Meeting of International Authorities under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

**Thirty-First Session
Beijing, October 16 and 17, 2024**

SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE: STATUS REPORT

Document prepared by the European Patent Office

1.   The Annex to this document contains a report prepared by the European Patent Office on the work of the Task Force on Sequence Listings created by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS) at its first session in October 2010.

> *2.   The Meeting is invited to note the contents of this document.*

[Annex follow

WIPO STANDARD ST.26 FOR THE PRESENTATION OF NUCLEOTIDE AND AMINO ACID SEQUENCE LISTINGS

BACKGROUND

1.   The Task Force on Sequence Listings was created by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS), at its first session (October 25 to 29, 2010), to deal with 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 Task Force was also requested:

"To liaise with the appropriate PCT body with regard to the possible impact of such 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 standard, entitled WIPO Standard ST.26, was formally adopted during the reconvened fourth session of CWS (CWS/4BIS) in March 2016.

4.   At the fifth session of the CWS, the International Bureau informed the CWS that it would develop a new common software tool to enable applicants to prepare sequence listings and verify that such sequence listings comply with WIPO Standard ST.26. The CWS therefore agreed to modify the description of Task No. 44:

"Support the International Bureau by providing users' requirements and feedback on the ST.26 authoring and validation software tool; Support the International Bureau in the consequential revision of the PCT Administrative Instructions; and Prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26 upon request by the CWS."

5.   The PCT Assembly, at its fifty-third session in October 2021, adopted the amendments to the PCT Regulations to implement WIPO Standard ST.26 in the PCT (see Annex II to document PCT/A/53/3 and paragraphs 23 to 25 of the Report of the session, document PCT/A/53/4). The WIPO General Assembly, at its fifty-fourth session in October 2021, further approved the new "big-bang" implementation date of WIPO Standard ST.26 of July 1, 2022, at national, regional and international levels (see document WO/GA/54/14 and paragraphs 178 to 183 of the Report of the session, document WO/GA/54/15).

6.   WIPO Standard ST.26 entered into force on July 1, 2022, together with the modifications to the PCT Regulations, the Administrative Instructions to the PCT including relevant Forms, as well as the PCT Receiving Office Guidelines and PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

7.   Since the Standard was first adopted in 2016, there have been several updates resulting in versions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6. Most recently at the eleventh session, held in December 2023, the CWS adopted version 1.7, adding new examples to Annex VI of WIPO ST.26 and the Appendix to Annex VI.

8.   At its eleventh session, the CWS also approved a revision of the description of Task No 44, which reads now as follows:

"Support the International Bureau by testing new releases based on available resources and providing user feedback on the WIPO Sequence Suite; and prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26".

PROGRESS REPORT

REVISION OF WIPO STANDARD ST.26

9.   Since the eleventh session of the CWS, discussions of the Task Force regarding potential revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26 focused on the following (see paragraphs 6 to 13 of document CWS/12/5):

(a)   a proposal to require a subset of nucleotide analogs and peptide analogs to be represented by the corresponding unmodified residue symbol;

(b)   a proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement; and

(c)   some editorial improvements.

10.   The Task Force however concluded that further discussions and consultations on the proposals outlined in paragraphs 9(a) and (b) above, which would require a substantive update to the Standard, were necessary before any proposal for revision could be submitted to the CWS for consideration and approval. Pending such a substantive update, the Task Force decided not to propose a new minor revision of WIPO Standard ST.26 covering only editorial improvements to the twelfth session of the CWS in September 2024. With regard to the short sequence proposal, the Task Force also agreed to collect feedback from the users of WIPO Standard ST.26 through a formal survey.

WIPO SEQUENCE SUITE

11.   The International Bureau has developed a software suite to enable patent applicants to prepare sequence listings compliant with WIPO Standard ST.26 and to enable patent Offices to verify the compliance of filed sequence listing data with WIPO Standard ST.26:

(a)   WIPO Sequence: authoring and validation tool for applicants (standalone desktop application); and

(b)   WIPO Sequence Validator: validation tool for IP Offices as a standalone service in the IP Offices' network (web service incorporated into each IP Office IT system to check compliance of filed sequence listings with WIPO Standard ST.26).

12.   WIPO Sequence 2.3.0 is available for download on the WIPO website[1]. Patent Offices can obtain WIPO Sequence Validator by contacting the International Bureau by email at wiposequence@wipo.int.

13.   The next version of the WIPO Sequence will be released shortly in production and will be targeted to improving the performance of primarily the WIPO Sequence Validator, while keeping current functionalities.

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[1] https://www.wipo.int/standards/en/sequence/index.html

14.   To help support users, WIPO has been collaborating with patent Offices to produce a knowledge base of answers to regularly asked questions and common issues. This knowledge base, known as WIPO Sequence and Knowledge Base, has been available to the public since June 1, 2022[2].

15.   WIPO Sequence users are encouraged to sign up to the new email list for important announcements and information on software updates and related issues. Users will be prompted to register for the list when downloading the software from the WIPO Sequence homepage[3].

16.   The International Bureau has also been developing training content in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish and has organized numerous training webinars for applicants on WIPO Sequence and for patent Offices on the use WIPO Sequence Validator. The various training courses offered are listed on the WIPO Standards Webinars page[4].

WORK PLAN

17.   The following items are considered a priority in the upcoming year for the Sequence Listings Task Force:

(a)   Preparation of the formal survey questionnaire regarding the short sequence proposal, as referred to in paragraph 9(b) above;

(b)   Supporting the International Bureau by testing new releases and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence; and

(c)   Collaborating on any further revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while remaining aligned with the requirements of INSDC and the Universal Protein Resource (UniProt).

[End of Annex and of document]

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[2] https://www3.wipo.int/confluence/display/WSSKB/WIPO+Sequence+and+ST.26+Knowledge+Base+Home
[3] https://www.wipo.int/standards/en/sequence/signup.html
[4] https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group_id=330