UPOV
International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants

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Technical Committee **TC/60/5**

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PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this document is to present the reports from the chairpersons and propose the approval of the programs of work in 2025 of the Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops (TWA), Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF), Technical Working Party on Testing Methods and Techniques (TWM), Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees (TWO) and Technical Working Party for Vegetable Crops (TWV).

2. The TC is invited to:

(a) note the reports from the chairpersons of the TWA, TWF, TWM, TWO and TWV, at their sessions in 2024, as presented in the Annexes to this document;

(b) consider the programs of work for the TWA, TWF, TWM, TWO and TWV, at their sessions in 2025, as proposed in the Annexes to this document;

3. The structure of this document is as follows:

4. The following abbreviations are used in this document:

TC: Technical Committee
TWA: Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops
TWF: Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops
TWM: Technical Working Party on Testing Methods and Techniques
TWO: Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
TWV: Technical Working Party for Vegetables
TWPs: Technical Working Parties

[Annexes follow]

ANNEX I

FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY FOR AGRICULTURAL CROPS (TWA)

Report by Mr. Ľubomír Bašta (Slovakia), Chairperson of the TWA

1. The TWA held its fifty-third session, by virtual means, from May 27 to 30, 2024, and was chaired by Mr. Ľubomír Bašta (Slovakia). The report of the session is provided in document TWA/53/9 “Report”.

2. The session was attended by 139 participants from 37 members of the Union, three observer States and five observer organizations.

3. The TWA considered whether it would be possible to speed up the DUS test process with a comparison presented by an expert from Denmark on DUS tests performed "on one site in two years versus two sites in one year". In the comparison, it was observed that the examinations conducted in similar agroclimatic conditions the same year generated results closer to those conducted in the same location in different years, when compared to examinations conducted in different agroclimatic conditions the same year. The examination of varieties in different locations during the same year would benefit from calibration and harmonization of procedures among examiners. The results of the comparison indicate that speeding up DUS tests is possible, preferably within the same agroclimatic zone and with identical variety collections.

4. The topic “UAV-Based Field Phenotyping in the United Kingdom Agricultural DUS testing” presented by an expert from the United Kingdom, promoted stimulating debates on the development of new technological methods for DUS examination of agricultural crops. The results are very promising and positive so far. There is potential to identifying additional characteristics assessed with multispectral images. Data capture, flight timing/frequency and obstacles in the field are subjects for further consideration. In addition, based on experience, it is necessary to remember the high costs of data storage that could affect the use of the method for some species or trial sizes.

5. To contribute to distinctness assessment in spring barley varieties, France and the United Kingdom examination authorities promoted discussion on potentially new characteristics for DUS examination. The experts made presentations on “Exploring new characteristics for Spring Barley variety examination” and “Possible new characteristics for Spring Barley variety examination” (available on the TWA/53 webpage). After discussion on experiences from members, the TWA agreed to invite the experts from France and the United Kingdom to report progress on the assessment of the proposed characteristics at its fifty-fourth session and invited other members of the Union to consider those characteristics for possible future inclusion in the Test Guidelines for Barley.

6. The TWA discussed 9 draft Test Guidelines and agreed that the draft Test Guidelines for Hemp/Cannabis (revision) and Zoysia Grasses should be submitted to the TC for adoption.

7. The TWA agreed to discuss the draft Test Guidelines for Bent (revision), Couch Grass/Bermuda Grass, Festulolium (revision), Fodder Beet (revision), Grain Amaranth (revision), Mung Bean, Sugarcane (revision), Maize (partial revision) and Sweet Potato (partial revision) at its fifty-fourth session.

8. At the invitation of the United Republic of Tanzania, the TWA agreed to hold its fifty-fourth session in Arusha, from May 19 to 22, 2025.

9. In order to allow sufficient time in advance of the meeting to post the documents and provide comments, all documents and presentations invited or to be prepared should be sent to the Office of the Union by April 4, 2025.

10. The TWA proposed to discuss the following items at its next session:

1. Opening of the session

2. Adoption of the agenda

Matters for discussion

3. Procedures for DUS examination (presentations invited)

4. Situations where illustrations could complement or replace example varieties (document to be prepared by Germany)

5. Variety description databases (presentations invited)

6. Image analysis and new technologies in DUS examination (documents to be prepared by China, Denmark, United Kingdom and presentations invited)

7. Molecular techniques in DUS examination (presentation from the United Kingdom and presentations invited)

8. Reports on existing policies on confidentiality of molecular information (presentations invited)

9. Using the COYU-Splines method in DUS examination (presentations invited)

10. Experiences with new types and species (oral reports invited)

11. Developing new characteristics for Barley variety examination (documents to be prepared by France and the United Kingdom and presentations invited)

12. Discussion on draft Test Guidelines (Subgroups)

13. Recommendations on draft Test Guidelines

14. Date and place of the next session

15. Future program

16. Adoption of the Report on the session (if time permits)

Matters for information

17. Reports from members and observers (written reports to be prepared by members and observers)

18. Report on developments in UPOV (general developments, including variety denominations, information databases, exchange and use of software and equipment)

19. Closing of the session

[Annex II follows]

ANNEX II

FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY FOR FRUIT CROPS (TWF)

Report by Ms. Carole Dirwimmer (France), Chairperson of the TWF

1. The TWF held its fifty-fifth session, via electronic means, from June 3 to 6, 2024, and was chaired by Ms. Carole Dirwimmer (France). The report of the session is provided in document TWF/55/9 “Report”.

2. The session was attended by 71 participants from 28 members of the Union, two observer States and two observer organizations.

3. The TWF considered the proposal to amend document TGP/7, ASW 7(b), on the number of parts to be examined from single plants, as set out in document TWP/8/1, paragraph 28. The TWF recalled that the assessment of characteristics in fruit crops was often based on three or five plants and that sample sizes were increased with additional parts taken from each plant (internal replicates), such as leaves and fruits. The wording in ASW 7(b) provided a defined number of parts of plants to be observed for all characteristics in the Test Guidelines, unless otherwise indicated. Certain characteristics such as fruit shape could require higher number of parts to be taken from each plant than defined in ASW 7(b). The TWF considered different approaches to indicate different number of parts to be taken from each plant, such as according to the type of variety (e.g. resulting from crossing or mutation), explanations for individual characteristics and indication of alternative methods of assessment (e.g. “MS/VG”). The TWF agreed to invite the expert from France to compile examples when the number of parts required to be taken from each plant could be higher than defined in the Test Guidelines and to explore options to indicate that the assessment of characteristics could be performed on different sample sizes according to the level of precision required.

4. The TWF considered document TWF/55/8 about (GN) 28 “Example Varieties” presented by an expert from Germany. The TWF agreed that Test Guidelines should have as much information as possible, including both example varieties and illustrations. The TWF noted that restrictions to international movement of plant material could restrict access to plant material of example varieties of fruit crops. The TWF agreed with the TWV, TWA and TWO that illustrations were particularly useful when the example varieties in Test Guidelines were not available or not suitable for cultivation in certain growing conditions.

5. The TWF noted that restrictions to international movement of plant material could restrict access to plant material of example varieties of fruit crops, and agreed that illustrations were particularly useful when the example varieties in Test Guidelines were not available or not suitable for cultivation in certain growing conditions.

6. The TWF received a presentation on “Number of growing cycles and concluding examination of fruit crops” from an expert from the European Union. The TWF noted that the number of growing cycles in Test Guidelines for fruit crops was usually two. The TWF considered the standard wording “the testing of a variety may be concluded when the competent authority can determine with certainty the outcome of the test” and whether it could be contradictory to the standard wording that “the minimum duration of tests should normally be two independent growing cycles.”

7. The TWF agreed to invite the experts from France with the support of Canada, European Union, Germany, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and CIOPORA to develop proposals on the number of growing cycles for fruit crops, such as reducing the duration of tests to one growing cycle for fruit crops and the meaning of “a satisfactory crop of fruit”.

8. The TWF received a presentation from the Office of the Union on guidance on types of records of characteristics in document TGP/9 “Examining Distinctness”. The TWF considered examples of assessment of different quantitative characteristics in fruit crops, as presented by the experts from France, Germany and South Africa. The TWF noted the situations when records were made for individual parts of plants and then used to calculate a variety mean, as opposed to situations when one plant part was recorded as representing the variety. The TWF agreed to further consider examples during discussions on the individual draft Test Guidelines.

9. The TWF received a presentation on “Image Analysis in Plant Variety Test for Fruit Crops (apricot, peach, apple)” from an expert from the Republic of Korea. The TWF noted the automated procedures for the assessment of characteristics from the Test Guidelines for Apricot (11 characteristics); Peach (7 characteristics); and Apple (11 characteristics). The TWF noted that the amount of time required for the assessment of each variety was expected to be reduced from six to three hours.

10. The TWF noted the report from the European Union on the filing of applications for rootstock varieties of different fruit crops. The TWF considered a proposal to append information to the UPOV codes of fruit crops used as rootstock. The TWF agreed to further explore this approach and invited the expert from the European Union to develop proposals for the individual UPOV codes concerned. The TWF considered whether the information on the variety use as rootstock could cause confusion regarding grouping and organizing of trials. The TWF noted that certain varieties could be used for different purposes (dual-purpose varieties) and agreed that further discussion would be required on this matter.

11. The TWF discussed six draft Test Guidelines and agreed that the draft Test Guidelines for Grapevine (revision) should be submitted to the TC for adoption.

12. The TWF agreed to discuss the draft Test Guidelines for Argania, European Pear (revision), Goji, Guava (revision), Hazelnut (revision), Japanese Pear (revision), Japanese Plum (revision), Granadilla/Passion fruit (revision) and Blueberry (partial revision) at its fifty-sixth session.

13. At the invitation of Türkiye, the TWF agreed to hold its fifty-sixth session in Malatya, from June 23 to 26, 2025.

14. The TWF agreed that documents for its fifty-sixth session should be submitted to the Office of the Union by May 9, 2025. The TWF noted that items would be deleted from the agenda if the planned documents have not reached the Office of the Union by the agreed deadline.

15. The TWF proposed to discuss the following items at its next session:

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the agenda

Matters for discussion

3. Date and place of the next session
4. Procedures for DUS examination (presentations invited)
5. Number of plants / parts of plants to be examined, including methods of observation (MS/MG) (France to provide a document and presentations invited)
6. Number of growing cycles and concluding examination of fruit crops (document to be prepared by France and documents invited)
7. Harmonization of content in Technical Questionnaires, Section 7 (document to be prepared by the European Union and presentations invited)
8. Variety collections (presentations invited)
9. Information databases (presentations invited)
10. Information on mutant varieties of apple useful for DUS examination (presentations invited)
11. Image analysis and new technologies in DUS examination (presentations invited)
12. Molecular techniques in DUS examination (presentations invited)
13. Experiences with new types and species (oral reports invited)
14. Discussion on draft Test Guidelines
15. Recommendations on draft Test Guidelines
16. Future program
17. Adoption of the Report on the session (if time permits)

Matters for information

18. Reports from members and observers (written reports to be prepared by members and observers)
19. Report on developments in UPOV (general developments, including variety denominations, information databases, exchange and use of software and equipment)
20. Closing of the session

[Annex III follows]

ANNEX III

SECOND SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY ON TESTING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES (TWM)

Report by Ms. Nuria Urquía Fernández (European Union), Chairperson of the TWM

1. The TWM held its second session, organized by electronic means, from April 8 to 11, 2024, and was chaired by Ms. Nuria Urquía Fernández (European Union). The report of the session is provided in document TWM/2/21 “Report”.

2. The session was attended by 144 participants from 30 members of the Union, four observer States and nine observer organizations.

3. On software and statistical analysis methods for DUS examination, the TWM noted new improvements to the software DUSTNT that will facilitate the introduction of the new COYU module with splines. UPOV members will be invited to participate in the test campaign for the new DUSTNT software and the results will be presented to the TWM at its next session.

4. The TWM also noted that the comparison between different software for COYD produced the same results for COYD analysis. This comparison will continue for another year, and the results of this exercise will be presented to the TWM at its third session.

5. On exchange and use of software, after several year of testing, the TWM agreed to recommend to the TC, at its sixtieth session, the inclusion of a new software for DUS testing called “DUSCEL” in document UPOV/INF/16. The DUSCEL software has been used in China for the DUS testing of chrysanthemum, gerbera, lily, maize, rice and wheat varieties.

6. On image analysis, the TWM noted that this is a fast-growing area, with several presentations on calibration of size and color, phenotypic identification of particular characteristics such as growth profile, vegetative index and seed vigor.

7. As of development of molecular techniques, very interesting presentations were made. For example on the use of molecular markers for genomic prediction and its use for the management of a reference collection of ryegrass varieties; the use of molecular markers to assess uniformity of measured and pseudo-qualitative characteristics of cross pollinated species through the analysis of genetic variability; and the correlation achieved on marker-trait of up to 75% in Barley, although not yet for DUS characteristics.

8. The TWM noted the request from breeders’ organizations for the development of guidance in UPOV on confidentiality of molecular data and their offer to propose a draft model agreement template, to be presented at its third session.

9. The TWM was offered a presentation on the use of Artificial Intelligence-based Markers for Variety Traceability used in routine procedures for market control and traceability of barley and wheat varieties in Argentina, which was being adapted to Soja. The TWM noted that the algorithm used established unique patterns for each variety based on seed morphology and that the thresholds for decision making and accepted error could be adjusted to enable the analysis of variety purity.

10. Finally, participants had the opportunity to learn about the software tool LociScan which identifies marker set combinations to optimize the number of markers required to discriminate varieties of a particular species.

11. The TWM agreed to hold its third session, from April 7 to 10, 2025, by electronic means.

12. The TWM agreed that documents for its third session should be submitted to the Office of the Union by February 21, 2025. The TWM noted that items would be deleted from the agenda if the planned documents did not reach the Office of the Union by the agreed deadline.

13. The TWM proposed to discuss the following items at the third session:

1. Opening of the Session

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Matters for discussion

3.1 Guidance and information materials (document to be prepared by the Office of the Union)

3.2 Technical Committee subgroup on Test Guidelines (document to be prepared by the United Kingdom)

3.3 Variety description databases including databases containing molecular data (papers invited)

3.4 Software and statistical analysis methods for DUS examination

(a) Statistical tools and methods for DUS examination (papers invited)
(i) The Combined-Over-Years Uniformity Criterion (COYU) (document to be prepared by the United Kingdom and papers invited)
(ii) Comparison of results obtained for COYD and COYU procedures using different software (document to be prepared by France)
(iii) Development of Big Data platform for DUS examination (document to be prepared by China)
(b) Exchange and use of software and equipment (papers invited)

3.5 Phenotyping and image analysis (papers invited)

3.6 Developments in molecular techniques and bioinformatics (papers invited)

(a) Latest developments in molecular techniques and bioinformatics (papers invited)
(b) Cooperation between international organizations (papers invited)
(c) Report of work on molecular techniques in relation to DUS examination (papers invited)
(d) Methods for analysis of molecular data, management of databases and exchange of data and material (papers invited)
(e) Confidentiality, ownership and access to molecular data, including model agreement template (papers invited)
- Examples of policies on confidentiality and access to molecular information data (papers invited)
(f) The use of molecular techniques in examining essential derivation (papers invited)
(g) The use of molecular techniques in variety identification (papers invited)
(h) The use of molecular techniques for enforcement (papers invited)

4. Matters for information

(a) Reports from members and observers (written reports to be prepared by members and observers)
(b) Report on developments in UPOV (general developments, including variety denominations, information databases, exchange and use of software and equipment)

5. Date and place of the next session

6. Future program

7. Adoption of the Report on the session (if time permits)

8. Closing of the session

[Annex IV follows]

ANNEX IV

FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY FOR ORNAMENTAL PLANTS AND FOREST TREES (TWO)

Report by Ms. Hilary Papworth (United Kingdom), Chairperson of the TWO

1. The TWO held its fifty-sixth session, via electronic means, from April 29 to May 2, 2024, and was chaired by Ms. Hilary Papworth (United Kingdom). The report of the session is provided in document TWO/56/9 “Report”.

2. The session was attended by 93 participants from 27 members of the Union, three observer States and two observer organizations.

3. The TWO received a presentation on the proposed revision of document TGP/7, GN 28 “Example varieties”, the group broadly supported the work that has been done so far. This item remains of great importance to the TWO as many of its Test Guidelines use illustrations to great effect and participants feel that they often present greater opportunity for international harmonization than example varieties. The TWO look forward to participating in further work on this revision and have agreed to provide the drafters with proposed examples of where illustrations can replace example varieties for inclusion in GN 28.

4. Partial revisions for 2 species were discussed during the session (Aloe and Carnation), the revisions were related to types where either flowering did not occur due to genetic control or where flowering was very slow to occur due to climatic conditions. Both situations presented challenges for the revisions and it was agreed new drafts should be presented. The situation where flowering was very slow to occur due to climatic conditions has also given rise to agenda item 5 (a) proposed for the fifty-seventh session, titled ‘exchange of DUS reports where asterisked characteristics cannot be observed.’

5. The TWO discussed 8 draft Test Guidelines and agreed that the draft Test Guidelines for Lavender (revision), Leucanthemum and Poinsettia (revision) should be submitted to the TC for adoption.

6. The TWO agreed to discuss the draft Test Guidelines for Ginkgo, Helleborus, Lotus, Magnolia, Pot Azalea and Rhododendron (revision to combine TGs), Zantedeschia, Aloe (partial revision) and Carnation (partial revision) at its fifty-seventh session.

7. At the invitation of the Netherlands (Kingdom of), the TWO agreed to hold its fifty-seventh session at Roelofarendsveen, from March 31 to April 3, 2025.

8. The TWO agreed that documents for its fifty-seventh session should be submitted to the Office of the Union by February 14, 2025. The TWO noted that items would be deleted from the agenda if the planned documents have not reached the Office of the Union by the agreed deadline.

9. The TWO agreed to discuss the following items at its next session:

1. Opening of the session

2. Adoption of the agenda

Matters for discussion

3. Procedures for DUS examination (presentations invited)

4. Situations where illustrations could complement or replace example varieties (document to be prepared by Germany in collaboration with Canada, Netherlands (Kingdom of the) and United Kingdom)

5. Information required to enhance the use of existing DUS test reports (presentations invited)

   (a) Exchange of DUS reports when asterisked characteristics cannot be observed (presentations invited)

6. Report on court cases dealing with technical matters (presentation from the European Union and presentations invited)

7. Molecular techniques in DUS examination (presentations invited)

   (a) Harnessing molecular data to support DUS testing in ornamentals: a case-study on *Hydrangea* (Presentation from France)

8. Information databases (presentations invited)

9. Experiences with new types and species (oral reports invited)

10. Discussion on draft Test Guidelines (Subgroups)

11. Recommendations on draft Test Guidelines

12. Date and place of the next session

13. Future program

14. Adoption of the report of the session (if time permits)

Matters for information

15. Reports from members and observers (written reports to be prepared by members and observers)

16. Report on developments within UPOV (general developments, including variety denominations, information databases, exchange and use of software and equipment)

17. Closing of the session

[Annex V follows]

ANNEX V

FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY FOR VEGETABLES (TWV)

Report by Mr. Yoshiyuki Ohno (Japan), Chairperson of the TWV

1. The TWV held its fifty-eighth session via electronic means, from April 22 to 25, 2024, and was chaired by Mr. Yoshiyuki Ohno (Japan). The report of the session is provided in document TWV/58/11 “Report”.

2. The session was attended by 101 participants from 29 members of the Union, four observer States and five observer organizations.

3. The TWV discussed two key issues which were “Male sterility characteristic in TG/45/7 Cauliflower” and “Disease resistance characteristics, states of expression scales of notes”.

Male sterility characteristic in TG/45/7 Cauliflower

4. The TWV considered document TWV/58/8, presented by an expert from Germany.

5. The discussion point was states of expression and description of percentage of plants expressing the characteristic. The TWV noted a question on whether the expression of the characteristic would be due to segregation between the states absent and present. The explanations from France and the Netherlands (Kingdom of) that the segregation was observed in varieties and remained stable after repeated cycles of propagation.

6. To resolve a key issue, the TWV agreed to invite the Netherlands (Kingdom of) to prepare a proposal for the partial revision of the Test Guidelines for Cauliflower to address the characteristic male sterility, for consideration at its fifty-ninth session. The revision of Test Guidelines for Cauliflower would address the states of expression and explanation on the percentage of plants expressing the characteristic, clarify the effect of segregation in genic male sterility (GMS) and the relevance of explanations on genetic background for assessing the characteristic.

7. Another discussion point was the use of a molecular marker to assess the characteristic and adding a request in the Technical Questionnaire for applicants to provide information on the expression of the characteristic. The TWV agreed that this information was useful to avoid an additional growing cycle to assess the characteristic. On the other hand, the TWV agreed that the use of the protected marker should provide equal opportunity to all breeders.

Disease resistance characteristics, states of expression scales of notes

8. The TWV considered document TWV/58/3, presented by an expert from France.

9. The discussion point was a proposal of a new type of expression for disease resistance characteristics, similar to a quantitative (QN) characteristic but with two states of expression and particular features. Some QN disease resistance characteristics had no example varieties for high-level of resistance and their range of expression was divided into two states only (e.g. “absent or low / medium or high”). The TWV noted that other disease resistance characteristics were only partially continuous, having no example varieties for part of the range of variation.

10. The new type of expression proposed for QN disease resistance characteristics aimed at establishing distinctness based on a one-note difference for selecting varieties for the growing trial (grouping characteristics). The TWV identified that parts of new type of expression could be supported by existing guidance in relevant TGP documents or should be further considered in view of guidance in relevant TGP documents (TGP/7, TGP/8 and TGP/9).

11. The cut-off points between states of expression to be included in the trials (“threshold controls”): The TWV agreed to invite experts to provide further information on the level of difference required to demonstrate a clear difference between the expression of a characteristic of two varieties that are close to the same border

line (e.g. high end of one note and low end of the next), including the use of statistical analysis to establish distinctness.

12. The TWV discussed 8 draft Test Guidelines and agreed that the draft Test Guidelines for Asparagus (partial revision), Cucumber, Gherkin (partial revision), Lettuce (partial revision), should be submitted to the TC for adoption.

13. The TWV agreed to discuss at its fifty-ninth session the draft Test Guidelines for Asparagus (revision), Eggplant (revision), Garlic (revision), Ginger (revision), Parsley (revision), Broccoli (partial revision), Brussels Sprouts (partial revision), Cabbage (partial revision), Cauliflower (partial revision), Kohlrabi (partial revision), Lettuce (partial revision), Maize (partial revision), Melon (partial revision), Shiitake (partial revision), Tomato (partial revision) and Tomato Rootstocks (partial revision).

14. The TWV agreed to hold its fifty-ninth session by virtual means from May 5 to 8, 2025.

15. The TWV agreed that in order to allow sufficient time in advance of the meeting to post the documents and provide comments, all documents and presentations invited or to be prepared should be sent to the Office of the Union by March 21, 2025.

16. The TWV proposed to discuss the following items at its next session:

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda

Matters for discussion

3. Procedures for DUS examination (presentations invited)
4. Guidelines on access and the use of plant material for the purpose of managing variety collections and DUS examination (presentations invited)
5. Proposals for ring-tests (presentations invited)
6. Assessing distinctness in disease resistance characteristics (document to be prepared by France and the Netherlands (Kingdom of) and presentations invited)
7. Image analysis of vegetable crops (presentations invited)
8. Molecular techniques in variety examination (presentations invited)
9. Experiences with new types and species (oral reports invited)
10. Discussions on draft Test Guidelines (Subgroups)
11. Recommendations on draft Test Guidelines
12. Date and place of the next session
13. Future program
14. Adoption of the report of the session (if time permits)

Matters for information

15. Reports on developments in plant variety protection from members and observers (reports invited)
16. Reports on developments in UPOV (general developments, including variety denominations, information databases, exchange and use of software and equipment)
17. Closing of the session

[End of Annex V and of document]