

Technical Committee

TC/55/24.

**Fifty-Fifth Session
Geneva, October 28 and 29, 2019**

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INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE UNION IN THE WORK OF THE TC AND TWPS

Document prepared by the Office of the Union

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this document is to assist the Technical Committee (TC) in its discussions on possibilities to improve invitation letters to the Technical Working Parties (TWPs) and TC sessions and to report on other proposals on increasing participation in the work of the TC and the TWPs.
2. The TC is invited to
 - (a) consider the proposals to improve invitation letters to the TWPs and TC, as set out in paragraph 10 and Annex IV of this document;
 - (b) consider providing guidance on content and format of the proposed seminar to communicate the importance of the technical work conducted in UPOV; and
 - (c) note that the invitations to the TWPs, at their sessions in 2019, were amended to invite members to indicate particular topics in which they would wish to participate by electronic means.

3. The structure of this document is as follows:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
IMPROVING INVITATION LETTERS FOR THE TC AND TWP MEETINGS	2
Background	2
Current procedures and possible improvement options.....	2
Summary of comments received	2
OTHER PROPOSALS ON INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE TC AND THE TWPS	3
Organization of a seminar in Geneva	3
Participation at the TC and TWP meetings by electronic means.....	3
Annex I Procedure for submission of invitations to the TC and TWPs sessions	
Annex II Example electronic invitation Circular for the TC sessions	
Annex III Example electronic invitation Circular for a TWP session	
Annex IV Responses to Circular E-19/013 inviting members to inform of ways in which the invitation letters for the TC and TWPs meetings might be improved	

4. The following abbreviations are used in this document:

- 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
- TWPs: Technical Working Parties
- TWV: Technical Working Party for Vegetables

IMPROVING INVITATION LETTERS FOR THE TC AND TWP MEETINGS

Background

5. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, held in Geneva on October 29 and 30, 2018, considered proposals on increasing participation in the work of the TC and the TWPs (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraphs 191 to 195).

6. The TC noted that invitations to UPOV meetings and other relevant information were sent to the contact persons designated by the UPOV representative of each member of the Union. The TC noted that the list of contact persons could contain as many relevant experts as necessary and noted that members could update their list of contact persons at any time.

7. The TC agreed to invite members to inform the UPOV Office of ways in which the invitation letters for the TC and TWPs meetings might be improved.

Current procedures and possible improvement options

8. On April 12, 2019, the Office of the Union issued Circular E-19/013 to the TC and TWPs inviting members to inform the UPOV Office of ways in which the invitation letters for the TC and TWPs meetings might be improved. Annexes I to III to this document present the current procedures and possible improvement options along with example invitations to the TC and TWP sessions.

9. Comments were received by the following members in response to Circular E-19/013 (in alphabetical order): European Union; Germany; New Zealand; and United Kingdom. All comments received are presented in Annex IV to this document.

Summary of comments received

10. To facilitate analysis and consideration of how to improve invitation letters for the TC and TWP meetings, the comments received are synthesized as follows:

Invitations:

- send invitations earlier than current three months prior to TWP sessions (e.g. six months);
- change circular email to raise visibility of invitations (different font, font size, color, subject line);
- use different sender for issuing invitations than the institutional UPOV mail account ;
- post invitations on UPOV website and ask for a letter/signature of support to be returned;
- announce invitations via social media;

Recipients of invitations:

- send a circular to the representatives to the Council from each member of the Union to:
 - raise awareness of the importance of updating of lists of designated persons at the TC and TWPs;
 - explain the possibility to have more than one designated person in the TC and TWPs.

Content of TC and TWP sessions

- invite participants to make presentations on relevant matters during the session;
- group matters of interest for breeders in certain days of the sessions;
- have a video on website about benefits of participation at TC and TWP sessions.

11. *The TC is invited to consider the proposals to improve invitation letters to the TWPs and TC, as set out in paragraph 10 and Annex IV of this document.*

OTHER PROPOSALS ON INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE TC AND THE TWPS

Organization of a seminar in Geneva

12. The TC, at its fifty-fourth session, held in Geneva on October 29 and 30, 2018, considered proposals on increasing participation in the work of the TC and the TWPs (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraphs 191 and 192).

13. The TC recalled that the results of the 2016 survey had indicated budgetary reasons as the main cause preventing participation of a greater number of members at UPOV meetings. The TC agreed that it would be useful to communicate the importance of the technical work conducted in UPOV and agreed to propose the organization of a seminar in Geneva in conjunction with the UPOV sessions.

14. In consultation with the Chairpersons of the TC and the Consultative Committee, it is proposed that the TC provide guidance on the content and format of the proposed seminar, to enable consideration by the Consultative Committee.

15. The TC is invited to consider providing guidance on content and format of the proposed seminar to communicate the importance of the technical work conducted in UPOV.

Participation at the TC and TWP meetings by electronic means

16. The TC agreed that participation at the TC and TWP meetings might be further enhanced through enabling participation by electronic means for particular topics. The TC agreed to invite members to indicate particular items they would like to attend by electronic means in future TC and TWP meetings. The relevant Chairperson, Office of the Union and host would then consider how to respond to the requests (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraph 195).

17. Invitations to the TWPs, at their sessions in 2019, were amended to invite members to indicate particular topics in which you would wish to participate by electronic means. The UPOV Office received one request for participation by electronic means to the BMT from an observer organization.

18. The TC is invited to note that the invitations to the 2019 sessions of the TWPs, invited recipients to indicate particular topics in which they would wish to participate by electronic means.

[Annexes follow]

ANNEX I

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF INVITATIONS TO THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (TC) AND THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTIES (TWP) SESSIONS:

Deadline for submission of invitations

Electronic invitation Circulars for the TC sessions are sent by e-mail at the same time as the invitations for the Council sessions (i.e. five months prior to the sessions). An example electronic invitation Circular to a TC session is provided as Annex II to this document.

Electronic invitation Circulars to TWP sessions are sent by e-mail three months in advance of the respective sessions. An example electronic invitation Circular to a TWP session is provided as Annex III to this document.

List of designated persons in UPOV bodies

The representative of each member of the Union to the Council has the responsibility to designate persons for the relevant UPOV bodies, including the TC and TWPs (see document UPOV/INF/15/3 "Guidance for members of UPOV", paragraph 10).

Invitations to Technical Committee sessions

Invitations to the TC sessions are sent to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of members and observers and to the Executive Heads of member and observer organizations. In addition, copies for information are sent to the Ministers for Agriculture and Permanent Missions of members and observers and the designated persons of members and observers in the TC.

Invitations to Technical Working Parties (TWPs) sessions

Invitations to TWP sessions are sent to the designated person(s) of members and observers at the respective TWP. In addition, invitations to TWPs sessions are also sent to the designated persons of members and observers in the TC.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING INVITATION LETTERS TO THE TC AND TWP SESSIONS

Send a circular to the representatives to the Council from each member of the Union to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of updating of lists of designated persons at the TC and TWPs;
- Explain the possibility to have more than one designated person in the TC and TWPs.

[Annex II follows]

EXAMPLE ELECTRONIC INVITATION CIRCULAR FOR THE TC SESSIONS



International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants

E-18/051
TC 18

The Secretary-General of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) presents his compliments and has the honor to extend an invitation to participate in the

fifty-fourth session of the Technical Committee,

which will take place at the headquarters of UPOV, 34, chemin des Colombettes, Geneva, on October 29 and 30, 2018. The session will open on Monday, at 9.30 a.m. and close on Tuesday, at 5.30 p.m.

./ The draft agenda of the session is attached hereto (document TC/54/1). The working documents will be made available on the UPOV website.

The working languages will be English, French, German and Spanish; simultaneous interpretation will be provided in these languages.

./ It would be appreciated if the names of the persons participating in the above-mentioned session could be communicated by means of the attached registration form to the Office of the Union by October 12, 2018.

June 1, 2018

Enclosures: document TC/54/1 and registration form

Distribution: – Ministers for Foreign Affairs of members and observers /
Executive Heads of member organizations
– Executive Heads of observer organizations

Copy for information: – Ministers for Agriculture of members and observers
– Permanent Missions of members and observers
– Designated persons of members and observers in the Technical Committee

[Annex III follows]

EXAMPLE ELECTRONIC INVITATION CIRCULAR FOR A TWP SESSION



International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants

Circular E 19/042
TWF 2019

March 25, 2019

Madam,
Sir,

In agreement with the Chairperson of the Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF), I have pleasure in inviting you to participate in the

Fiftieth Session of the
UPOV Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops

which will be held in Budapest, Hungary, from June 24 to June 28, 2019.

- ./ The draft agenda of the session is attached (document TWF/50/1). Please note that items will be deleted from the agenda if the planned documents have not reached the Office of UPOV at least four weeks before the session. Further documents or working papers will be distributed in due course.

The working languages will be English, French, German and Spanish, however, no interpretation will be available in these languages.

The Technical Committee (TC), at its fifty-fourth session, agreed that participation at the TC and TWP meetings might be further enhanced through enabling participation by electronic means for particular topics. The TC agreed to invite members to indicate particular items they would like to attend by electronic means in future TC and TWP meetings. The relevant Chairperson, Office of the Union and host would then consider how to respond to the requests (see document TC/54/31 "Report", paragraph 195). You are invited to indicate to the Office of the Union, particular topics in which you would wish to participate by electronic means. The TWF Chairperson, in consultation with the Office of the Union and the host, will consider how to respond to any requests received.

- ./ In order that the program can be planned and accommodation booked in good time, it would be appreciated if you could complete and return the attached registration form concerning the TWF session, to the addresses indicated on the form, by May 24, 2019, at the latest.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Button
Vice Secretary-General

Distribution: List TWF + TC

[Annex IV follows]

ANNEX IV

RESPONSES TO CIRCULAR E-19/013 INVITING MEMBERS TO INFORM OF WAYS IN WHICH THE INVITATION LETTERS FOR THE TC AND TWPS MEETINGS MIGHT BE IMPROVED

EUROPEAN UNION

TWO:

In response to your invitation to propose improvements in the invitation letters to TWP, I would like to suggest to add in the core text that participants are welcome and encouraged to present any new relevant matter in their sector or authority during the TWP (with a particular deadline). I know that according to the usual functioning of UPOV, the agenda of the next meeting is defined during the previous meeting. However we now have as agenda item "matters of relevance in DUS...", which is according to me a very good development as it allows discussions on potential new subjects without losing one year. Therefore I would encourage participants to make use of this possibility and to propose presentations to share information or questions.

TWF:

Sending invitations to a wider circle as proposed would certainly improve the situation. I can remember having forwarded that invitation to some colleagues of an European Union country in the past. This country stopped its participation to UPOV Technical Working Parties at a certain moment in time and as a consequence, no relevant technical expert received the invitation any longer. The formal channel still received that invitation but it did not come down to them. Experts participating to Technical Working Parties could perhaps be encouraged to promote the participation to experts from other countries they know. The attendance to UPOV Technical Working Parties is a part of CPVO quality requirements.

Another point is the development of video conferencing facilities. This way of attendance slowly starts to develop but is far from being fully operational. It would necessitate that the meeting room is fully equipped with video conferencing facilities and it is to my knowledge more the exception than the rule today. At least in the European Union, some experts cannot travel outside Europe for reasons of principle. I think that operational video conferencing facilities need to be promoted to organizers of working parties.

In the fruit sector, we tried to encourage the participation of breeders. We managed to convince them that they should participate but they would like to have issues of interest for them grouped within 1 or 2 days in order to make their attendance more efficient. The UPOV Office managed to make a proposal in this respect.

In conclusion, I think that it would be beneficial to have more video conferences with the relevant experts (e.g. DUS examiners, breeders) when we discuss particular subject matter or species.

GERMANY

Thank you for the circular. I have no comments or suggestions. Distribution lists and information in the invitation letter works well in Germany.

NEW ZEALAND

The invitations to UPOV meetings and events are sent to higher level contacts, following the agreed process within UPOV. This in itself is not necessarily a problem however it does rely on the national authority having a system to distribute the invitations and an awareness at all levels that meetings occur. In general, TC invitations are not sent directly to those who may participate or those directly involved in operational technical activity.

It is often the case that an authority has a different PVP administrative/legal body from the technical body. The technical body may not be the Ministry of Agriculture and the assumption that a PVP body is part of an Agricultural Ministry can no longer be assumed.

We suggest that a different invitation protocol to that used for the Council and CAJ be considered for the TC where an authority is requested to provide an official Technical contact. Each representative member of the Union already has the responsibility to designate persons, however it could be useful to specifically request a Technical Representative. The Invitations are currently copied to those who have participated in the TC, but this relies on previous attendance.

ANNEX IV

The invitations to TWP are currently sent out at least three months in advance of the sessions. In our view, this time scale is very short and a longer time frame is recommended, six months would be preferred. The date and place of the next TWP session is notified at least a year in advance but does not have the detail required for formal travel planning and budget purposes.

UNITED KINGDOM

TWA:

- Post the invitation on the UPOV website along with the other meeting documents rather than emailing to specific people. That way you may reach a broader audience. You could ask for a letter/signature of support to be returned with any invitation from 'unknown' delegates
- Announce that invitations are being sent out via social media – and reminders when the deadline is approaching
- Make the invitation different from the other UPOV circulars so that it stands out more – different font, font size, color etc
- Maybe the host could issue the invitations – again so it stands out more in people's inbox
- Send out a reminder after issue

BMT:

We understand that you have a standard format for your emails, but this may result in the invitations being overlooked. We suggest that a specific "invitation" format is used so that it is quickly identifiable as such.

In a similar vein, perhaps the UPOV number (e.g. E 19 013) could be added at the end of the subject line, again to make the invitation stand out in a busy inbox.

It is difficult to ensure that the correct people attend the meeting as each member will have their own way of selecting the delegates. Often the people who attend the meeting are the "country representative" who are not necessarily the technical experts. It is unlikely that this will change, however, some prominent advertising on the website (e.g. a short video on the benefits of participation) or on social media could highlight the purpose and aims of the meetings. This may encourage member states to refocus on appropriate representation.

[End of Annex IV and of document]