



United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

**151st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 14 September 2020

Online meeting

13:00 – 15:00; 15:30 – 17:30 (GMT+3)

Agenda Item 7: Progress update on the work of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics.

This note serves as a background document for consideration of agenda item 7: “Progress update on the work of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics”

It encompasses a Scenario Note and 4 annexes, which were prepared by the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics (AHEG), which provide an overview of planned inter-sessional activities before the 4th and final meeting of the expert group which will take place virtually from 9 – 13 November 2020.

Scenario Note for the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

Note from the Bureau

This Scenario Note has been prepared by the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics (AHEG), to chart a path to UNEA-5 scheduled to take place in 2021, and also to update Member States on the current planning for expert group.

I INTRODUCTION

1. The AHEG was established by [resolution 3/7](#) of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its mandate extended by UNEA [resolution 4/6](#).
2. The third meeting of the AHEG (AHEG-3) was held from 18-22 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand and two additional meetings of the AHEG were initially scheduled for May and November 2020. However, due to the current COVID-19 situation, the Bureau of the AHEG decided at its [meeting on 25 March 2020](#), to postpone the fourth meeting of the AHEG (AHEG-4). Information on the AHEG is available under the [UNEP/AHEG web page](#).
3. In light of this, and with a view to facilitating further progress under the AHEG, the Secretariat prepared in consultation with the AHEG Bureau, Member States and AHEG focal points as well as Major Groups and Stakeholders an intersessional roadmap of virtual meetings and other activities.
4. The Bureau met on [8 July 2020](#) as well as on [22 July 2020](#) and reviewed two drafts of the Scenario Note. Further revision of the draft Scenario Note was requested by Bureau members at their meeting on 22 July and a revised version will be considered by the Bureau members through silence procedure until 13 August 2020.
5. As the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact how we work for the foreseeable future, the Bureau has also reviewed with the Secretariat the feasibility of the physical meetings of the AHEG for 2020 at the Bureau meeting held on 22 July 2020, and the Bureau decided to hold only one session of the AHEG prior to UNEA-5.
6. A revised roadmap is attached as Annex A to this document.

II. OUTCOME OF THE AHEG

7. The outcome of the AHEG is a short summary, for further consideration of UNEA-5 to be held 22-26 February 2021. In accordance with the mandate provided in paragraph 10 d) of [UNEA resolution 3/7](#) and paragraph 7 of [UNEA resolution 4/6](#), and based on inputs from experts throughout the AHEG process, the summary report is envisaged to include relevant information on:

Review of the present situation as described in the following mandates:

- i. 3/7 10d (1) Exploration of all barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics, including challenges related to resources in developing countries
- ii. 4/6 7 (a) Stocktaking of existing activities and action by governments, regional and global instruments, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other relevant contributors to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics with the aim of the long-term elimination of discharge into the oceans
- iii. 4/6 7 (b) Identification of technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics

Potential Response Options and relevant matters as described in the following mandates:

- iv. 3/7 10d (2) Identification of the range of national, regional and international response options, including actions and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategies and approaches
- v. 3/7 10d (3) Identification of environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of different response options
- vi. 3/7 10d (4) Examination of the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options;
- vii. 4/6 7 (d) Analysis of the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities with regard to marine litter and microplastics at all levels to determine the contribution that they make to solving the global problem;
- viii. 3/7 10d (5) Identification of potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly
- ix. 4/6 7 (c) Encouragement of partnerships that undertake activities such as the development of source inventories, the improvement of waste management, awareness-raising and the promotion of innovation in relation to the prevention of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics

The Executive Director will report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of resolution 4/6.

III. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

a) AHEG-4 meeting

- 8. Only one session of the AHEG prior to UNEA-5 is foreseen. It is envisaged that this session will take place as a virtual meeting during the week of 9-13 November, with meetings lasting up to four hours daily in order to accommodate all time zones.
- 9. Technical and operational aspects will be managed through a virtual platform, interpretation in all UN languages will be provided and all working documents will be issued in all UN languages.
- 10. Procedural aspects will be addressed in accordance with the rules of procedure of UNEA, as applicable to the AHEG with the support of UNEP's Legal Advisor.

b) Online AHEG forum

- 11. An online AHEG forum is planned to be available from September for informal exchange of technical information amongst experts. Experts will receive an account with private credentials to interact amongst themselves, make comments and answer questions. Discussion, comments and interactions on the e.g. pre-recorded presentations on the studies mandated under subparagraph 7a, 7b and 7d of UNEA resolution 4/6 will be conducted at the online AHEG forum to facilitate better understanding amongst the experts on the studies.

c) Virtual Preparatory Meetings

- 12. Virtual Preparatory Meetings will be set-up and facilitated to discuss and address technical, operational and procedural aspects for organising the virtual AHEG-4 meeting. Interpretation in all UN languages will be provided at the October meeting.
- 13. The AHEG Bureau will provide additional guidance on these meetings. Member States/experts will have the opportunity to provide written input on discussions through the online AHEG forum. Additional information is provided in Annex B.

14. The Secretariat will support the organization of the virtual preparatory meetings and will provide technical inputs to other meetings upon request, such as for Major Groups and Stakeholders Meetings.
 - d) Regional consultations
15. Member States can organize regional consultations virtually if desired in late August or early September, for which the Secretariat may provide expertise and logistics support upon request. A guidance for such regional consultations is provided in Annex C.
16. Annex D provides a comparison table for meetings and briefings drafted upon request from Member States to clarify differences between the various meeting formats being proposed.

ANNEX A

Roadmap of activities for the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

Virtual preparatory meetings and one virtual AHEG meeting will take place prior to UNEA-5. To maximize transparency, ensure inclusivity and participation from all regions, these meetings will last no longer than four hours daily in order to accommodate all time zones and will contain pre-recorded presentations which will be made available in all UN languages and uploaded on the AHEG [web portal](#).

After each meeting, participants will be invited to provide written comments on the presentations and the background documentation within two weeks of its posting to: unep-gpmarinelitter@un.org. The Secretariat will make available the written comments through the AHEG web portal.

Proposed timeline of activities

Date	Activity	Background documentation
July		
29 July	Interactive technical briefing: Presentations of submitted response options followed by a question and answer session with the submitters Time: 8:00 – 11:00 am (EAT) and 4:00 – 7:00 pm (EAT)	Draft outline of summary of submissions on potential response options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly Received submissions on potential response options Link Received pre-recorded presentations on potential response options Link
31 July	Deadline: Voluntary submission for the stocktaking , pursuant to UNEA resolution 4/6 subparagraph 7(a)	Received narrative submissions to the report on stocktaking Link
August		
12 August	Interactive technical briefing: Presentation of case studies on the analysis of effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities in contributing towards long-term elimination of discharge of marine plastic litter and microplastics into the oceans. Time: 8:00 am (EAT) and 4:00 pm (EAT)	Recorded presentations of the technical briefing Link Background information document Link Draft revised methodology to analyse the effectiveness Link
15 August	Deadline: Voluntary submission on potential response options , pursuant to UNEA resolution 3/7 subparagraph 10d	Received submissions on potential response options Link Received pre-recorded presentations on potential response options Link
26-27 August	Asia-Pacific regional consultation Confirmed	Invitation circulated

September		
7-8 September	African Group regional consultation (Confirmed)	Additional information to be provided in due course
Week of 14 September	GRULAC, WEOG and EEG regional consultation (To be confirmed)	Additional information to be provided in due course
September (Date to be confirmed)	Virtual Preparatory Meeting	Additional information to be provided two weeks before the meeting
Week of 19 October	Virtual Preparatory meeting	Additional information to be provided two weeks before the meeting
9-13 November	AHEG-4	Additional information to be provided 6 weeks before the meeting

ANNEX B

Guidance for Virtual Preparatory Meetings

Background

The present note is intended to provide guidance on virtual preparatory meetings, whereby participants will be invited to discuss and address technical, operational and procedural aspects for organising the virtual AHEG-4 meeting.

Two virtual preparatory meetings are foreseen to take place in September and October and will be open to all AHEG experts. The discussions will be chaired by a Bureau representative and facilitated by the Secretariat. The September virtual working group will be run as a single session from 2-4 pm Nairobi Time to accommodate all geographical time zones and avoid splitting the discussions between two sessions.

The virtual preparatory meetings will have a separate section in the online AHEG forum where recordings and summaries of discussions and working documents will be posted. AHEG participants may also submit inputs, make comments and discuss the report in the online AHEG forum throughout the process.

The discussions of the meetings will guide the Secretariat in the preparation of the virtual AHEG-4 meeting.

ANNEX C

Guidance for regional consultations

Background

1. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided by the Bureau that only one session of the AHEG prior to UNEA-5 will be held. In light of this decision, and at the request of and in close consultation with the Bureau, the Secretariat has prepared this note with a view to facilitate additional interactions ahead of the next expert group meeting,
2. Members of the Bureau of the AHEG, proposed to organize virtual regional consultation meetings to:
 - 1) Engage additional countries from their respective regions;
 - 2) Facilitate consultations of the Chair and Bureau with the regions;
 - 3) Share information on the progress and ongoing work of the AHEG intersessional work;
 - 4) Provide feedback to Chair and Bureau on regional perspectives. (Regions may also wish to add additional topics such as regional coordination mechanisms or others).
3. Dates for the regional meetings are proposed as follows:
 - a. Asia-Pacific Group – 26-27 August (3 hours per day)
 - b. African Group – 7-8 September
 - c. GRULAC – 9-10 September (To be confirmed)
 - d. WEOG – if requested
 - e. EEG – if requested
4. Example of a provisional agenda – times proposed are just indicative – each region could decide on the timing and topics of the sessions or meeting.
 - a. Day 1
 - i. **Opening (30 min)**
 1. Adoption of the Agenda
 2. Update from the Chair of the Bureau
 - ii. **Stocktaking of existing activities and action to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics and inventory of technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics (2 hours).** This session aims to explore the domestic policy action and to understand how policymakers can learn from past initiatives and deepen and improve current action including the discussion on financial and technological resources inventory. The session is to cover not only policies and actions on a national scale, but also regional and international scale.

- iii. **Methodology for analysis of the effectiveness of potential and existing response options and activities (1 hour).** Participating experts would be invited to discuss based on the presentation of the case studies on the analysis of effectiveness of response options given by the UNEP Secretariat at the interactive technical briefings.

Day 2

- iv. **Potential Response Options (2 hours).** All participating members are expected to present their proposal of potential response options.
- v. **Region specific topic (30 min)**
- vi. **Summary of the meeting (30 min)**
- vii. **Closing (10 min)**

ANNEX D

Comparison table for meetings and briefings

Note: this table is drafted upon request from Member States to clarify differences between the various meeting formats being proposed. No meeting is of a negotiation nature.

	Document dates	Purposes/ Functions	Structures	Topics/areas of focus	Planned supporting materials	Intended outcomes
Interactive technical briefings	2 weeks before briefing dates	Update and exchange	Chaired by Bureau representative facilitated by Secretariat	Effectiveness and submitted response options	Pre-recorded presentations For analysis of effectiveness: background note	Note of the briefings
Regional consultations	Up to each region	See annex C	Organized by Bureau members/Member States Some support/input by Secretariat upon request	See annex C	Prepared by member states with support of the Secretariat	Summary of each regional consultation
Online AHEG forum	Online from September	Promote interaction and exchange	Exchange spaces for different documents and/or topics	All AHEG relevant topics		Increase exchange amongst AHEG participants
Virtual preparatory meetings in September and Week of 19 October	2 weeks before the meeting	Preparation for AHEG - 4	Chaired by Bureau representative facilitated by Secretariat English (September), All 6 UN languages (October)	All exchanges took place during the intersessional period	Draft of the Meeting documents for AHEG-4	Preparation on technical, operational and procedural aspects for AHEG-4
AHEG-4 9-13 November	Working documents 6 weeks before meeting (in English to start with, followed by language versions)	Preparation of report to UNEA-5	Rules of Procedures i.e. formal UN meeting in 6 UN languages	As per AHEG-4 agenda	Working documents and information documents	Short summary for the Executive Director's report to UNEA-5