular techniques in plant breeding;
- (iii) Consider the possible application of biochemical and molecular techniques in DUS testing and report its considerations to the TC;
- (iv) If appropriate, establish guidelines for biochemical and molecular methodologies and their harmonization and, in particular, contribute to the preparation of document TGP/15, "New Types of Characteristics." These guidelines to be developed in conjunction with the Technical Working Parties;
- (v) Consider initiatives from TWPs, for the establishment of crop specific subgroups, taking into account available information and the need for biochemical and molecular methods;
- (vi) Develop guidelines regarding the management and harmonization of databases of biochemical and molecular information, in conjunction with the TWC;
- (vii) Receive reports from Crop Subgroups and the BMT Review Group;
- (viii) Provide a forum for discussion on the use of biochemical and molecular techniques in the consideration of essential derivation and variety identification.