

# Revising the rules of botanical nomenclature

By Ronell R. Klopper – South African National Plant Checklist Coordinator, Foundational Biodiversity Sciences Division

During the Nomenclature Section meeting at the 20th International Botanical Congress held in July 2024 in Madrid, Spain, some of the proposed revisions and additions to the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants* were approved. The *Code* refers to the set of rules that govern how algae, fungi and plants are named, and these rules are abided to by taxonomists globally (see *SANBI Gazette* 17: 7 [2024] for more information on the Nomenclature Section and the International Botanical Congress).

As stated in the Preamble to the *Code*, the 'object of the rules is to put the nomenclature of the past into order and to provide for that of the future; names contrary to a rule cannot be maintained'. The rules and recommendations of the *Code* ensure stability in the names of the world's plants. These rules are amended every six years to ensure that they stay relevant.

The Editorial Committee for the *Madrid Code* was also appointed at the Madrid Nomenclature Section. This committee is responsible for developing the new text for the revised version of the *Code* following the Madrid meeting. Ronell Klopper and Prof. Gideon F. Smith (Nelson Mandela University; former Chief Director of SANBI's Foundational Biodiversity Sciences Division) represented South Africa (and Africa) on the Editorial Committee. Ronell is the first African woman to be elected by her international peers to serve on this committee. Other members of the committee are: Nicholas Turland (Chair of the Editorial Committee; Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Germany), John H. Wiersema (Secretary of the Editorial Committee; Smithsonian Institution, USA), Fred R. Barrie (Missouri Botanical Garden and The Field Museum, USA), Kanchi N. Gandhi (Harvard University Herbaria, USA), Julia Gravendyck (Bonn Institute of Organismic Biology, University of Bonn, Germany), Werner Greuter (Botanischer Garten

und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Germany and Palermo, Italy), David L. Hawksworth (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Natural History Museum, UK), Patrick S. Herendeen (Chicago Botanic Garden, USA), Sandra Knapp (Natural History Museum, UK), Wolf-Henning Kusber (Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Germany), De-Zhu Li (Kunming Institute of Botany, China), Tom W. May (Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Australia), Anna M. Monro (Australian National Herbarium, Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research, Australia), Jefferson Prado (Instituto de Pesquisas Ambientais, Brazil), Michelle J. Price (Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Switzerland) and Juan Carlos Zamora Señoret (Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Switzerland).

In September 2024, the first draft of the *Madrid Code* was produced by members of the Editorial Committee by incorporating the amendments and additions agreed to at the Madrid Nomenclature Section. This was followed in October 2024 by a thorough revision of the *Code's* Glossary in response to a request made at the Madrid meeting. Between October and November 2024, the first draft was further edited and refined by members of the Editorial Committee.

From 25–29 November 2024, all 18 members of the Editorial Committee met at the Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Germany. It was an intense week of hard work; the entire text of the *Code* was scrutinised and changes made in Madrid were reviewed, as was the existing/remaining wording from the previous *Shenzhen Code*. Potential new Examples and Glossary entries were also evaluated and edited.

The semi-final draft of the *Madrid Code*, as edited during the Editorial Committee meeting in Berlin, was proofread by the Committee in December 2024. After some final adjust-

ments and corrections, the final text was submitted for formatting and layout on 31 December 2024. The Index to scientific names and Subject index was produced, updated and proofread in January 2025. The first layout version of the *Madrid Code* was returned to the Editorial Committee for proofreading in February 2025, whereafter the final layout document was submitted to the University of Chicago Press for production in March 2025. The printed and e-book versions of the new *Madrid Code* are expected to be available in June 2025.

The Editorial Committee meeting in Berlin was extremely intense, with long hours of discussing precise wording to make sure the meaning of the articles, recommendations, notes and examples in the *Code* are not ambiguous. Under the expert guidance of the Committee Chair (Dr Nick Turland, Berlin), the discussions remained productive and concentrated on the purpose. The meeting started each day at 09:00 and continued until 18:00, whereafter members adjourned to meet at local restaurants for dinner. Conversations at the dinner table often still revolved around nomenclature and topics that were discussed during the meeting.

As this was the first time that Ronell Klopper served on the Editorial Committee of the *Code*, the entire experience was very interesting, informative, and educational – there is so much more to updating the *Code* than one would think. Members of the Editorial Committee are regarded as the doyens of botanical nomenclature and many of them have served on this committee for several years.

They were all welcoming and down-to-earth in their interactions and Ronell quickly felt at ease in their presence. It is a great honour for Ronell Klopper to be the first woman from Africa to represent SANBI and the African continent in the Editorial Committee.



The Editorial Committee of the *Madrid Code* during the meeting in Berlin, November 2024, with Thomas Borsch, Director of the Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Germany (left). The pile of books in the front left represents previous editions of the *Code*. Photograph: Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum.