

Report of the 24th Meeting of the World Flora Online Council

Eleuthera, The Bahamas, 20-21 February 2025

The 24th meeting of the World Flora Online (WFO) Council was held in person and with online virtual participation on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 February 2025, attended by 45 people (19 in person, 26 online) from 16 countries and representing 21 organisations/institutes. The Council meeting was preceded by three days of meetings of the Working Groups (Communications, Taxonomic and Technical). The meetings were hosted by the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve and The Bahamas National Trust, and held on Eleuthera, The Bahamas, at the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve.

Attendance:

Adil Güner ^V	Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahcesi, Istanbul, Turkey
Alan Elliott ^V	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
Alex Monro	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, UK
Avishek Bhattacharjee ^V	Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata, India
Andreas Müller	Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Berlin, Germany
Catherine Martin	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
Chuck Miller	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
Dalila Espírito-Santo ^V	University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal
Dinesh Kumar Agrawala ^V	Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata, India
Domingos Cardoso ^V	Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, Brazil
Eduardo Dalcin ^V	Instituto de Pesquisas Jardim Botânico do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Ethan Freid	Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve, Eleuthera, The Bahamas
Eve Lucas	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, UK
Geoffrey Levin ^V	Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada
Gopal Krishna ^V	Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata, India
Jennifer Bernstein	New York Botanical Garden, New York, USA
J. Jayanathi ^V	Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata, India
John Brinda	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
John Parnell	Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland
Jordan Teisher	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
Lauren Raz	Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia
Marc Sosef ^V	Meise Botanic Garden, Meise, Belgium
Marianne Le Roux ^V	South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Pretoria, South Africa
Mark Watson	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
Martin Ricker ^V	National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City, Mexico
Mauricio Diazgranados	New York Botanical Garden, New York, USA

Nicky Nicolson ^v	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, UK
Nicola Schönenberger ^v	Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques, Geneva, Switzerland
Nye Hughes ^v	Associate, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, UK
Ogün Demir ^v	Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahcesi, Istanbul, Turkey
Peter Fritsch	Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Texas, USA
Peter Moonlight	Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland
Peter Wyse Jackson	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
Pierre Bonnet	Pl@ntNet, Montpellier, France
Raoul Palese	Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques, Geneva, Switzerland
Roger Hyam ^v	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
Ronell Klopper ^v	South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Pretoria, South Africa
Thomas Haevermans ^v	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France
Tony Mast	Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, Missouri, USA
Visotheary Ung ^v	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France
Walter Berendsohn ^v	Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Berlin, Germany

^v = virtual

The following is a summary report of the meeting of Council and decisions adopted. Presentations given at the meeting and associated documents are available on the WFO OwnCloud online storage, <https://cloud.worldfloraonline.org>

1. Welcome

Ethan Freid, Lead Botanist at the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve, warmly welcomed the WFO delegates at the start of the meeting, which was held in the open-sided Educational Pavilion deep inside the forests of the Preserve. Council Co-chair Peter Wyse Jackson began the meeting and welcomed all participants who were attending in person and online. Pierre Bonnet and Mauricio Diazgranados were welcomed as new council members attending for the first time. Peter WJ thanked Ethan Freid and his team, for their thoughtfulness and care in organising the week of meetings in such an inspiring environment.

The following draft agenda, with modifications made during the meeting, was adopted as follows:

1. Welcome by Co-chairs *Peter Wyse Jackson, Lauren Raz and Mark Watson*
2. Apologies for absence
3. Adoption of the Report of the 23rd WFO Council meeting, held virtually 3 October 2024
4. Update on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) and Global Partnership for Plant Conservation (GPPC) *Peter Wyse Jackson*
5. New WFO Consortium Members

Working Group and Task Force Reports

6. Taxonomic Working Group *Mark Watson and Alan Elliott*
Discussion and adoption of recommendations

7. Technical Working Group *Chuck Miller and Walter Berendsohn*
Discussion and adoption of recommendations
8. Identification Task Force *Eve Lucas*
9. Geographic Distribution Task Force *Alex Monro*
10. Communications Working Group *Nicola Schönenberger and Catherine Martin*
Discussion and adoption of recommendations

Remaining Agenda Items

11. Update on collaboration with the Catalogue of Life *Lauren Raz*
12. WFO registration as an Association in Switzerland *Nicola Schönenberger*
13. Review of action points from the last meeting
14. Arrangements for the 25th and 26th WFO Council meetings
15. Election of Officers
16. Any other business
17. Concluding remarks

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Olaf Bánki (Catalogue of Life), Thomas Borsch (Germany), Fabian Michelangeli (USA), and Alan Paton (UK).

3. Adoption of the Report from the 23rd meeting of the WFO Council

The Report of the 23rd WFO Council meeting, held online on 3 October 2024, was adopted with minor corrections and will be posted on the WFO About Pages.

4. Update on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) and Global Partnership for Plant Conservation (GPPC)

Peter Wyse Jackson commented on the status of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), which was adopted by a decision of COP16 in Cali, Colombia, on 1 November 2024. The new GSPC is aligned with the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, resulting in 41 Voluntary Complementary Actions in plant conservation to be achieved by 2030. The parties to the Convention agreed to an action that specifically highlighted WFO; it was the only individual initiative specifically referenced. The GSPC supports continuous updating and development of the World Flora Online, including plant ID tools ([COP 16 Decision 16/20, Plant conservation](#)). This COP Decision is the recognition of 196 parties to the CBD of the importance of WFO and gives us a powerful mandate to move forward.

As implementation of GSPC goes forward, efforts will be made to monitor progress on actions and we may need to develop specific indicators to monitor achievement of WFO and align with the GBF over the

coming years. These indicators will be discussed at the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation (GPPC), of which WFO is a member. The next meeting of the GPPC will be at Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, in March 2025. This will be a good opportunity to promote WFO.

5. New WFO Consortium Members

There have been no new partner applications since the last meeting of the WFO Council, but an application from the Royal Botanic Garden Madrid is expected soon.

6. Report of the Taxonomic Working Group Report

Alan Elliott, WFO TEN Manager, provided an update on progress made since the last meeting (see presentation on OwnCloud). The December 2024 version of WFO Plant List completed on schedule, the WFO Plant List website updated with the new version, with 195 authors, archived on [Zenodo](#) and [ChecklistBank](#). There have been over 12,000 views and over 6,000 downloads of the updated version from Zenodo.

The December 2024 version incorporates 21,531 additional plant names (including 11,292 from the fern TEN and 3,857 from IPBI), and nearly 350,000 names have been updated, further information is given [here](#). Notable classification updates from TENs include Pteridophytes, Brassicaceae, Annonaceae, Bryophytes, several Caryophyllales families, Cycads, Ericaceae, Malpighiaceae, Meliaceae, Papaveraceae and Putranjivaceae. 54% have a TEN, 46% of accepted species are covered by a TEN, and 90% of TENs have provided updated classifications.

There are an increasing number of papers being published based on the work of TENs (e.g. Annonaceae, Gesneriaceae and Putranjivaceae) and/or analyses based on the WFO Plant List data.

The general trend in the number of unplaced names and deprecated names is reduction, although the current figures show a slightly increased due to the incorporation of a large number of missing names from the Brassicaceae and Pteridophyte TENs. However, accepted species have increased to 380,240 and synonyms now number over 1 million. 307 (of 324) non-TEN families are now updated from WCV 2.0 as a default classification. In total, 82% of accepted species in WFO have been updated.

The following proposals for new TENs were received:

- Lacistemataceae: 2 genera, 17 species (expanding the existing Salicaceae TEN)
 - Boraginales: 153 genera, 3,517 species
 - Convolvulaceae: 59 genera, 1,962 species
 - Asparagaceae subfam. Scilloideae: 30-70 genera, 500-1000 species
 - Clusiaceae: 18 genera, 905 species
 - Combretaceae: 10 genera, 585 species
 - Loasaceae: 22 genera, 346
- TOTAL: 8,696 species

Mark Watson, co-chair of the Taxonomic Working Group, continued the report (see presentation on OwnCloud) and gave summary of the joint discussion topics. The proposals for new TENs were all

recommended by the Taxonomic Working Group for Council for authorisation. This recommendation was accepted by Council. We now have a total of 62 approved TENs.

The Taxonomic Working Group discussed ideas for developing the community of Taxonomic Expert Networks and how they might be willing to do more than curate their classification, for example, providing users with advice on Content. An annual virtual meeting of TENs and creating an online discussion forum for TENs have been suggested, but this would need volunteers to take a lead on organising these as the TEN Manager already has a heavy workload and does not have the capacity to take these on. The Working Group discussed how to monitor and report on TEN activity, and this could be done using data extracted from Rhakhis.

Contributors to the WFO symposium at IBC Madrid, 2024, and other WFO-relevant presentations have been invited to submit papers for a special issue of *Taxon*. Thomas Borsch, Lauren Raz, Mark Watson and Peter Wyse Jackson are editors. Four manuscripts have so far been received and in the review process.

A proposal from PhytoKeys has been received to establish a long-term publishing collaboration with WFO, including publication charge discounts such as waiving the Article Processing Charge for some of the articles. This was seen as a potentially useful collaboration but further discussions are needed to understand the benefits for WFO. The recommendation to Council to ask a small team led by Thomas Borsch (with Lauren Raz, Roger Hyam and Alan Elliott) to continue discussions with PhytoKeys to explore this proposal and clarify doubts, was approved.

Discussions have continued with IPNI and WCVP towards moving the curation of classification data from WCVP onto WFO, with IPNI as the nomenclatural source of vascular plant data. Once complete, WFO could provide the classification backbone for Plants of the World Online. Maintaining data quality is a key issue and a general curatorial team would need to be established in WFO. Discussions are ongoing on the workflows and data pipelines needed to undertake this work. Zotero is being explored as a shared library. The WFO general curatorial team might also be able to support large TENs who have orphaned segments in their group. Kew has embarked on the redevelopment of IPNI and Index Fungorum software. This work will include resolving the differences in data between IPNI and WCVP, which will resolve the current issues around discrepancies in nomenclatural data between IPNI, POWO and WFO. Council agreed with the Working Groups recommendation to continue this work.

Best practice for the governance and content of international checklists was discussed, with Stephen Garnett and Claire Johnston presenting their work on this for Catalogue of Life. CoL has developed metrics to assess compliance in these areas. WFO was seen a good example of best practice in some areas, but we can learn from the CoL criteria to strengthen our working practices and management of TENs.

Raoul Palese gave a presentation on the African Plants Database during a joint session of the Working Groups, looking for ways to move forward on integration with WFO. The Taxonomic Working Group recognised the high quality and continental scope of APD data, and APD are keen to contribute Content. Name matching has been undertaken, with 85% success, and names missing in WFO should be fed to IPNI for inclusion. At present there is little engagement from taxonomists based in Africa, but Ronell Kloppe said that SANBI will soon be sharing data with APD. The Taxonomic Working Group recommendation that these discussions on collaboration and data sharing should continue was approved.

Council decisions on Taxonomic Working Group recommendations

- 1) Council to authorise one expanded and six new Taxonomic Expert Networks covering: Lacistemataceae, Boraginales, Convolvulaceae, Asparagaceae subfam. Scilloideae, Podostemaceae, Clusiaceae, Combretaceae and Loasaceae. **APPROVED**
- 2) Council to approve Thomas Borsch, Lauren Raz, Roger Hyam and Alan Elliott to continue discussions with PhytoKeys to explore this proposal and clarify doubts. **APPROVED**
- 3) Council to approve the continuation of the work to integrate WCVF into WFO as proposed. **APPROVED**
- 4) Council to ask the co-chairs of Council, Taxonomic and Technical Working Groups to continue discussions towards future closer collaboration with the African Plants Database and sharing data. **APPROVED**

7. Report of the Technical Working Group

Tony Mast, WFO Gatekeeper, provided an update on progress made since the last meeting (see presentation on OwnCloud). The past problems causing outages of the public portal have now been resolved. Server outages are automatically monitored and restarted as necessary. Google Analytics is reporting good stability and an overall trend of increasing traffic. About 75% of traffic comes from desktop computers and 25% from mobile devices.

The taxonomic backbone used in the Portal has been updated to the December 2024 version and enhancements made in reporting metrics for distributions, descriptions, images and references. The Geoserver is up and running, with data updated to include distributions imported from WCVF and specimens from Alex Monro's parsed GBIF records (ParseGBIF).

The Plant List (www.theplantlist.org) is now removed from Google and Bing search indexes. The OwnCloud is now stable and running smoothly, and the accidental deletion of files has been mitigated against. All the WFO mailing lists have been updated. It was noted that the TEN mailing list does not include leads for all the TENS, and that the TENS should be encouraged to do so. Amendments for the mailing lists should be sent to tony.mast@mobot.org.

The backlog of Content waiting to be harvested is being processed with Flora accounts prioritised. Harvesting status report (Action Item 6):

Flor. Trop. East Africa & Fl. Trop. West Africa (Kew)	Version prior to 2/2023 - harvested
IUCN Conservation Status	Version dated 3/2024 - harvested
Improve Metadata for Images from Solanaceae & Flora of China	Get Clarification
Solanaceae Source	Contacted back to coordinate an updated dataset Version circa 2018/2019 - harvested
NYBG	Version prior to 2/2023 - harvested
Catalogo de las Plantas de Colombia	Version prior to 2/2023 - harvested

Australian Floras	Version prior to 2/2023 - harvested
Flore du Gabon and Flore d'Afrique centrale	Version dated 12/2023 - harvested
Flore du Gabon and Flore d'Afrique centrale	8/26/24 - Marc Sosef working on a new version 10-24-24 - Fixed the format. Waiting for Marc. Sunitha reached out to Alan.
Flora of Cambodia	Theary is working with Alan Elliott on name matching
GBIF Specimen Data	Check with Alan regarding Name Matching Received data - requires name matching/WFO IDs/harvesting
Flora of Nepal	Tony to find out where we can get this data No Data Received
Illustrated Treatments for Korea	Last response - coordinating to convert Word documents into structured data
Flora Helvetica	French descriptions pending.
Flora do Brazil	more descriptions being provided.
eMonocot descriptions (Kew, TBC)	PalmWeb descriptions pending harvesting
New FNA data	3/24 - Got data and content sample. Issues with Authors format. Reviewed file's DwCA format. Repeated Name Matching process as requested. Version prior to 2/2023 - harvested
African Plants Database	3/24 - African Plants Database – (distributions, ecology, biology) 200K names, 78K taxa. - Pending.
eFloramaghreb.org	6400 taxa – Pending.
Flora of Ireland	Check on status of dataset William was handling with John Parnell. Irish Names is a different dataset from Peter Wyse Jackson already harvested.
Caryophyllales	Harvested Nepenthes taxa. Pending other taxa and all content from EDIT platform.
South Africa	Previously harvested, Sunitha to check on latest version

Chuck Miller, co-chair of the Technical Working Group, continued the report (see presentation on OwnCloud). Most of the discussions on the Technical Strategy have been focussed on Portal 2.0. Roger Hyam demonstrated an infrastructure and portal/user interface he has developed at RBG Edinburgh using a copy of the eMonocot data. This built on the faceting work shown at the last meeting of Council, and included distribution maps, images and linked data.

The recommendation that WFO should go forward with developing Portal 2.0 with full engagement of Consortium members was approved, as was the recommendation that a new Task Force to support this be established by Council (see recommendations below). The work of the Communications Working Group in reviewing the current portal will feed into this. In order to support the development of a new WFO data infrastructure and portal, a new joint review of the Use Cases will be initiated. The establishment and working methods of this group to be determined by the Technical Working Group, but the review itself will be a joint working group effort.

Council approved the recommendation that Council members should be invited to contribute staff resources to help with the development of Portal 2.0. Resources are needed to cover include: project management, development management, software architecture, quality control, data curation, programming and technical documentation. Chuck said that Missouri can provide image server, geospatial server and data curation support. Oğün Demir (NGBB Istanbul) offered programming support.

Following discussions on automated identification tools, Council approved the recommendation that the Pl@ntNet AI image Identification Module be added to the current portal, and that the incorporation of AI-based services be investigated in the development of Portal 2.0.

On reviewing their action items, the Technical Working Group recommendation to cancel Action Item 109 (explore the use of badges on portal pages), as this was no longer relevant, was approved by Council.

The Working Group discussed Content and some issues about using Content Types, including reducing the splitting of descriptions into several content types, adding economic botany terms, etc. The WG recommended that a Content Data Provider Working Group should be set up, but this was not approved as Council did not want to create more Working Groups, but handle emerging issues through the current Working Group structure and subgroups/task forces. The issues around Content would be appropriately handled by the Taxonomic Working Group. Discussions around adding the uses of plants concluded that this is a wide and difficult area, and that this is best done through linking out to authoritative resources.

Following discussions on the African Plants Database, the Technical Working Group recommended that APD be added as an external link to the Portal. This was not approved by Council, but will be included in future discussions with APD.

A WFO-focussed symposium has been submitted led by Walter Berendsohn, with several Council members, for the Living Data conference, Bogota, Colombia, 21-24 October 2025. Several WFO-related presentations will be submitted and it is expected that WFO will have a significant presence.

Council decisions on Taxonomic Working Group recommendations

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| 1) WFO will go forward with the development of Portal 2.0 with the full engagement of the WFO Consortium members who will bring their inkind resources and expertise to the collective effort | APPROVED |
| 2) Formation of a joint Portal 2.0 Task Force to assist with the ongoing development | APPROVED |
| 3) Recommend and invite Council members to contribute staff resources to help with Portal 2.0 | APPROVED |
| 4) Add Pl@ntNet AI Image Identification module to WFO Portal 1.0. | APPROVED |
| 5) Investigate incorporation of AI-based services into WFO Portal 2.0. | APPROVED |
| 6) Cancel Action Item 109 -Explore use of badges for kind of object on Portal pages. | APPROVED |
| 7) Create a Content Data Provider Working Group | NOT APPROVED |
| 8) Add African Plant Database to External Links on WFO Portal 1.0 | NOT APPROVED |

8. Report of the Identification Task Force

Eve Lucas presented a report on behalf of the Identification Task Force (see presentation on OwnCloud). The Task Force proposal for an ID road map to direct future work was approved, with the first phase of a user survey to determine the needs for plant ID tools.

Pierre Bonnet presented a mock-up of how the integration of the Pl@ntNet image search tool might look on the WFO Portal (see presentation on OwnCloud). He explained how this works when matching a submitted image to the Pl@ntNet database and how the results could be displayed in WFO. Council approved the recommendation that work on the accommodation a menu of Pl@ntNet ID tools into the WFO Portal should be undertaken. Council also approved that the Pl@ntNet web tool should be embedded as a first step and that feedback on this should be used for the development of Portal 2.0.

Council decisions on Identification Task Force recommendations

- 1) ID Task Force should adopt the ID road map and as part of phase 1 would undertake a user survey to determine needs for plant ID tools **APPROVED**
- 2) Plant ID TF will work with Tech Working Group to work out how best to accommodate a menu of Plant ID tools in the Portal **APPROVED**
- 3) WFO should embed the Pl@ntNet web component to WFO in a first step, then collect feedback and progress on the use of the Pl@ntNet API for deeper integration (Portal 2.0) **APPROVED**
- 4) WFO should make descriptive data available via a structured data API in the future when resources allow **APPROVED**

9. Report of the Geographical Distribution Task Force

Alex Monro presented a report on behalf of the Geographical Distribution Task Force (see presentation on OwnCloud). This outlined the benefits and risks of making plant occurrence data available. Council approved the recommendation that geographical distribution information in the WFO portal be endorsed by including voucher occurrence data. Council also agreed to the recommendation to test the value the global ParseGBIF dataset with a subset for taxa covered by an active TEN (Peter Moonlight offered the *Begonia* dataset as a test case), and for GBIF to be invited to nominate a member of their staff to join in the Task Force discussions.

Council decisions on Identification Task Force recommendations

- 1) Enhance the geographical distribution information by endorsing the dissemination of voucher occurrence data through the WFO portal **APPROVED**
- 2) Evaluate the dissemination of a test dataset, using a subset of the global ParseGBIF for taxa covered by an active TEN **APPROVED**
- 3) Invite a member of the GBIF staff to participate in the TF discussions **APPROVED**

10. Report of the Communications Working Group

Catherine Martin presented a report on behalf of the Communications Working Group (see presentation on OwnCloud). The work of the Working Group has focused on defining the audience – who are we communicating with and how are we doing this? and reviewing promotional materials and the website.

Catherine Martin has been active on our Social Media, showcasing activities and promoting WFO. WFO has 1,500 followers on Facebook, an increase of 279 followers with 6,700 views since October. The top post was the WFO Plant List Solstice update. Twitter/X has little engagement these days, with LinkedIn being more active. The top post on both these platforms was the GSPC update. Bluesky is being trialled, and Partner organisations are encouraged to reshare posts to build following. Council agreed with the proposal to create a timetable of regular activities and scheduled events to help support this. More posts results in more followers, and those with material for posts are encouraged to contact Catherine. The Working Group would like to develop a list of ‘ever green’ posts which are ready to use when needed. These could include announcements of new TENs and new Consortium Members, highlights from existing Members and TENs, WFO Plant List updates, new datasets incorporated into WFO, TEN wish lists (priority families), meetings, papers citing WFO, etc. Council approved the recommendation to created a mailing list of the communications contacts in WFO Partner organisations. This would be maintained by Catherine in the first instance, but Tony Mast offered to set up a mailing list on the WFO mailserver if required.

The Working Group has undertaken a through review of the WFO Website (Main Portal, About Pages and WFO Plant List). Multi-language capabilities was deferred to the development of Portal 2.0. The Working Group has produced a report of their findings (see OwnCloud). The main finding is that the website needs significant overhaul to enhance communications, ensure consistent messaging and improve navigation. The Working Group can provide recommendations and oversight, but human resources are needed to undertake this work. Council agreed that the recommendations made in the report should be factored into the development of Portal 2.0. Council approved with the recommended first step towards this – to develop a standard description or mission statement for WFO which is easily understood by our audience. This needs to be aligned with our mandate from the CBD.

The WFO promotional leaflets in English, Spanish and French proved successful and effective at the International Botanical Congress and other international meetings, and versions in the three other UN languages are needed: Arabic, Russian and Chinese. Promotional leaflets are available for download on the OwnCloud.

Agathe Pineau is developing a promotional animated video and graphics to explain WFO in an engaging, playful way. This should be finished in June and available to show at the next meeting of Council.

Council decisions on Identification Task Force recommendations

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| 1) | Develop a content schedule for social media posts | APPROVED |
| 2) | Encourage Council members to reach out to the communications staff within their respective institutions and provide the Communications Working Group with their contact info to create a mailing list for communications support | APPROVED |
| 3) | Take note of the World Flora Online website assessment by the Comms Working Group and take it into account when planning new website with aim of establishing | APPROVED |
| 4) | Develop a standard description or mission statement for World Flora Online that is easily understood by our audience | APPROVED |

11. Collaboration with Catalogue of Life

Lauren Raz provided an update on WFO's relationship with Catalogue of Life. The taxonomic backbone in COL continues to rely heavily on World Plants, supplemented by WCVP, with WFO directly providing conifer data; Bryonames is the source for bryophyte data (the same is used for WFO). That said, recently implemented automated pipelines have significantly increased the number of synonyms brought in from WFO. There is potential for technical collaboration between our teams, especially development/implementation of automated processes for bringing in new data for TEN review. Regarding governance, COL assures a permanent WFO seat on its Global Team, currently occupied by Lauren Raz, but others in future can assume this role.

A Global Team meeting was scheduled for March 2025. At the time of writing this report this meeting had already taken place. It focused on a proposed new governance structure for COL, spurred on by a governance review carried out by the Convention on Migratory Species, who are considering adopting COL as their taxonomic backbone. Lauren Raz made arguments for adoption of WFO as the primary source for plant data based on COL's own governance principals and a clear CBD mandate, emphasizing that WFO is the only resource explicitly endorsed by the CBD in the new Global Biodiversity Framework, approved by 191 countries. At the COL meeting, there was support among the Global Team for this proposal, but not via any formal voting mechanism and no new decision has been made as of yet. COL is currently undergoing a major internal restructuring and a decision will thus likely be deferred.

12. WFO registration as an Association in Switzerland

Nicola Schönenberger reported on the registration of WFO as a non-profit Association according to the Swiss Civil Code. Establishing WFO as a legal body addresses the new Strategic Plan which calls for WFO to strengthen our ability to execute the plan by adapting our governance structure and establishing the capacity to receive and manage funds. As a non-profit body, WFO would be tax-exempt. Draft Statutes, based on the current Partnership Memorandum of Understanding, have been prepared by Geneva and circulated to Council members for review prior to this meeting. Minor corrections and suggestions were received and incorporated into the version tabled at the meeting. This text has been reviewed by Nicola's legal team at Geneva and it is compliance with Swiss Law.

Members of the Consortium (those who have signed the MoU), through their designated representatives on Council, would constitute the General Assembly. The General Assembly would elect the Board. The Board must have a minimum of five people, including (co-)Presidents, Treasurer and Secretary – at least one member of the Board must be domiciled in Switzerland.

Discussions on the need for a new MoU or other formal written endorsement by existing partners of the Consortium for the change in structure of WFO to an Association concluded with the view that the Council Co-chairs can write to the existing members if they have concerns. If institutions do not express concerns, then this can be interpreted as acceptance of inclusion within the Association. This was the

approach taken when the MoU was updated in 2021. This will be done once the Association exists, which will be at the founding constituent assembly when the attending members ratify the Association.

Regarding annual fees, these would be decided by the General Assembly, and can be set at zero. It was recommended to give the General Assembly the flexibility of setting fees, even if these are never levied. The necessity of a quorum in meetings was raised, but this was not necessary under Swiss Law and WFO currently does not have this. The change in governance should not create constraints on how we do things (e.g. hybrid meetings and electronic voting), but is intended simply as a mechanism to receive and manage financial assets.

The Co-chairs of Council recommended that Council approved the draft statutes as presented subject to minor changes and that WFO become an Association under Swiss Law. This was approved unanimously. The draft statutes incorporating these minor changes are appended as Annex 2.

The establishment of WFO as an Association in Switzerland would be enacted at the first official meeting of the General Assembly in-person in Switzerland, with other participants online. Council approved the proposal by Mark Watson that the next meeting of Council should be the founding assembly in Geneva, with the expectation that most would attend online. Co-chairs will work with Nicola to fix the date.

13. Review of Action Points from the last meeting

Updates from Action Points not already covered elsewhere include:

1) Presentations and promotion opportunities

- 14th Latin American Botanical Congress, Cuba March 2025
- GPPC, St Louis, Missouri, March 2025
- Brazilian Botanical Congress, August 2025
- AETFAT, Ghana, August 2025
- EUROGARD, Italy September 2025
- Living Data, TDWG/SPNHC, GBIF Governance Board, Colombia, October 2025

14. Arrangements for the 25th and 26th WFO Council meetings

The 25th meeting of WFO Council will be in Geneva, provisionally in September 2025 (see Agenda Item 12, above). The offer by the Botanical Survey of India of holding the 26th meeting of WFO Council in Kolkata, India, in February 2026 was enthusiastically accepted. The timing to coincide with the celebrations of BSI Foundation Day, and held at the AJC Bose Indian Botanical Garden, Howrah, near Kolkata. Dinesh Kumar Agrawale of BSI thanked the WFO Council for accepting this proposal, and commented that this would also coincide with the completion of publication of Flora of India in print form, with a digital version completed soon after. BSI extends a hearty welcome for WFO participants coming to Kolkata – the City of Joy.

15. Election of Officers

Co-chairs of the Working Groups discussed the need for succession planning and to give opportunities to others. The proposal that Marianne Le Roux and Tony Mast be elected as co-chairs for the Technical Working Group along with the re-election of Walter Berendsohn and Chuck Miller was approved by Council. The proposal that Eve Lucas be elected co-chair of the Taxonomic Working Group along with the re-election of Thomas Borsch and Mark Watson was approved by Council. The proposal that Catherine Martin and Nicola Schönenberger be re-elected as co-chairs of the Communications Working Group was approved.

The re-election of Lauren Raz, Mark Watson and Peter Wyse Jackson as co-chairs of Council was proposed by John Parnell and seconded by Nicola Schönenberger, who commented positively on the effectiveness of their past work and the need for continuity as WFO transitions into an Association. Council approved this proposal.

16. Any Other Business

None not covering previous agenda items and recorded above.

17. Concluding remarks

Peter Wyse Jackson drew the meeting to close by expressing his gratitude to our host, Shelby White, the benefactor of the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve, who had joined us for the last session, and to Ethan Freid and all the staff of the Preserve for all the work they have done in hosting the meeting. He commended the Preserve on all their inspirational conservation and education work over the years.

Peter WJ extended the deep appreciation of the WFO Co-chairs to the Working Group co-chairs, Task Force leaders, TEN Manager, Gatekeeper, and all Council members who have joined online and in person. We should be proud of our achievements and we are looking forward to what lies ahead.

Annex 1

ACTION ITEMS FROM 24th WFO COUNCIL MEETING – Eleuthera, February 2025

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
1	<p>Presentations on WFO. Take advantage of the meetings we attend to promote the WFO.</p> <p>Presentations to be uploaded to WFO Presentations folder in ownCloud.</p>	All	Standing Item	Recent/next presentations: 14th Latin American Botanical Congress, Cuba Mar 2025; GPPC, St Louis, Mar 2025; Brazilian Botanical Congress, Aug 2025; AETFAT, Ghana, Aug 2025; EUROGARD, Italy Sept 2025; Living Data, TDWG/SPNHC, GBIF, Colombia, Oct 2025
2	<p>Update current signatories. Secretariat to maintain an archive of hard copies of any formal agreements with WFO. List of Consortium members on the WFO website to be updated.</p>	Peter Wyse Jackson	Standing Item	No new partners have joined the Consortium since the Oct 2024 meeting, but Royal Botanic Garden Madrid is in process.
3	<p>Update Social Media. Keep updating FaceBook, X/Twitter, etc with news and current information.</p>	Comms Working Group	Standing Item	Send items for social media to Catherine Martin (Missouri BG)
5	<p>Videos. Links to videos by partner institutions to be included on WFO About Pages.</p>	All	Standing Item	Send videos relevant WFO to Alan Elliott (RBG Edinburgh)
6	<p>Enhance Production Portal with Descriptive Data. Production portal should be enhanced with descriptive data content, as advised by Taxonomic WG/Council, in order to increase the diversity of content and geographic coverage. Send a tweet as content is loaded to Production.</p>	Tony Mast	<p>Standing Item</p> <p>When ready, Tony Mast will touch base with the intermediary contacts of the Content providers for the next digital resources to bring into the WFO Portal</p>	See Gatekeeper report for harvesting details.
7	<p>Create a Harvester administration/operations guide. The development of a Harvester administration/operation guide should be carried out immediately through testing and collaboration.</p>	Tony Mast	Ongoing	New updates should be included. Created documentation for “Name-Matching” process and made code and SQL Stored Procedures available for Geneva in Github (private MBG-CBI repository)
13	<p>Taxonomic Expert Networks (TENs) 1) Encourage proposals of new TENs by contacting potential</p>	TEN Manager Alan Elliott	Standing Item	1) TENs approved by Council February 2025: Lacistemataceae (added to

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
	<p>taxonomic experts and supporting them in the formulation of a TEN.</p> <p>2) Highlight inactive TENS for consideration of removal.</p> <p>3) Encourage all TEN leads/focals to subscribe to the TEN Mailing List (New)</p>			<p>Salicaceae TEN), Boraginales, Convolvulaceae, Asparagaceae subfam. Scilloideae, Podostemaceae, Clusiaceae, Combretaceae and Loasaceae</p> <p>2) None of concern.</p>
15	<p>Develop markup Tools for a Toolkit. Consolidate the Markup Tools being used; develop them to integrate them into a toolkit.</p> <p>- SANBI has developed Markup tools and are available for others to use. Available from GitHub: github.com/rudivs/SpeciesMarkupAddIn</p>	Technical Working Group	Deferred at St Louis	
18	Save the Dates of next meetings of Council	Peter Wyse Jackson	25 th Meeting hybrid in Geneva, Switzerland, September 2025; 26 th Meeting, hybrid February 2026 at Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata, India	<p>Post the report of the 23rd Council Meeting on the WFO website.</p> <p>The Geneva meeting would be the founding General Assembly of the WFO as an Association under Swiss Law</p>
33	<p>Resolve insufficient resources to support:</p> <p>Software development staffing.</p>	WFO Council	Ongoing	<p>Missouri is committed to providing Tony Mast's role, but has an issue with software development staffing.</p> <p>Rhakhis software developed by Roger Hyam (RBGE).</p> <p>Ogün Demir (NGBB Istanbul) offered programming support.</p>
48	<p>Make modifications to the Portal</p> <p>18. Assess how to provide page hit statistics by data provider.</p> <p>28. Reveal hidden fields (e.g. Basionym)</p> <p>29. Enable alternate classifications</p>	Technical Working Group	Ongoing	<p>NB Code changes required</p> <p>18. Pending</p> <p>28. Deferred at St. Louis</p> <p>29. Deferred at St. Louis</p>
80	Develop Criteria for judging authorisation of potential Content Providers	Taxonomic Working Group	Pending (revisit with strategic review)	<p>Criteria (scientific credibility, completeness, substantial contribution, currency, etc.), similar to those used for assessing TENS.</p> <p>Another approach is to list what we would not accept.</p>

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
81	WFO to give percentages of what data have been uploaded from what is published for each source of Content	Technical Working Group	Pending	Possibly include in a Content stock take and show against source in the Flora page in About Pages. Derive percentages from table of content data records maintained by Tony Mast.
84	Contact Consortium Members to solicit additional Content datasets	WFO Council Co-chairs	Ongoing	
86	Explore formalising WFO's relationship with IPNI with a written agreement covering the nature of the collaboration and the exchange of data	WFO Council	Ongoing	Discussions ongoing with RBG Kew on integration of WCVF and links with IPNI.
106	Explore registration of WFO as an NGO in Switzerland	Nicola Schoenenberger	In progress	Council resolved to register WFO as an Association under Swiss Law. Establishment meeting planned for September 2025.
108	Review guidance on Data Downloads on the WFO website	Tony Mast, Alan Elliott	Pending	Replace text and downloads on 'Download Data' page of the WFO Portal with instructions on how Content and classification data can be downloaded, e.g. links to Zenodo, ChecklistBank, WFO Plant List, Portal downloads by registered users, etc.
109	Explore use of badges for the kind of object and institution on Portal pages.	Roger Hyam, Tony Mast	Deleted as no longer needed	Badges for kind of object to be deferred until a future rebranding of WFO. This is considered low priority.
111	Update Contributor Guides with latest data process changes after addition of Rhakhis.	Tony Mast, Roger Hyam	Next Council	In progress.
114	Consensus classification data development in Rhakhis 1) Incorporate updates from TENS 2) Update non-TEN groups with data from WCVF, or other published classifications approved by the Taxonomic WG	TEN Manager Alan Elliott		June 24 to Dec 24 data cycle 1) 24 Angiosperm TEN. All ferns. All Bryophytes. 2) 17 WCVF families updated in this data cycle. 305 updated from WCVF 2.0

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
	3) Report on deduplication in curation metrics			3) currently stands at around 4900 name pairs in Rhakhis integrity report. Homonyms with the same name string and author string are becoming more prevalent.
115	Consider modifications to the Family and Higher order classifications	Taxonomic Working Group	Ongoing	Activity on this is under Task 116
116	Establishing a supra-order classification	Lauren Raz Taxonomic Working Group	Next Council	Supra-order classification to be decided by Taxonomic WG and provided to Catalogue of Life. Higher classification under review, all bar Angiosperms done, to complete by next Council meeting.
117	Building a TEN global community 1) Develop an annual WFO TEN online symposium to share lessons learned and promote collaboration between TENS	Taxonomic Working Group	Ongoing	1) Seek to run an online symposium. Nadja Korotkova and Caryophyllales to organise the first of these in 2023. [not progressed yet]
118	IUCN Red List to adopt WFO Plant List as its accepted classification	Peter Wyse Jackson (Missouri and Kew)	Next Council	WFO has requested to the IUCN Governor General to adopt WFO Plant List as the accepted classification used by IUCN for plant groups covered by WFO.
121	Create a subgroup to develop a Technical Strategic Plan	Technical Working Group	Next Council/Ongoing	Subgroup to create a short document that outlines the systems and people/roles involved in running the WFO now and for each one a “vision” of what will replace it/them either in case of emergency or as part of planned improvements. This plan will address WFO current technical infrastructure only.
126	Pursue strategic alliances with Xper3, GIFT, etc. for collaborating with identification resources	ID Task Force	Ongoing	To stimulate common efforts in developing a global plant character database, e.g, study the feasibility of using

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
				AI to data mine the WFO descriptive content.
127	Develop a collaboration with PI@ntNet to offer support to users in identifying images using AI image recognition tools	ID Task Force	Completed	PI@ntNet is now a WFO Partner, and ID tools are being used.
128	Establish a task group to undertake the next steps towards integration of WCVP and WFO and report to Council	Council	Next Council meeting	Discussions ongoing with WCVP and IPNI.
130	Explore recognition of WFO as a Core Biodata Resource by Global Biodata Coalition	Taxonomic WG	Ongoing	Lauren Raz to look into Catalogue of Life experience with this and benefits it brings.
131	Establish a Geographic Distribution Task Force	Alex Monro	Completed	To bring forwards ideas on how best to incorporate geographic distribution data in WFO, starting with WCVP country-level data
132	Establish a Task Force to update the Use Case Report (new)	Technical WG	Next Council	A joint review inform future development of the WFO infrastructure and website.
133	Establish a Task Force to review options for development of the WFO infrastructure and website (new)	Technical WG	Next Council	Include new RBGE-demo portal
134	Publication agreement with PhytoKeys (new)	Thomas Borsch to lead	Ongoing	Thomas Borsch, Lauren Raz, Roger Hyam and Alan Elliott to continue discussions with PhytoKeys to explore this proposal and clarify doubts
135	African Plant Database collaboration discussions (new)	Co-Chairs	Ongoing	To explore future closer collaboration and data sharing.
136	PI@ntNet web tool to be embedded in the WFO Portal (new)	Technical WG and ID Task Force	Next Council	User feedback to be used to inform future development.

#	TASKS	WHO?	WHEN?	COMMENTS
137	Assess how PI@ntNet ID tools can be accommodated in WFO (new)	Technical WG and ID Task Force	Ongoing	
137	Undertake a user survey to determine needs for plant ID tools (new)	ID Task Force	Ongoing	
138	Test the ParseGBIF dataset with an active TEN (new)	Geo Task Force	Ongoing	<i>Begonia</i> dataset offered as a test case by Peter Moonlight
139	Invite GBIF participation in the Geo Task Force (new)	Geo Task Force	Next Council	
140	Create a content schedule for social media posts (new)	Communications WG	Next Council	
141	Council members to connect their communications staff with the Communications WG (new)	Communications WG and all Council Members	Next Council	To create a mailing list for communications support
142	Promotional leaflets to be produced in Arabic, Russian and Chinese (new)	Communications WG – Geneva BG	Ongoing	Geneva has committed to develop these materials with help for other languages
143	Investigate incorporation of AI-based services into WFO Portal 2.0 (new)	Technical WG	Ongoing	

Annex 2

The World Flora Online Association Draft Statutes

(incorporating minor changes made during the meeting)

Based on the Memorandum of Understanding of the World Flora Online as adopted by the WFO Council at its 17th meeting on 6th July, 2021.

Preamble

The World Flora Online Association (hereinafter referred to as "WFO" or "the Association") is founded upon the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) initially established among participating organizations to support plant biodiversity conservation in response to decision X/17 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which endorsed the updated Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) for 2011–2020. This strategy aims to promote the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits from plant biodiversity.

In particular, Target 1 of the GSPC calls for the creation of an online flora of all known plant species, accessible globally and freely available. WFO is established to support this goal through the continued development and maintenance of a comprehensive database, the *World Flora Online*, and to serve as an organizational framework to enhance cooperation among the international, regional, and national partners involved in plant conservation.

In fulfilling its mandate, WFO adheres to the principles of open access, Creative Commons licensing, and alignment with the goals of the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation (GPPC) to facilitate data sharing and knowledge dissemination. WFO is committed to contributing to the common good by making botanical information accessible to all, in accordance with relevant international, regional, and national laws.

ARTICLE 1 - Name

- 1.1 Under the name "World Flora Online" (WFO), a non-profit Association is hereby created, governed by the present Statutes in accordance articles 60 and following of the Swiss Civil Code.
- 1.2 WFO is an apolitical and religiously neutral association.

ARTICLE 2 - Seat and duration

- 2.1 The Association's seat is in the Canton of Geneva.
- 2.2 The Association is created for an indefinite period.

- 2.3 The Association is registered in the commercial register of the Canton of Geneva ("*le registre du commerce*") in accordance with the Swiss Civil Code.

ARTICLE 3 - Purpose

The purposes of the Association are the following:

- to support the implementation of the GSPC;
- to establish an international consortium ("*Consortium*") to continue to develop and maintain the *World Flora Online*;
- to establish and acknowledge the link between the international Consortium and the GPPC, whereby the Consortium is formally recognised as a working group of the GPPC;
- to provide opportunities for collaboration for organisations to become involved in the WFO and elaborate a framework for cooperation and coordination between the members to contribute to the WFO.

ARTICLE 4 - Members

- 4.1 Membership of the Association shall be open to all organisations and institutions that have substantial programmes relevant to plant systematics at the national and/or international levels and wish to play a part in the achievement of the WFO.
- 4.2 New members sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Association.
- 4.3 Members agree to cooperate as part of the international Consortium of relevant organisations and institutions to contribute to the development and maintenance of the WFO.
- 4.4 Members further agree that in undertaking this work that they shall be contributing to the common good, by making information on the world's plants freely available to all.
- 4.5 Furthermore, they agree that this work shall be carried out within the context of the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, namely conservation of, sustainable use of, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of use of biodiversity, as well as to relevant international, regional and national laws and regulations concerning biodiversity including laws relating to access to plant genetic resources, associated benefit sharing and traditional knowledge.

ARTICLE 5 – Resources of the Association

The Resources of the Association shall be derived from:

- Annual membership fees, the amount of which is determined by the General Assembly;
- Grants, donations, and bequests from individuals or public or private entities;
- Revenue from partnerships and specific collaborations aligned with the Association's objectives;

- Voluntary contributions from members and partners for specific projects, approved by the Board;
 - Any other legally acquired income to support the Association's activities.
- 5.2 The resources of the Association shall be used exclusively to achieve its objectives as defined in these Statutes. No funds shall be distributed to members as profit or other forms of distribution, except as reimbursement for expenses incurred on behalf of the Association.
- 5.3 The financial year of the Association shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31 of each year. An annual financial report shall be prepared by the Board, verified by the auditors, and submitted to the General Assembly for approval.
- 5.4 The financial obligations of the Association are guaranteed solely by its assets. Members bear no personal liability for the Association's debts.

ARTICLE 6 - Statutory bodies

- The General Assembly;
- The Board (or Executive Committee);
- The Auditors;
- The Working Groups.

ARTICLE 7 - The General Assembly

- 7.1 The General Assembly will include one primary designated representative of each of the member organisations who have signed the MoU.
- 7.2 Each member organisation shall have an equal voting right at the General Assembly.
- 7.3 As the supreme body of the Association the General Assembly shall be the decision-making body of the Consortium. Decisions by the General Assembly shall, in principle, be made by consensus. In the event of a vote, decisions are taken by a simple majority of the votes of the members present except in cases specified under article 7.5 of these Statutes. In the event of a tie, the vote is postponed until the next General Assembly. Decisions made by the General Assembly shall relate to the activities of the Consortium only, rather than to individual activities of its members.
- 7.4 The General Assembly:
- decides on admission and exclusion of members;
 - adopts the MoU and its modifications;
 - appoints and dismisses the Board members;
 - elects the President, the Secretary and a Treasurer and all other members of the Board;
 - elects the chairs of the Working Groups, who are members of the Board;

- decides all matters which are not reserved to other governing bodies of the Association;
- takes note of the reports and accounts for the financial year and organizes the vote for their approval;
- approves the annual budget;
- grants discharge to the Board for its management;
- appoints the Auditors;
- decides on any amendment of the Statutes;
- establishes and oversees the objectives of the Association;
- decides on the dissolution of the Association;
- decides on all items on the agenda or which are reserved for it by law or the Statutes.

7.5 Decisions relating to the modification of the Statutes and the dissolution of the Association require a two-thirds majority of the members present.

7.6 The General Assembly will meet in-person annually in ordinary session and other virtual or in-person meetings may be held at other times as required by the Board or if requested by a majority of the members.

7.7 The Board communicates to the members in writing the date of the General Assembly at least 6 weeks in advance. The convocation with an agenda is sent by the Board to each member at least 10 days in advance of the General Assembly.

ARTICLE 8. The Board / Executive Committee

8.1 The members of the Board are elected by the General Assembly and consist in a minimum of 5 including the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer.

8.2 The members of the Board can be re-elected.

8.3 At least one of the members of the Board will be domiciled in Switzerland.

8.4 The Board is responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs, the staff, all matters pertaining to the proper functioning of WFO.

8.5 In its capacity, the Board:

- convenes ordinary and extraordinary Assemblies and executes their decisions;
- oversees the annual budget for the coming calendar year as well as an accounting balance sheet and an activity report for the past year with the support of the Treasurer;
- oversees the Association's financial management, ensuring compliance with approved budgets and financial regulations with the support of the Treasurer;
- ensures the application of the Statutes, writes the regulations and administers the property of the Association;
- hires and manages Association staff;

- represents the WFO legally towards third parties and may delegate this responsibility as necessary;
- holds the authority to sign on behalf of the Association. The right of signature is exercised collectively by two members of the Board;
- may delegate specific powers to Working Groups or individuals within the Association;
- reports to the General Assembly on its activities, decisions, and financial management on a regular basis.

8.6 Role of the President.

The President leads the Board and oversees its activities, with the following responsibilities:

- chairs the meetings of the Board and the General Assembly;
- represents the Association in an official capacity and is authorized to act on behalf of the Association in matters requiring immediate attention;
- holds an individual right of signature in urgent matters, subject to ratification by the Board, where applicable;
- prepares the agenda for Board and General Assembly meetings, in collaboration with the secretary, and ensures that decisions are implemented effectively.

Co-presidency is possible.

8.7 Role of the Treasurer.

The Treasurer supports the Board in financial management and assumes the following delegated responsibilities:

- prepares the annual budget in consultation with the Board;
- maintains accurate financial records and ensures compliance with financial regulations and approved budgets;
- prepares the annual financial statements, balance sheet, and financial report, which are submitted to the Board, and then to the General Assembly, for approval;
- manages the Association's bank accounts and investments, ensuring that all financial transactions are authorized by the Board.

8.8 Role of the Secretary:

The Secretary supports the Board in administrative and compliance matters, with the following responsibilities:

- prepares and distributes the agenda and materials for Board and General Assembly meetings in coordination with the President;
- takes and maintains accurate minutes of all meetings of the Board and the General Assembly, ensuring they are signed and archived;
- keeps and updates all official records of the Association, including member registers, minutes, and statutory documents;

- ensures that the Association complies with all reporting and filing obligations required by law and the Association's internal regulations;
- manages official correspondence of the Association, including with members and external stakeholders as directed by the Board.

ARTICLE 9 - The Auditors

9.1 The Auditors serve as independent overseers of the Association's finances, with the following responsibilities:

- conduct an annual audit of the Association's financial statements, including income, expenditures and balance sheet, to verify their accuracy and compliance with approved budgets and financial regulations;
- prepare an audit report outlining their findings and conclusions and present this report to the General Assembly;
- ensure that the Association's financial practices comply with legal requirements and internal policies, including Statutes and internal financial regulations;
- provide recommendations for improving financial management practices and report any irregularities directly to the General Assembly.

The Auditors operate independently of the Board to maintain objectivity, with no decision-making power over the Association's financial transactions or policies.

9.2 The Association's financial statements shall be subject to either an ordinary audit or a restricted audit, based on its financial size and staffing levels in accordance with Swiss law.

9.3 If, for two consecutive years, the Association exceeds two of the following thresholds—total assets of CHF 10 million, turnover of CHF 20 million, or an average of 50 full-time staff—the Association must submit its accounts to an ordinary audit. This audit includes a comprehensive examination of the financial records to ensure compliance with Swiss accounting standards and legal requirements.

9.4 If the Association does not meet the thresholds requiring an ordinary audit, a restricted audit will be conducted. This involves a general review of the financial statements to verify their consistency and reasonableness.

ARTICLE 10 - The Working Groups

10.1 The Working Groups will take forward technical and other work of the Consortium. In their respective area of expertise, Working Groups will also develop specific work plans as needed for implementing the WFO, thereby supporting decisions of the General Assembly. The following Working Groups are recognized:

- Technical Working Group;
- Taxonomic Working Group;
- Communications Working Group.