

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

**Thirteenth Session**  
**Geneva, November 10 to 14, 2025**

### **REPORT ON TASK NO. 44 BY THE SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE**

*Document prepared by the Sequence Listings Task Force Leader*

#### **SUMMARY**

1. The Sequence Listings Task Force manages updates to WIPO Standard ST.26 and is led by the European Patent Office (EPO). Two substantive proposals for revision were considered by the Task Force and presented for approval by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS), including the lifting of the minimum length requirement to optionally provide short sequences within a sequence listing. This report provides a summary of the progress made by the Sequence Listings Task Force since the last session of the CWS.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. At the first session of the CWS held in 2010, the Sequence Listings Task Force was created to perform Task No. 44. Task No. 44 is to 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 EPO was assigned the role of Task Force Leader. The Task Force was also requested to liaise with the appropriate Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) body regarding the possible impact of such a Standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT (see paragraph 29 of document CWS/1/10).

3. At its reconvened fourth session in 2016, the CWS adopted WIPO Standard ST.26. In October 2021, at the fifty-third session of the PCT Assembly, the amendments to the PCT Regulations to implement WIPO Standard ST.26 in the PCT system were adopted. The WIPO General Assembly approved to delay the "big-bang" implementation date of WIPO Standard ST.26 to July 1, 2022, at national, regional and international levels (see document WO/GA/54/14 and paragraphs 178 to 183 of document WO/GA/54/15).

4. At its eleventh session in 2023, the CWS 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”.

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

6. Since the eleventh session of the CWS, discussions of the Task Force centered on two proposals for substantive revisions of the Standard, in addition to a number of improvements and corrections:

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

(b) a proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement and allow short sequences – i.e., sequences with less than 10 specifically defined nucleotides or less than 4 specifically defined amino acids – to be included in the sequence listing.

7. No proposal for revision was submitted to the CWS for approval at the twelfth session in September 2024, as further discussions and consultations were considered necessary by the Task Force. Regarding the proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement, as indicated in paragraph 6(b) above, the Task Force agreed to collect feedback from the users of WIPO Standard ST.26 through a survey to be launched in early 2025 (see paragraph 32 of document CWS/12/29).

## PROGRESS REPORT

8. Since the twelfth session of the CWS, the Task Force met online four times to discuss the proposals for the revision of WIPO Standard ST.26 and related issues, as well as the progress made with the development of the WIPO Sequence Suite.

9. With a view to obtaining user feedback on the minimum length requirement for sequence listings in ST.26, and whether the proposal to lift it would find support, the Task Force approved a user survey questionnaire, to be conducted by the International Bureau. The user survey was open from January 23 until March 31, 2025. Out of the 1,114 responses (both complete and incomplete) that were received, 61% of the responses expressed support for lifting the minimum length requirement.

10. During the subsequent meetings of the Task Force and through discussions undertaken on the electronic forum (hereinafter referred to as the wiki), the Task Force members engaged in the analysis of the results of the user survey and the merits of the proposal. In light of the broad user support, consensus was reached in the Task Force to propose to the CWS the lifting of the minimum length requirement by making the inclusion of short sequences optional, as indicated in paragraph 6(b) above.

11. The Task Force also discussed, during its meetings, on the wiki, and in small group discussions between Task Force members having expressed a position, the proposal to make the representation of a subset of nucleotide analogs and peptide analogs mandatory. Following extensive discussions, consensus was eventually reached to include in the revised draft Standard the substantive proposal, as indicated in paragraph 6(a) above.

12. There were two formal rounds of discussion, based on a consolidated draft prepared by the Secretariat, and these rounds of discussion concluded with a formal proposal for WIPO Standard ST.26 version 2.0. The proposed draft for version 2.0 is provided as Annex I to document CWS/13/16. This document also includes a proposal regarding the implementation method for this new version of the Standard.

13. The Task Force thus agreed to submit to the CWS, together with a draft implementation plan, a proposal for revision of WIPO ST.26 in the form of version 2.0 for approval at the current session (see document CWS/13/16) comprising:

- Amendments aimed at requiring a subset of nucleotide analogs and peptide analogs to be represented by the corresponding unmodified residue symbol;
- Amendments aimed at lifting the minimum sequence length requirement; and
- Improvements and corrections.

14. The Task Force also supported the International Bureau with the progress made as regards improving WIPO Sequence Suite, particularly noting the performance improvement of the WIPO Sequence Validator.

15. Finally, the Task Force also discussed validation of sequence listings at its member Offices. Several Members shared their practice regarding further checks being conducted in addition to the automated checks by the WIPO Sequence Validator, which include those manual checks conducted by formalities examiners at these Offices. These manual checks are to capture recommendations from the Standard that could not be automated as part of the WIPO Sequence Suite.

#### WORK PLAN

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

- (a) Facilitating preparations for the entry into force of version 2.0 of WIPO Standard ST.26, if adopted, and its implementation, including by liaising with International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC) and its members;
- (b) 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); and
- (c) Supporting the International Bureau by testing new releases of WIPO Sequence Suite and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence.

17. *The CWS is invited to note:*

*(a) the contents of the present document; and*

*(b) the work plan of the Sequence Listings Task Force, as indicated in paragraph 16 above.*

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