

## **Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS)**

**Ninth Session**  
**Geneva, November 1 to 5, 2021**

### **REPORT BY THE SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE**

*Document prepared by the Sequence Listing Task Force Leader*

#### **BACKGROUND**

1. The Sequence Listings Task Force was created by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS), at its first session in October 2010, to be responsible for Task No. 44 (see paragraph 29 of document CWS/1/10):

“Prepare a recommendation on the presentation of nucleotide and amino acid sequence listings based on eXtensible Markup Language (XML) for adoption as a WIPO standard. The proposal of the new WIPO standard should be presented along with a report on the impact of the said standard on the current WIPO Standard ST.25, including the proposed necessary changes to Standard ST.25.”

2. The Sequence Listing Task Force was also requested, regarding collaboration with the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) body:

“To liaise with the appropriate PCT body with regard to the possible impact of such [a] standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT.”

3. The European Patent Office (EPO) was assigned the role of Task Force Leader and the new recommended Standard for the representation of nucleotide and amino acid sequence listings using XML, WIPO Standard ST.26, was formally adopted at the reconvened fourth session of CWS (CWS/4BIS) in March 2016.

4. Based on the recommendation for the transition provisions from Standard ST.25 to ST.26 presented by the Task Force at the fifth session (see document CWS/5/7), the CWS reached an agreement on:

- (a) the “big bang” scenario as the option for the transition (i.e., all PCT Contracting States to transition simultaneously);
- (b) the international filing date as the reference date, rather than the priority date; and
- (c) January 1, 2022 as the transition date for implementation of WIPO ST.26.

5. At its fifth session the CWS was informed that the International Bureau would develop a new common software tool, WIPO Sequence, to enable applicants to prepare sequence listings and verify that such sequence listings are in compliance with WIPO ST.26 (to the extent determinable by a computer). As part of this development, there would be a secondary component, the WIPO Sequence Validator, which would also validate sequence listings received by Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs) to ensure they are compliant with the Standard. Collectively the two tool components are referred to as the WIPO Sequence Suite.

6. Revisions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of WIPO ST.26 were approved by the CWS at the fifth, sixth and seventh sessions, respectively.

7. The PCT Working Group, at its thirteenth session in October 2020, discussed proposals to amend the PCT Regulations, as set out in the Annex to document PCT/WG/13/8. The Working Group approved the amendments to the PCT Regulations with a view to their submission to the PCT Assembly for consideration at its next session in 2021 (see paragraph 5 of document PCT/WG/13/14).

8. Revision 1.4 of WIPO ST.26 was approved by the CWS during its eighth session. It was aimed at providing the necessary updates to ensure the smooth transition to WIPO ST.26 from WIPO ST.25 by the “big-bang” implementation date at national, regional and international levels. This revision further enabled the changes to PCT Regulations agreed to at the PCT Working Group in October 2020.

9. The CWS/8 further noted the progress in WIPO Sequence Suite development as well as the request by several delegations for training and supporting materials in a language other than English. The CWS fully supported the initiative of the International Bureau to provide online trainings covering both WIPO Standard ST.26 and WIPO Sequence for any interested participants.

## PROGRESS REPORT

10. Under the framework of Task No. 44, the Task Force proposed a final revision to WIPO ST.26 before the implementation date in 2022. The proposed revision is presented to this session of the CWS as document CWS/9/12.

11. In view of the abridged agenda of the PCT Assembly in 2020, due to the COVID-19 related health measures, the amendments to the PCT Regulations for the implementation of WIPO Standard ST.26 could only be considered for adoption by the PCT Assembly in October 2021. As a result and in view of the short time-frame to implement the adopted PCT Regulations before the agreed implementation date, the International Bureau in consultation with the Sequence Listings Task Force issued the joint Circular C. PCT 1626/C. CWS. 150, recommending the postponement of the implementation date to July 1, 2022. Twenty-nine IPOs responded to the Circular and all responses supported the postponement of the implementation date to July 1, 2022 as proposed (see document WO/GA/54/14). A final decision and approval of this postponement shall be made at the WIPO General Assembly in October 2021.

12. Subsequent to the eighth session of the CWS, the Task Force carried out discussions on the wiki and met virtually six times to discuss the revision to the PCT Administrative Instructions with the International Bureau, the training plan for WIPO ST.26, the WIPO Sequence development project and the fifth revision to WIPO ST.26.

13. The International Bureau, supported by the Sequence Listings Task Force, continued working on the modifications to the PCT Administrative Instructions and the PCT forms which resulted in the issuance in August 2021 of Circular C. PCT 1627. The aim is to have the modifications to the PCT Administrative Instructions endorsed by the WIPO General Assembly in October 2021 for an entry into force on July 1, 2022, if the postponement of the big-bang implementation date is decided by the WIPO General Assembly.

#### WIPO SEQUENCE DEVELOPMENT

14. With regard to the development of the WIPO Sequence Suite, the Task Force has participated in the testing of all the sprints during the agile development of the tool, by providing new requirements or fine tuning existing ones, as well as by functionally testing both suite components (WIPO Sequence and WIPO Sequence Validator).

15. As an outcome of the functional testing, the Sequence Listings Task Force provided a specification of the “Minimum Value Product” (MVP) that WIPO Sequence would need to achieve before releasing into production for use by Offices and applicants such that Offices could be confident it could achieve its original aim. As part of producing this specification, the use-cases, which specify the functionality of the tool, and priorities of new requirements were reviewed.

16. The International Bureau will manage another development project to improve the WIPO Sequence Suite such that it meets the requirements set-out in the MVP specification. Development for the WIPO Sequence MVP project commenced in September 2021 and is due to be completed at the end of the year. The new version of the tool suite is scheduled for release in early 2022. Offices are encouraged to continue to support the International Bureau by testing releases which are made available.

#### WIPO ST.26 AND WIPO SEQUENCE TRAINING

17. In order to support IPOs and applicants in the use of WIPO Standard ST.26 and WIPO Sequence tools, the International Bureau in collaboration with the Sequence Listings Task Force prepared training materials and provided a series of online training courses for IPOs’ staff, applicants, legal representatives and interested parties in English during April to May 2021 as follows:

- (a) Introduction and advanced training on WIPO ST.26;
- (b) WIPO Sequence Tool; and
- (c) WIPO Sequence Validator.

18. These sessions were recorded and the videos published, along with the slide decks presented, on the WIPO website at:

[https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group\\_id=330](https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group_id=330).

19. The CWS requested at the eighth session that training be provided in the other PCT languages which are available in the WIPO Sequence Suite (see paragraph 47 document CWS/8/24). As a result, the International Bureau coordinated speakers to present the introduction and advanced training on WIPO ST.26 in Chinese, French, German, Korean, Japanese, Russian and Spanish during September and October 2021.

## WORK PLAN

20. The Task Force informs the CWS of its work plan for 2021 – 2022, which is as follows:

- (a) obtain approval for the fifth revision of WIPO ST.26, version 1.5, by the CWS during the ninth session;
- (b) await formal decision on the postponement of the "big-bang" date for entering into force of Standard ST.26 by the WIPO General Assembly in October 2021;
- (c) support the International Bureau by continuing to participate in the development and testing of the WIPO Sequence Suite;
- (d) await approval for the revision PCT Administrative Instructions by the PCT Assembly in October 2021; and
- (e) work on any further revision of WIPO ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while keeping its alignment with the requirements of International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC).

21. *The CWS is invited to:*

*(a) note the contents of this present document, including the work plan of the Sequence Listings Task Force; and*

*(b) encourage IPOs to continue to test the WIPO Sequence Suite, as outlined in paragraph 16 above.*

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