

Technical Committee**TC/55/10****Fifty-Fifth Session
Geneva, October 28 and 29, 2019****Original: English
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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN EXAMINATION*Document prepared by the Office of the Union**Disclaimer: this document does not represent UPOV policies or guidance***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The purpose of this document is to assist the Technical Committee in its discussions on possibilities to facilitate cooperation in DUS examination.
2. The TC is invited to:
 - (a) note the list of persons to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination, as set out in the Annex to this document;
 - (b) note that UPOV members will be invited to update information on a person(s) to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination every year when invited to provide information for document TC/[xx]/4 "List of genera and species for which authorities have practical experience in the examination of distinctness, uniformity and stability";
 - (c) note that the contact details of persons to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination will be made available on the UPOV website by October 2019;
 - (d) note that the topic of international cooperation in DUS examination and explanation on existing possibilities for cooperation between UPOV members was presented to the TWO, TWV and TWF, at their sessions in 2019, and will be presented to the TWA, TWC and BMT, at their sessions in 2019;
 - (e) note that the TWPs, at their sessions in 2019, formed discussion groups to discuss the technical concerns that prevent cooperation in DUS examination and to propose how to overcome the technical concerns raised;
 - (f) consider the outcomes of discussions held at the TWO, TWV, TWF and TWA, at their sessions in 2019, as set out in paragraphs 20 to 25 of this document;
 - (g) consider the proposals to address the concerns raised, as set out in paragraphs 27 and 28 of this document; and
 - (h) report to the CAJ the related administrative issues presented in paragraphs 27 and 28 of this document.

3. The structure of this document is as follows:

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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 for Fruit Crops
TWO:	Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
TWV:	Technical Working Party for Vegetables
TWPs:	Technical Working Parties

BACKGROUND

5. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, held in Geneva on October 29 and 30, 2018, considered document TC/54/25 “Cooperation in examination”, including the results of the survey of the current situation of members of the Union with regard to cooperation in examination, as set out in document TC/54/25, Annex (see document TC/54/31 “Report”, paragraphs 252 and 253).

Identification of contact persons for international cooperation in DUS examination

6. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, agreed that it would be useful for UPOV members to identify the contact persons for international cooperation in DUS examination and make this information available via the UPOV website (see document TC/54/31 “Report”, paragraph 254).

7. On March 21, 2019, the Office of the Union issued Circular E-19/012 “Invitation to identify the contact persons for international cooperation in DUS examination” to Council representatives and alternate representatives.

8. In response to the Circular E-19/012, the following 34 members of the Union provided information on a person(s) to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination:

African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI)	Netherlands
Brazil	New Zealand
Canada	Poland
Chile	Republic of Korea
China	Republic of Moldova
Costa Rica	Russian Federation
Croatia	Serbia
Denmark	Slovakia
Estonia	Slovenia
European Union	South Africa
Georgia	Sweden
Hungary	Spain
Israel	Trinidad and Tobago
Japan	Tunisia
Latvia	United Kingdom
Lithuania	Uruguay
Mexico	Viet Nam

9. The contact details provided by the members of the Union concerned are presented in the Annex to this document and will be made available on the UPOV website by October 2019.

10. UPOV members will be invited to update information on a person(s) to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination every year when invited to provide information for document TC/[xx]/4 "List of genera and species for which authorities have practical experience in the examination of distinctness, uniformity and stability."

11. *The TC is invited to note:*

(a) the list of persons to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination, provided in the Annex to this document;

(b) that UPOV members will be invited to update information on a person(s) to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination every year when invited to provide information for document TC/[xx]/4 "List of genera and species for which authorities have practical experience in the examination of distinctness, uniformity and stability"; and

(c) that the contact details of persons to be contacted for matters concerning international cooperation in DUS examination will be made available on the UPOV website by October 2019.

Information on possibilities for international cooperation

12. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, agreed that the topic of international cooperation should be included in the preparatory workshops for the TWPs to explain the existing possibilities for cooperation between UPOV members (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraph 256).

13. The topic of international cooperation in DUS examination and explanation on existing possibilities for cooperation between UPOV members was presented to the TWO, TWV and TWF, at their sessions in 2019, as part of the preparatory workshop. The topic will also be presented to the TWA, TWC and BMT, at their sessions in 2019.

14. The TC is invited to note that the topic of international cooperation in DUS examination and explanation on existing possibilities for cooperation between UPOV members was presented to the TWO, TWV and TWF, at their sessions in 2019, and will be presented to the TWA, TWC and BMT, at their sessions in 2019.

Technical concerns that prevent cooperation

15. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, agreed to invite the TWPs to explore the technical concerns that prevented cooperation and to propose how to overcome the technical concerns raised (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraph 255).

16. The TWPs, at their sessions in 2019, were invited to form discussion groups at each TWP to discuss the technical concerns that prevent cooperation in DUS examination and propose how to overcome the technical concerns raised.

Consideration by the Technical Working Parties, at their sessions in 2019

17. The TWO, at its fifty-first session, held in Christchurch, New Zealand, from February 18 to 22, 2019, the TWV, at its fifty-third session, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from May 20 to 24, 2019, the TWF, at its fiftieth session, held in Budapest, Hungary, from June 24 to 28, 2019, and the TWA, at its forty-eighth session, held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from September 16 to 20, 2019, considered document TWP/3/14 "Cooperation in Examination" (see documents TWO/51/12 "Report", paragraphs 60 and 61, TWV/53/14 "Report", paragraph 72 and TWF/50/13 "Report", paragraph 82).

18. The TWO, TWV, TWF and TWA formed discussion groups to discuss the technical concerns that prevent cooperation in DUS examination and how to overcome the technical concerns raised.

19. The TWO noted the following technical concerns raised by participants in the discussion groups:

- Level of experience of an authority to conduct DUS examination for a particular crop;
- Whether the testing authority has an appropriate set of example varieties;
- Whether relevant varieties have been considered in the examination;
- Environmental influence over the expression of relevant characteristics (e.g. color of plant parts);
- Need for information on quality controls on reports produced from trials grown on breeders' premises;
- DUS test reports that do not conform to UPOV Test Guidelines;
- Difficulties to import plant material for DUS examination (e.g. for centralized testing of particular crops);
- Additional requirement for a comparison variety to be described along with the candidate

20. The TWO noted the following proposals from the participants in the discussion groups on how to overcome the technical concerns raised:

- To provide information on varieties available in the variety collection;
- To report which varieties were considered in the examination (not only the most similar variety chosen to be grown in the trial);
- Possible use of verification trials with additional relevant varieties (e.g. local varieties) and/or to confirm environmental influence on expression of relevant characteristics;
- To provide data from characteristics assessed during trials (field observations);
- To disclose procedures used for DUS testing by different authorities;
- To conduct ring-tests for mutual understanding on possible observation discrepancies between different authorities;
- To maintain updated information available on cooperation in the GENIE database;
- To facilitate access to morphological databases from different authorities (possible role of UPOV to facilitate such access);
- To facilitate requesting variety information;
- To share information at TWPs to improve discussion about requirements and possibilities for cooperation;
- To develop an online portal to facilitate requesting DUS test reports;
- To provide information on contact person for cooperation in DUS examination;
- To promote participation at TWP sessions as an opportunity to facilitate cooperation and enhance communication between authorities

21. The TWV noted the following technical concerns raised by participants in the discussion groups:

- Appropriate reference collection/ set of example varieties
- Difficulties to obtain plant material to complete the local reference collection (phytosanitary measures)
- Difficulties to deal with differences in climatic/ geographical conditions
- Differences in national Test Guidelines (e.g. missing questions, more/less characteristics)
- Obligation for some species to have DUS test carried out in the territory of the country (legal & technical)
- Regulations in place in the country
- No assessment of disease resistance characteristics in some DUS reports
- Divergence on how to observe a characteristic (e.g. different protocols for disease resistance characteristic)
- Validation process required to ensure the level of the quality of the DUS examination performed
- Lack of information on crops/ DUS tests available
- Formal agreement required
- Some authorities do not accept reports under certain conditions (e.g. DUS at breeder's premises)
- Discrepancies in disease names and nomenclature
- Differences in the variety descriptions
- Lack of global database (DNA)
- Additional work to create a common database on phenotypical data
- Level of experience and expertise of DUS examination office for some crops or some characteristics
- Languages

22. The TWV noted the following proposals from the participants in the discussion groups on how to overcome the technical concerns raised:

- Encourage the same base for performing DUS examination with the use of UPOV Test Guidelines
- Increase the number of characteristics in Test Guidelines to trigger better harmonization between DUS examination Offices
- Identify a contact person for questions in relation to DUS in each authority
- Intensify training and support among UPOV members (for DUS purposes)
- Encourage the use of internationally agreed terminology for disease
- Assess the possibility to develop a common database (with description and molecular information) to be able to choose similar varieties
- Create a centralized source of information on DUS examination
- Breeders to encourage changes in legal rules to trigger better cooperation among authorities
- Encourage participation in UPOV sessions (e.g. TWPs) to create a better network of experts and facilitate training and exchange of information
- Make available statistics on current exchange of DUS reports with details on crops and countries
- Facilitate establishment of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the technical level (cooperation agreement)
- Encourage exchange of DUS staff/ experts
- More engagement of the countries in order to be in line with existing Test Guidelines
- Transparency regarding the conditions of the DUS examination (e.g. number of varieties in the reference collection)

23. The TWF noted the following technical concerns raised by participants in the discussion groups:

- Difficulty to exchange plant material between some countries (e.g. phytosanitary measures)
- Different environmental conditions (need to be similar to take over reports)
- No taking-over of tests in the case of breeder -testing
- Need to establish agreement (bilateral agreements or case by case agreements)
- International understanding of varieties of common knowledge
- Easier to establish cooperation for major species, more difficult for minor species
- Language barriers
- Identification of contact persons
- National Test Guidelines – lack of harmonization if no UPOV Test Guidelines
- Reference varieties (different national rules on which ones are used)
- Regulations in place in the country to perform all DUS examinations
- Wish from breeders to use (or not) existing DUS reports
- Appropriate reference collection/ set of example varieties

24. The TWF noted the following proposals from the participants in the discussion groups on how to overcome the technical concerns raised:

- Ensure the quality of the report produced
- Facilitated administrative process for obtaining test reports
- Encourage participation in UPOV sessions (e.g. TWPs)
- Improve communication between countries (contact persons, specialist meetings, ring tests)
- Wider access to information (e.g. provide more technical information in GENIE, displayed in a more user-friendly manner)
- Enhance transparency in contact lists (include crop experts)
- Create model/ template for standard cooperation agreement in relevant different languages (available on the UPOV Website)
- Encourage the use of TGs to guarantee harmonization (differences between authorities)
- Ensure follow-up in any DUS reports request

25. The TWA noted the following technical concerns raised by participants in the discussion groups:

- Regional specificity of agricultural crop varieties would not require expanding cooperation
- Genotype by environment interaction could require additional trials to generate local variety descriptions (regional adaptation of varieties)

- Lack of varieties in variety collection (varieties of local importance)
- Lack of information on similar varieties included in trial or compared against candidate (information not available on examination report)
- Lack of more detailed information on location and environment of testing
- Impossibility to observe some characteristics due to environmental conditions leading to incomplete descriptions
- Lack of experience on testing of a particular crop
- Different methods of testing (e.g. use of TGs used other than UPOV TGs, organization of trials, analysis criteria)
- Lack of harmonized TGs for minor crops
- Lack of availability of DUS test reports in required languages
- Lack of response from examination offices contacted for cooperation
- Differences in criteria for granting variety denomination
- Difficulty to transfer material for testing (phytosanitary issues)
- Lack of UPOV members in certain regions (sub-regional cooperation)
- Legal restrictions to cooperate, such as priority partners
- Difficulty to organize receiving payments from foreign applicants
- Lack of capacity to invoice the sale of test reports
- Difficulty by some companies or UPOV members to pay DUS testing fees

26. The TWA noted the following proposals from the participants in the discussion groups on how to overcome the technical concerns raised:

- Centralized testing of varieties for crops with larger regional adaptation
- Regional collaboration among PVP offices, such as conferences to strengthen technical contacts and training for calibration and harmonization
- Inform the composition of variety collections
- Establishment of quality assurance systems
- Frequent update of example varieties in UPOV TGs or creating regional sets of example varieties
- Harmonization of molecular markers and development of global databases
- Increase capacity of UPOV PRISMA to translate applications and other data to be exchanged
- Provide a platform to request DUS test reports (mediating service, including translation)
- Supporting small companies to purchase test reports

27. To facilitate analysis and consideration of how to overcome concerns raised, the concerns and proposals by the TWO, TWV and TWF are synthesized as follows:

Concerns:

Technical and related administrative issues:

- Sufficient experience for conducting DUS examination of a particular crop / quality of examination performed
- Suitable variety collection
- Information on varieties included in DUS examination
- Different descriptions due to environmental influence on expression of characteristics
- Lack of assessment of or divergent protocols and nomenclature for disease resistance characteristics
- Requirement for a specific comparison variety to be described along with candidate
- Lack of information on quality controls for DUS at breeders' premises
- DUS test reports that do not conform to UPOV Test Guidelines (missing or different characteristics)
- Difficulty to complete variety collections (e.g. import / phytosanitary issues)
- Lack of global DNA database for selection of similar varieties
- Language barriers
- Difficulty to identify contact persons
- Lack of information on available DUS test reports

Policy or legal issues:

- Requirement of formal agreement for cooperation
- Obligation for DUS examination to be conducted by the authority granting the rights
- Non-acceptance of breeder-based DUS test reports
- Wish from breeders to use (or not) existing DUS reports

Proposed solutions:

- GENIE Database: practical experience and cooperation in examination;
- Publication of contact persons for DUS cooperation on UPOV website (see paragraphs 6 to 11)
- PLUTO Database: create search function to find DUS test reports
- Multilingual online tool for requesting DUS test reports
- TWP sessions: invite presentations on DUS testing procedures
- Amend document TGP/5 Section 6 to report the varieties considered in the examination (not only similar varieties);
- Amend document TGP/5 Section 6 to provide data from field observations along with DUS test report for each variety
- Translate the Model Agreement for Cooperation in Testing Varieties into other relevant languages (doc. TGP/5 Sec.1)
- Develop common database with morphological and molecular information for selected crops/species
- Publishing quality assurance procedures for variety testing
- Survey and review of UPOV members use of UPOV Test Guidelines

29. *The TC is invited to:*

(a) note that the TWPs, at their sessions in 2019, formed discussion groups to discuss the technical concerns that prevent cooperation in DUS examination and to propose how to overcome the technical concerns raised;

(b) consider the outcomes of discussions held at the TWO, TWV, TWF and TWA, at their sessions in 2019, as set out in paragraphs 20 to 25 of this document;

(c) consider the proposals to address the concerns raised, as set out in paragraphs 27 and 28 of this document; and

(d) report to the CAJ the related administrative issues presented in paragraphs 27 and 28 of this document.

[Annex follows]

CONTACT PERSONS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN DUS EXAMINATION

African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI)	<p>Ms. Eliane Posso Directeur de la prospective et de la Coopération (DPC) Email: eliane.posso@oapi.int</p> <p>Mr. Guy Francis Boussafo Directeur des brevets et autres créations technique (DBCT) Email: gfrancis.boussafo@oapi.int</p>
Brazil	<p>Mr. Ricardo Zanatta Machado Coordinator of the National Plant Variety Protection Service Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco D, Anexo A, Sala 347 Brasília/DF, ZIP code 70043-900 Brazil</p> <p>Phone: +55(61) 3218.2549 Email: ricardo.machado@agricultura.gov.br</p>
Canada	<p>Ms. Sarah Grenier Program Officer Canadian Plant Breeders' Rights Office Floor 2E, Room 126 59 CAMELOT DRIVE Ottawa ON K1A 0Y9 Canada</p> <p>Email: sarah.grenier@canada.ca</p>
Chile	<p>Mr. Manuel Toro Ugalde Jefe Departamento Registro de Variedades Protegidas, División Semillas Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero I Gobierno de Chile Presidente Bulnes 140, Piso 2, Santiago</p> <p>Tel.: (+562)23451388 Anexo 3063 Email: manuel.toro@sag.gob.cl</p>
China	<p>Ms. Wen Wen Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA)</p> <p>Email: wenwen@agri.gov.cn</p>
Costa Rica	<p>Mr. Gustavo Alizaga López Email: galizaga@ofinase.go.cr Phone 506+ 2223 5541</p> <p>Mr. Alberto Fallas Barrantes Email: afallas@ofinase.go.cr Phone 506+ 2223 5541</p>
Croatia	<p>Mr. Ivan Varnica Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food Center for Seed and Seedlings Usorska 19, Brijest HR – 31000 Osijek</p> <p>tel: + 385 31 275 715 fax: + 385 31 275 716 email: ivan.varnica@hapih.hr</p>

Denmark	<p>Mr. Preben Klarskov Hansen Agronom Ph.D. / M.Sc. agriculture Ph.D. SES Koordinator / DUS Coordinator New Varieties and Seed for the Market Teglværksvej 10 4230 Skælskør</p> <p>Phone +45 5080 8463 Email: pkh@tystofte.dk</p> <p>CC: Erik Lawaetz (eal@tystofte.dk)</p>
Estonia	<p>Ms. Agra Univer Agricultural Research Centre Viljandi Variety Testing Centre Männi tee 5 Matapera 71065 Viljandi maakond Estonia</p> <p>Phone +372 59 128 164; +372 43 34 054 Email: agra.univer@pmk.agri.ee</p>
European Union	<p>Mr. Dirk Theobald Senior Adviser Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) 3, boulevard Maréchal Foch CS 10121 49101 ANGERS Cedex 02 France</p> <p>Tel.: +33 2 4125 6442 Email: theobald@cpvo.europa.eu</p>
Georgia	<p>Mr. Merab Kutsia Head Department of Inventions and New Plant Varieties and Animal Breeds Antioch Street 5 3300 Mtskheta Georgia</p> <p>Tel.: +995 32 225 25 33 Fax: +995 32 298 84 26 E-mail: mkutsia@sakpatenti.org.ge</p>
Hungary	<p>Mr. Zoltán CSÜRÖS coordinator National Food Chain Safety Office Agricultural Genetic Resources Directorate Keleti Károly utca 24., H-1024 Budapest</p> <p>Tel.: +36-70/436-0671 Email: csuros@nebih.gov.hu</p>

Israel	<p>Mr. Benzion Zaidman DUS Examiner Plant Breeders' Rights Unit Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development P.O. Box 30 BEIT-DAGAN 50250 Israël email: benzionz@moag.gov.il</p> <p>Ms. Zipora Rasaby PBR Coordinator Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Devel. P.O. Box 30, Bet Dagan 50250, Israel Tel.: 972-3-9485450 email: tsippy@moag.gov.il</p>
Japan	<p>Mr. Manabu SUZUKI Deputy Director, Plant Variety Protection Office, Intellectual Property Division, Food Industry Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Japan (e-mail: manabu_suzuki410@maff.go.jp)</p> <p>Mr. Manabu OSAKI Senior Examiner, Plant Variety Protection Office, Intellectual Property Division, Food Industry Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Japan (e-mail: manabu_osaki190@maff.go.jp)</p>
Latvia	<p>Ms. Inga Ovsjannika Senior Officer State Plant Protection Service Seed Control Department Division of Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection Lielvārdes iela 36, Rīga, LV-1006 Latvia</p> <p>Phone:+(371) 67365569 e-mail: inga.ovsjannika@vaad.gov.lv</p>
Lithuania	<p>Ms. Sigita Juciuviene Head of the Plant Variety Division State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania Ozo st. 4 A, LT-08200, Vilnius Lithuania</p> <p>Phone +370 5 2343647 Fax +370 5 2730233 e-mail: sigita.juciuviene@vatzum.lt</p>
Mexico	<p>Mr. Eduardo Padilla Vaca Director de Variedades Vegetales, Servicio Nacional de Inspección y Certificación de Semillas Av. Guillermo Pérez Valenzuela, No. 127. Col. Del Carmen, Alcaldía Coyoacán, C.P.04100, Ciudad de México</p> <p>Email: eduardo.padilla@sader.gob.mx Tel.: +52 55 4196 0535 Ext. 47026 / +52 55 4196 0518</p>

Netherlands	<p>Policy: Mr. Marien Valstar M.valstar@minlnv.nl</p> <p>Technical: Mr. Bert Scholte B.Scholte@naktuinbouw.nl</p>
New Zealand	<p>Mr. Chris Barnaby PVR MANAGER / ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER Plant Variety Rights Office, Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment 55 Wordsworth St, Private Bag 4714 Christchurch 8140 New Zealand</p> <p>Tel.: +64 3 962 6206 e-mail: chris.barnaby@pvr.govt.nz</p>
Poland	<p>Mr. Marcin KRÓL Head of DUS Testing Department, The Research Centre for Cultivar Testing (COBORU), 63-022 Słupia Wielka</p> <p>tel.: +48 61 28 523 41, +48 61 28 78 250 fax: +48 61 285 35 58 e-mail: m.krol@coboru.pl</p>
Republic of Korea	<p>Ms. Eunsun Chung Examiner Plant Variety Protection Division. Korea Seed & Variety Service 119 Hyeoksin 8-ro, Gimcheon-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Republic of Korea</p> <p>Tel.: +82-54-912-0251 Fax: +82-54-912-0210 e-mail: eschung@korea.kr</p>
Republic of Moldova	<p>Ms. Evghenia Partas Head of DUS testing State Commission for Crops Variety Testing of the Republic of Moldova 180, Blvd. Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt, State Commission for Crops Variety Testing, Chisinau. Moldova. IVD-2004</p> <p>Tel: +373 22 220 300 Email : evgheniapartas@gmail.com</p>
Russian Federation	<p>Ms. Anastasia Ivanitskaia PhD, Agronomist, Interpreter Department of Methodology and International Cooperation State Commission of the Russian Federation for Selection Achievements Test and Protection Orlikov pereulok, 1/11 107139 Moscow Russian Federation</p> <p>Tel / fax: +7 495 607 49 44 / 411 83 66 email: gossort.rf@yandex.ru</p>

Serbia	<p>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management Plant Protection Directorate Group for Plant Variety Protection and Biosafety Omladinskih brigada 1 11070 Belgrade Republic of Serbia</p> <p>1) Mr. Jovan Vujović Head of Group for Plant Variety Protection and Biosafety E-mail: jovan.vujovic@minpolj.gov.rs Phone: (+381 11) 311 70 94</p> <p>2) Mrs. Gordana Lončar Senior adviser for plant breeders rights E-mail: gordana.loncar@minpolj.gov.rs Phone: (+381 11) 260 47 20</p>
Slovakia	<p>1) Ms. Bronislava Bátorová National Coordinator for the Cooperation of the Slovak Republic with UPOV/ Senior Officer Department of Variety Testing Central Controlling and Testing Institute in Agriculture (ÚKSÚP) Akademická 4 949 01 NITRA Slovakia</p> <p>Tel.: +421 37 655 1080 Email: bronislava.batorova@uksup.sk</p> <p>2) Mr. Ľubomír Bašta DUS expert for agricultural species Variety Testing Department Central Controlling and Testing Institute in Agriculture Bratislava (UKSUP) Testing Station Partizánska 14 053 61 SPISSKÉ VLACHY Slovakia</p> <p>Tel.: + 421 53 4495311 Email: lubomir.basta@uksup.sk</p>
Slovenia	<p>Ms. Helena Rakovec Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection</p> <p>Email: helena.rakovec@gov.si</p>

South Africa	<p>1) Ms. Elna de Bruyn Registrar: PBR Act Directorate: Genetic Resources, Division: Plant Breeder's Rights Harvest House Room 255, 30 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0001 Private Bag x 973, Pretoria, 001 Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Tel: 012 319 6096 Fax: 012 319 6298 Email: ElnaDB@daff.gov.za</p> <p>2) Mr. Thapelo Sekele Variety Control Registration Officer Directorate: Genetic Resources, Division: Plant Breeder's Rights Harvest House Room 263, 30 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0001 Private Bag x 973, Pretoria, 001 Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Tel: 012 319 6226 Fax: 012 319 6298/6385 Office No: 263 Harvest House Email: ThapeloS@daff.gov.za</p>
Spain	<p>Ms. Nuria Urquía Jefe de servicio Oficina Española de Variedades Vegetales (OEVV) Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación Calle Almagro 33 28010 MADRID Espagne</p> <p>Email: nurquia@mapa.es</p>
Sweden	<p>Ms. Anna Pettersson Senior Administrative Officer Swedish Board of Agriculture Plant Regulations Unit SE-551 82 Jonkoping</p> <p>Tel. +46 36 15 59 16 / 50 00 Fax: +46 36 71 05 17 E-mail: anna.pettersson@jordbruksverket.se E-mail: jordbruksverket@jordbruksverket.se</p>
Trinidad and Tobago	<p>Mr. Richard Aching Manager, Technical Examination Intellectual Property Office Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs 3rd Floor, Capital Plaza 11-13, Frederick Street Port of Spain Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (868) 625 9972, 625 1907, 627 0706 ext. 3005 ph (868) 625 7742 ph (direct) (868) 624 1221 fax Email: achingr@gov.tt / richard.aching@ipo.gov.tt</p>

Tunisia	<p>1) Mr. Omar Brahmi Chef Service d'évaluation, d'homologation et de protection des obtentions végétales et des relations extérieures Direction générale de la protection et du contrôle de la qualité des produits agricoles Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Hydrauliques et de la Pêche 30 Rue Alain Savary 1002 Tunis Tunisie Email: Brahmi_omar@yahoo.fr</p> <p>2) Ms. Amel Zoglami Ingénieur principal Service catalogue Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Hydrauliques et de la Pêche Email: zoghlamiamel@yahoo.fr</p>
United Kingdom	<p>Ms. Mara Ramans Varieties and Seeds Animal and Plant Health Agency Eastbrook Shaftesbury Road Cambridge CB2 8DR United Kingdom Tel: +44 20802 65870 Email: mara.ramans@apha.gov.uk</p>
Uruguay	<p>Ms. Virginia Olivieri (volivieri@inase.uy): <i>Triticum aestivum, Hordeum vulgare, Brassica spp. y Glicyne max</i></p> <p>Ms. Constanza Taran (ctaran@inase.uy): <i>Oryza sativa</i></p> <p>Mr. Federico Boschi (fboschi@inase.uy): <i>Citrus, Prunus, Malus, Eucalyptus, Solanum, Fragaria xananassa, Allium cepa, Capsicum annuum, Zea mays, Sorghum y Cannabis</i></p> <p>Mr. Sebastián Moure (smoure@inase.uy): <i>Avena, Bromus, Cichorium, Dactylis, Lolium, Lotus, Medicago, Festuca aurundinacea, Trifolium y × Festulolium</i></p>
Viet Nam	<p>1) Ms Pham Thai Ha Examiner in PVPO</p> <p>2) Mr. Hoang Le Khang Vice Director of Southern National Center for Plant Testing</p>