# Proposed extension to the WMO file naming convention

## Background

The WMO file name convention states that files to be exchanged need to be named according to the following pattern:

**pflag\_productidentifier\_oflag\_originator\_yyyyMMddhhmmss[\_freeformat].type[.compression]**

The current version of the WMO file naming convention defines the following list of valid extensions (field *type*):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Meaning** |
| met | The file is a metadata file pair which describes the content and format of the corresponding information file with the same name |
| tif | TIFF file |
| gif | GIF file |
| png | PNG file |
| ps | Postscript file |
| mpg | MPEG file |
| jpg | JPEG file |
| txt | text file |
| htm | HTML file |
| bin | a file containing data encoded in a WMO binary code form such as GRIB or BUFR |
| doc | a Microsoft Word file |
| wpd | a Corel WordPerfect file |
| hdf | HDF file |
| nc | NetCDF file |
| pdf | Portable Document Format file |
| xml | XML format files (data or metadata) |

All extensions are limited to 3 characters, certainly for compatibilities with earlier versions of Microsoft Windows. But this requirement does not hold as the first part of the file names is longer than the maximum of 8 characters required by said versions, and that the additional compression flag is also not allowed.

The extension **.bin** must be used for “*a file containing data encoded in a WMO binary code form such as GRIB or BUFR*”. This extension does not carry enough information for the end user, and does not allow distinguishing between GRIB and BUFR, which is required in order to process the data. Furthermore, the term “binary” is too generic, and most of the other formats, such as image formats or netcdf as also binary formats.

Please note that this limit of 3 characters for the type is not present in the Manual on Codes, but merely implied by the table.

It should also be noted that the new extension for Microsoft Word document is .docx (as is this document).

## Proposal

It is proposed to relax the limitation of the 3 characters for the type, and had the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Meaning** |
| html | HTML file |
| grib | a file containing data encoded in GRIB |
| bufr | a file containing data encoded in BUFR |

The extension **.htm** and **.bin** are still acceptable, but should be discouraged.

For non-WMO formats, any commonly used extensions as defined in an agreed catalogue, such as the [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Filename\_extensions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category%3AFilename_extensions) (to be decided) are acceptable.