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UPOV  
Mr. Peter Button, Vice Secretary-General  
34, chemin des Colombettes  
CH-1211 Genève 20  
Switzerland

March 27, 2020

**Dear Mr. Button,**

On behalf of CIOPORA, we sincerely hope that you, the UPOV staff and their families are healthy and safe.

While Covid-19 continues to spread rapidly across the globe, it is increasingly evident economies worldwide are crumbling – with some sectors more dramatically affected than others. Measures taken by governments to stop the spread of the virus have caused a tremendous economic impact on businesses and individuals. While many of these are immediate, we can also expect medium- and long-term implications.

The horticultural sector in general and ornamentals in particular are experiencing a devastating decrease in sales. For instance, the Dutch flower sector is about to collapse. The auction sales have dropped dramatically with over 85% less turnover on Friday, March 20 as compared to the last year. The situation in other countries is similar. Flower growers in Italy (very strongly hit by the virus), Kenya, Columbia and Ecuador have to destroy up to 80% of their produce due to the lack of demand and transportation. The situation in pot and bedding plants is equally dramatic as in most countries, especially in the northern hemisphere, the quarantine measures set in place have led to a drastic drop in the spring season sales. The fruit sector is facing significant challenges as well as labor shortages complicate harvesting, processing and transportation of the fruit– and globally supply chain disruptions are caused by border closures, full and partial, and diversion of biosecurity personnel to human health matters.

**As a consequence, horticultural plant breeders are heavily hit by the crisis. Not only are they subject to all labor restrictions as any other business and facing drastic financial losses with a diminishing demand for propagating material worldwide but are forced to deal with the travel bans and restrictions on the plant material import imposed by many countries. Retention of key personnel and capability within**

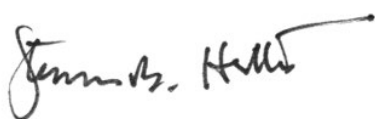
**businesses is also under critical pressure. All these factors might lead to a non-return crisis of the industry, with lots of shutdowns, and the potential collapse of their business obviously makes it impossible for many breeders to comply with the obligations and deadlines of the PBR application process.**

**Given these exceptional circumstances, CIOPORA asks all UPOV Member States to support the industry.** In particular, we request that UPOV Member States urgently consider extending deadlines related to the PBR application proceedings, including the grace periods and the deadlines for the submission of plant material and documentation. Also, that PBR Offices consider additional financial relief measures such as reduction of DUS examination fees and other fees or allowing for multiple installments of fees due. These would be consistent with business relief packages being implemented in various countries.

Since March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization officially declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a **pandemic**, many countries have deemed the COVID-19 a **Force Majeure Event** in order to protect or partially release businesses from their contractual obligations. This may serve as a basis for the UPOV Member States to adopt protective measures, such as those suggested above. These are unprecedented events worldwide and affect all UPOV Member States, it is in our common interest to reasonably enable continuity and endurance of the industries our respective organizations exist to serve and support. The “benefit of the society” here is for sure under high risk, and everybody is called to act within his responsibilities, to avoid a greater damage.

On behalf of the CIOPORA breeder community, we thank you for any actions and measures that UPOV and its Member States can collectively and individually adopt to optimize the opportunity for survival and ongoing well-being of plant breeders and associated business worldwide. We would very much appreciate strong consideration of circulation of this letter among all the UPOV Member States and Observers.

With kind regards,



Steve Hutton, President



Dr Edgar Krieger, Secretary General