

Meeting of the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics
Wednesday 8 July 2020, 15:30 to 16:30 (GMT+3)
Virtual meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

Agenda and background documentation is available on the [meeting portal](#).

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.

1. The Secretariat, Ms. Susan Gardner, welcomed Bureau members and recalled that the last meeting of the Bureau was held on 25 March, and that the meeting summary is available on the [meeting portal](#). The Secretariat also recalled that the Bureau meeting scheduled for 6 May had to be postponed as the Chair was unwell.
2. The Secretariat communicated that Ms. Jillian Dempster is currently not in a position to assume her duties as the Chair and suggested that Mr. Satoru Iino from Japan be designated by the Bureau to serve as Acting Chair for today's Bureau meeting.
3. The Secretariat opened the floor for any comments or objections by Bureau members. None were raised; therefore, the Secretariat handed the floor to the Acting Chair.
4. The Acting Chair thanked Bureau members for the confidence that they had entrusted him and invited Ms. Jillian Dempster, representative of New Zealand, to take the floor.
5. Ms. Jillian Dempster explained that she was still recovering and that more information on her ability to continue in her capacity as Chair will be shared in the next couple of weeks. She thanked the Acting Chair for taking on the responsibility to chair this meeting.
6. The Acting Chair thanked Ms. Jillian Dempster for her efforts in joining the meeting despite not yet being back at work officially.
7. The Bureau adopted the draft annotated Agenda and the Acting Chair opened the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Discussion on chairmanship and possible arrangements to ensure Bureau's functionality.

8. The Acting Chair recalled that the Bureau meeting planned for 6 May had to be postponed due to the unavailability of the Chair and informed that to assist the Bureau and the Secretariat in ensuring that progress in this process continues to be made, he will remain available to serve as Acting Chair until further notice. Should Ms. Jillian Dempster return she will then resume the functions of Chair.
9. The Acting Chair recalled that under the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly that are applicable mutatis mutandis to the ad hoc open ended expert

- group and specifically Rule 22, should the Chair be unable to perform the Chair's functions, then the Bureau shall designate one of the Vice Chairs as Acting Chair.
10. Furthermore, should the Acting Chair continue to perform the functions of Chair until the next session of the AHEG (whether in person or virtual), then the AHEG should at that session, elect a replacement.
 11. The Acting Chair opened the floor to members of the Bureau for any questions or observations on this. The Bureau unanimously decided to designate Ms. Satoru Iino from Japan as Acting Chair until further notice.

Agenda item 3: Discussion on the feedback received from Member States and Stakeholders on the intersessional roadmap of activities and possible way forward to deliver the AHEG outcome.

12. The Acting Chair congratulated the Secretariat for the progress made despite the continued challenges we are facing due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and highlighted the different activities that have been organized to date, such as webinars and submissions of presentations on response options.
13. The Acting Chair also reminded the Bureau that on 12 June the Secretariat invited all members of the expert group and the Bureau to provide feedback on a revised intersessional roadmap by 24 June and invited the Secretariat to provide a brief update on the feedback and recommendations they had received.
14. The Secretariat received 15 written comments on the revised intersessional roadmap and held an additional 10 phone exchanges with Member States. The written comments received can be accessed on the [AHEG portal](#). General comments were taken into consideration in the draft Scenario Note and the revised roadmap which is annexed to the draft Scenario Note.
15. The roadmap has also been amended to allow for fewer webinar/virtual interactive technical briefings. The roadmap outlines activities until 30 September 2020, however, since it is a living document it will be revised. The Secretariat highlighted that consideration has been given to the activities that might take place from 30 September 2020 until UNEA 5 in the draft Scenario Note.
16. The Secretariat proposed as outlined in the draft Scenario Note to encourage more interactivity through the following tools:
 - Online Forum to be set up for discussion on relevant topics among experts
 - Virtual Working Group calls on key elements identified in the draft Scenario Note
 - Potential regional meetings
17. The Acting Chair recognized the difficulties faced by the Secretariat in accommodating a range of views of Member States. Furthermore, the Acting Chair requested the Secretariat to further clarify the proposed outcome documents in the draft Scenario Note, specifically how do the three recommendations proposed in the document fit the mandate given by the UNEA Resolution. The Secretariat explained that it has tried to accommodate different perspectives, for example, a non-paper by the Chair would be a difficult outcome for some member States, however, other member States stressed the importance to have more than a meeting report.

18. The Acting Chair recognized that the explanation of Virtual working group on potential response options in the draft Scenario Note still needed to be worked on, and requested the Secretariat to further articulate:
 - Purpose, Goal, and Output,
 - Who can participate,
 - How will the Secretariat make available invitations,
 - Who will facilitate the activities,
 - What is the proposed Agenda,
 - What is the relation between working groups, submissions, and regional consultations.
19. The Secretariat clarified that working group calls are envisaged to be held on the key elements identified in the draft Scenario Note. The Secretariat could provide a guidance note on each of the proposed key elements which would take into account previous works of the AHEG 1, 2 and 3, results from the stocktaking, inventory of financial and technical resources and mechanisms, relevant partnership approaches as well as key elements pertaining to the various response options submitted. The sessions should be facilitated or co-facilitated by experts with support from the Secretariat.
20. The Acting Chair expressed appreciation on the efforts of moving forward. However, the Acting Chair mentioned that if we refer to a draft resolution or political commitment the proposal will be out of mandate and therefore recommended the Secretariat articulate and describe clearly what the requested and expected outcome documents will address. Furthermore, the Acting Chair supported this recommendation by explaining that the outcome of AHEG would provide an objective technical and factual basis on which member states can negotiate and build consensus at UNEA 5.
21. The Acting Chair recommended to spend more time to elaborate on detail while proceeding consultation of the draft scenario note. In addition, the Acting Chair requested the Secretariat to ensure that inclusivity and transparency of the working group calls is addressed in the draft Scenario Note.
22. The Bureau agreed with the comments and recommendations raised by the Acting Chair and supported the need to bear in mind the characteristics of an expert group, which is to provide expert advice. In addition, the Bureau also stated that within each regional group there are different views and perspectives and recognized the challenges that this can bring to the process. The Bureau also stressed the importance of inclusive participation and to allow space for discussion and debate, which goes beyond the establishment of a message board. The Bureau also requested the Secretariat to revise the amount of activities and timelines proposed in the roadmap and stressed the need for more time between meetings in order to prepare and provide feedback.
23. The Secretariat thanked the Bureau for the constructive feedback and recommendations on the draft Scenario Note and reassured the Bureau that it will incorporate the recommendations made and work closely with the Bureau to revise the draft.
24. The Bureau also requested the Secretariat to accommodate upon request updates of focal point contact information for any communication of the expert group. The Secretariat confirmed that it has acted on these requests and is maintaining an updated list of distribution.

25. The Acting Chair informed the other Bureau members that they are currently reaching out to the Asia Pacific region to start organizing a virtual regional consultation most likely taking place in late August.
26. The Bureau requested the Secretariat for a list of contacts and focal points for the different regions to ensure a broader outreach in the regions. The Secretariat confirmed that this information would be made available soon.
27. The Bureau agreed to the following steps to revise the draft Scenario Note:
 - Bureau and Secretariat to revise the draft Scenario Note by Wednesday 15 July
 - Wednesday 15 July invite Member States for feedback and written comments by Tuesday 21 July
 - Bureau to meet again Wednesday 22 July to review feedback and make a decision on the way forward.

Agenda item 4. Any other matters.

28. The Acting Chair opened Agenda item 4: Any other matters.
29. The Bureau requested more information on a reference made to an in-person meeting. The Secretariat clarified that the last decision taken by the Bureau concerning upcoming AHEG meetings was to postpone the 4th meeting of the expert group scheduled 4 – 8 May 2020. This decision was taken at the 25 March Bureau meeting. The Secretariat suggested that a decision should be taken on upcoming meetings at the next Bureau meeting. The Secretariat will provide legal guidance during the next Bureau meeting on this matter.

Agenda item 5. Closing of the Meeting.

30. The Acting Chair thanked the Bureau and the Secretariat for an informative and productive discussion and closed the meeting.