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The sixth World Flora Online Council meeting held in South Africa

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Background: Biannual Council meetings are held with the aim of developing a World Flora Online (WFO) in response to Target 1 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (2011–2020).

Objectives: To report on the sixth WFO Council meeting held in Pretoria, South Africa, on November 2016.

Method: A WFO Council meeting (preceded by Taxonomic and Technical Working Group meetings) was hosted by the South African National Biodiversity Institute in Pretoria.

Results: Significant progress with the development of the WFO portal was made.

Conclusion: The WFO portal will be launched at the International Botanical Congress in China in 2017.

Introduction

The World Flora Online (WFO) initiative is a global effort to compile a floristic inventory of all plants. This addresses Target 1 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) (2011–2020), under the governance of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that 'an online flora of all known plants' should be produced. The number of plant species in the world is currently estimated at ca. 400 000 [Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 2012; Miller et al. 2014; Paton 2013; State of the World's Plants 2016]. A baseline of floristic information is required to support conservation efforts in an attempt to minimise loss of the world's biodiversity and to assist in creating a sustainable environment (CBD 2012). To achieve this, the WFO project requires input from a collaborative network of expertise (from individual taxonomists and taxonomic networks to information technology experts) to develop a consensus classification, provide the required content and create a system that can store and disseminate the floristic data.

The WFO Consortium was formed in 2012 (Miller et al. 2014) and currently comprises 35 institutions or projects (Miller et al. 2014; WFO 2017). Council meetings take place biannually and are usually hosted by one of the institutions that form a part of the Consortium. Meetings held to date are summarised in Table 1. At the second meeting of the Council, held in Russia (2014), the South African National Biodiversity Institute expressed interest in hosting a forthcoming Council meeting.

The sixth Council meeting took place at the Pretoria National Botanical Gardens from 10 to 11 November 2016, preceded by Taxonomic and Technical Working Group meetings from 8 to 9 November 2016. There were 29 participants, representing 13 institutions or projects and 10 countries (Table 2).

Main outcomes of the meeting

The main outcomes of the sixth Council meeting include the following:

- Significant progress has been made in the development of the WFO Portal, and thus a decision was taken to launch it at the International Botanical Congress (23–29 July 2017) in Shenzhen, China, during the WFO symposium. This provides an opportunity to invite potential participants to contribute data and expertise and to promote the Consortium.
- The WFO is aimed at being the 'fundamental, verified online resource for all known plants in the world' and it will 'provide search capabilities with verified information

Note: This article has not been peer-reviewed.

TABLE 1: World Flora Online Consortium meetings held since the formation of the Consortium in 2012 until the end of 2016.

Meeting number	Host institution	Host country	Meeting dates
1	Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh	Scotland	14–15 November 2013
2	Komarov Botanical Institute, St. Petersburg	Russia	26–27 June 2014
3	Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques de la Ville de Genève, Geneva	Switzerland	28–29 January 2015
4	Jardim Botânico do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	19–24 October 2015
5	New York Botanical Garden, New York City, New York	United States of America	25–29 April 2016
6	South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria	South Africa	10–11 November 2016

Source: Miller et al. 2014; WFO 2017

TABLE 2: Participants of the Taxonomic and Technical Working Groups and World Flora Online Council meetings that took place from 8 to 9 and 10 to 11 November 2016, respectively.

Individual	Country	Organisation	Herbarium or project acronym
Barker, A.	England	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	K
Berendsohn, W.G.	Germany	Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin	B
Borsch, T.	Germany	Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin	B
Daly, B.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	NBG
Delmas, M.	France	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle	P
Iacona, J.	England	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	K
Klopper, R.R.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	PRE
Le Roux, M.M.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	PRE
Loizeau, P.-A.	Switzerland	Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques de la Ville de Genève	G
Manning, J.C.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	NBG
Masinde, P.S.	Denmark	Global Biodiversity Information Facility	GBIF
Miller, J.S.	United States of America	Missouri Botanical Garden	MO
Miller, C.	United States of America	Missouri Botanical Garden	MO
Palese, R.	Switzerland	Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques de la Ville de Genève	G
Qin, H.-N.	China	Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences	PE
Raz, L.	Colombia	Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Universidad Nacional de Colombia	COL
Rivière-Ung, V.	France	Institut de Systématique, Evolution, Biodiversité	P
Sebola. R.J.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	PRE
Smith, G.F.	South Africa	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	PEU
Smock, P.	United States of America	Missouri Botanical Garden	MO
Thiers, B.M.	United States of America	New York Botanical Garden	NY
Thomas, W.W.	United States of America	New York Botanical Garden	NY
Haevermans, T.	France	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle	P
Tulig, M.	United States of America	New York Botanical Garden	NY
Ulate, W.	United States of America	Missouri Botanical Garden	MO
Victor, J.E.	South Africa	South African National Biodiversity Institute	PRE
Watson, M.F.	Scotland	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	E
Wyse Jackson, P.S.	United States of America	Missouri Botanical Garden	MO

and link with other existing species databases and catalogues' (WFO 2017). This vision was expanded to encompass the WFO being a primary community-based access point for global taxonomic information beyond 2020.

- The Universidad Nacional de Colombia was welcomed to the Consortium as its most recent member.

The following Council meeting took place from 27 to 31 March 2017 at the Botanical Garden, Berlin, Germany and the one thereafter is to be held from 13 to 17 November 2017 at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

M.M.L.R. compiled the article. Input was provided by R.R.K., P.S.W.J., P-A.L., J.E.V. and R.J.S.

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