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**Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel
to contribute further to the sound management of
chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution
First session**

Nairobi, 6 October 2022 and Bangkok, 30 January–3 February 2023*
Agenda item 5**

**Options for the timetable and organization of work of the ad hoc
open-ended working group**

**Update from the secretariat on resource mobilization efforts,
the budget and a provisional workplan**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its resumed fifth session, held in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly decided, by resolution 5/8, that a science-policy panel should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, with details to be further specified according to the provisions in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the resolution. The Environment Assembly considered that “the panel should be an independent intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its member Governments to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive”.
2. In the same resolution, the Environment Assembly decided to convene, subject to availability of resources, an ad hoc open-ended working group that would begin work in 2022, with the ambition of completing it by the end of 2024. In paragraph 12 of the resolution, the Assembly invited Governments and others in a position to do so to provide extrabudgetary resources for the implementation of the resolution, in particular to enable the full participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the ad hoc open-ended working group, and in paragraph 13, it requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide a secretariat for the ad hoc open-ended working group and prepare the analytical and summary reports necessary for its work.
3. **Timeline.** During the first part of the ad hoc open-ended working group’s first session, held in Nairobi on 6 October 2022, several representatives reiterated their desire to conclude the ad hoc open-ended working group process by the end of 2024. The secretariat welcomed the expressions of continued support for the process and stressed that the timeline would depend heavily on the provision

* The first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution is being held in two parts. The first part of the session was held in Nairobi on 6 October 2022, while the second part, namely the resumed first session, will be held in person in Bangkok from 30 January to 3 February 2023.

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of adequate extrabudgetary resources to support the work of the secretariat and the planned sessions of the ad hoc open-ended working group, including the intersessional process.

4. Section II of the present document provides an update on the current status of contributions and pledges pursuant to paragraph 12 of resolution 5/8. Section III presents a more detailed budget for the ad hoc open-ended working group process, based on actual figures for aspects such as conference services, while section IV presents a provisional timetable and workplan.

5. **Insufficient resources for the second and third sessions.** The secretariat wishes to draw attention to the fact that, despite contributions received to date from the Governments of Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Germany and Norway (listed in the order of the receipt of the contributions), the ad hoc open-ended working group is faced with a significant cash shortfall. The secretariat remains hopeful that other contributions will be forthcoming in the near future based on bilateral discussions with a series of potential donor countries in the lead up to the resumed first session. It should be noted, however, that the time needed to make funding available following a pledge can be significant and could result in periods of inactivity and so delay the ad hoc open-ended working group process. In summary, the financial contributions received to date provide sufficient resources to support the resumed first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group but there are currently insufficient funds available to support the intersessional activities proposed in the provisional work plan presented in section IV or the subsequent sessions of the ad hoc open-ended working group. A more detailed analysis of the costs involved in completing the ad hoc open-ended working group process within the ambitious time frame set out in resolution 5/8 is included in section III.

6. **Secretariat staffing.** Similarly, the costs for staffing the secretariat have, until now, been largely covered by allocation of existing UNEP staff on a part-time basis. This approach has placed significant pressure on the secretariat and will affect delivery of other areas of work under the medium-term strategy and is thus not sustainable moving forward. A more detailed analysis of future staffing matters is included in section III.

II. Resource mobilization

7. **Contributions to date.** As at 23 November 2022, UNEP had received financial contributions and pledges in the amount of \$2,349,892, as is shown in table 1.

Table 1

Contributions and pledges received as at 23 November 2022

(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>Total</i>
Switzerland	809 234	445 545	1 254 779
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		327 360	327 360
France		158 395	158 395
Germany		196 514	196 514
Norway		140 890	140 890
UNEP Environment Fund		275 000	275 000
Total income^a	809 234	1 543 704	2 352 938

^a These figures are net of the 1 per cent coordination levy (where applicable) but include the programme support costs (13 per cent where applicable) applied to all extrabudgetary contributions to the Organization.

8. Net of operational overhead and programme support costs, contributions and pledges as at 23 November 2022 represented approximately \$2,113,883. With the exception of the full-time head of the secretariat, UNEP staff are covering the duties of the secretariat in addition to their regular assigned duties. This situation will need to be reviewed in the lead-up to the resumed first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group and a more sustainable solution found as the work of the group intensifies. UNEP has also provided \$275,000 from the 2022–2023 Environment Fund allocation to support the work of the secretariat across all divisions and regions in the lead-up to the resumed first session.

III. Budget

9. **Budget.** Based on a review of costs for the ad hoc open-ended working group process, approximately \$8.25 million will need to be mobilized. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the costs, which cover the hosting of three ad hoc open-ended working group sessions, with the second and third sessions now including a full hybrid platform to support remote participation, as requested by representatives during the first part of the first session. The proposed budget in table 2 is slightly higher than the budget presented in the letter from the Executive Director of UNEP to Member States dated 19 April 2022. The increase can be attributed to unbudgeted costs for the first part of the first session and an additional provision for a hybrid platform for the second and third sessions. It should also be noted that the costs for the second and third sessions remain subject to confirmation following identification of the venues. The presentation format for the budget is also slightly different from that used in the letter from the Executive Director to allow for more detail in response to questions raised during the first part of the first session concerning conference services charges, and to ensure complete transparency.

10. **Sponsored travel.** The proposed budget also includes financial support for the participation of eligible countries and, subject to the availability of funding, of major groups and stakeholders, in accordance with the established practice at the United Nations Environment Assembly.

11. **Venue and conference services.** The figures presented for the meeting venue and associated conference services costs are based on the assumption that all sessions must be funded from secured funding. Those figures may be lower if Member States offer to host one or more of the sessions. The secretariat is also discussing with the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Nairobi how to minimize costs to the extent possible, given the expectation of full hybrid participation, the provision of interpretation for all working sessions, and the requirement to issue meeting documents in the six official United Nations languages.

12. **Hosting the third session.** A formal expression of interest in hosting the third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group has been received from Switzerland. The secretariat welcomes the offer and is keen to work with representatives to reach an agreement on the location and the scope of the support to be offered. For the purpose of the budget exercise, the costs for the third session remain in the budget table, pending confirmation of the amount of Switzerland's contribution and agreement by Member States to accept the offer by Switzerland to host the third session.

Table 2

Proposed budget for the ad hoc open-ended working group process

(United States dollars)

<i>Cost category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>Total</i>
Secretariat staff and travel					
Personnel	Secretariat staff	383 375	797 000	797 000	1 977 373
	Consultants ^a	128 663	278 663	278 663	685 989
Secretariat travel		85 000	125 000	90 000	300 000
Subtotal					2 963 362
Consultations					
	Virtual platforms		100 000	100 000	200 000
	Regional meeting travel		75 000	75 000	150 000
	Bureau meetings		25 000	25 000	50 000
	Webinars	25 000	50 000	50 000	125 000
Subtotal					525 000
Ad hoc open-ended working group session					
First session, first part	Meeting venue and UNON conference services ^b	87 706			87 706
Subtotal					87 706
Resumed first session	UNON conference services ^c		450 000		450 000
	Meeting venue (ESCAP) ^c		193 000		193 000
	Travel support ^d		430 000		430 000
	ENB reporting		50 000		50 000

<i>Cost category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>Total</i>
Subtotal					1 123 000
Second session	UNON conference services		450 000		450 000
	Meeting venue (to be confirmed)		193 000		193 000
	Provision of hybrid facilities ^e		150 000		150 000
	Travel support		430 000		430 000
	ENB reporting		50 000		50 000
Subtotal					1 273 000
Third session	UNON conference services			430 000	430 000
	Meeting venue (to be confirmed) ^f			193 000	193 000
	Provision of hybrid facilities			150 000	150 000
	Travel support			430 000	430 000
	ENB reporting			50 000	50 000
Subtotal					1 253 000
Totals					
	Subtotal				7 225 068
	PSC (13 per cent)				939 259
	Subtotal 2				8 164 327
	Coordination levy (1 per cent)				81 643
	Total				8 245 970

Abbreviations: ENB – Earth Negotiations Bulletin; ESCAP – Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; PSC – programme support costs; UNON – United Nations Office at Nairobi.

^a The 2022 contribution from Switzerland provides support for a full-time technical consultant recruited in October 2022 to work as part of the secretariat team for two years.

^b Actual charges for an originally unbudgeted meeting held in Nairobi on 6 October 2022 to formally launch the ad hoc open-ended working group process.

^c Awaiting final quotation.

^d Represents balance of available funding. Current cost estimates for Member State participation in accordance with Environmental Assembly rules of procedure is approximately \$405,000, leaving a limited balance to cover sponsorship of major groups and stakeholders.

^e Subject to confirmation.

^f Potential contribution from Switzerland subject to negotiation.

13. As can be seen from the information presented in tables 1 and 2, the current level of financial support to the secretariat of the ad hoc open-ended working group will be exhausted after the conclusion of the resumed first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group.

14. **Secretariat costs.** The cost of secretariat operations, consultations and future sessions will therefore require additional resources if the ad hoc open-ended working group is to succeed in establishing proposals for the panel and fulfilling its mandate by the end of 2024.

15. **Request for contributions.** Member States are invited to provide suggestions for how the process can continue and to work with the secretariat to secure the funding needed to conclude the process within the ambitious time frame set out in Environment Assembly resolution 5/8.

IV. Provisional timetable and programme of work of the ad hoc open-ended working group

16. **Workplan.** This section offers a provisional timetable and workplan for the ad hoc open-ended working group, in line with paragraph 5 of resolution 5/8 regarding proposals for the science-policy panel. To facilitate the discussions and the organization of the work of the group, it is proposed that scheduling of discussions be based on clustering of issues. Without prejudice to the order of priority of the issues, clustering could be organized around the following thematic areas: (a) proposals for the scope, principal functions and name; (b) proposals for institutional design and

governance; (c) proposals for the rules of procedure and policies governing the work of the panel; and (d) proposals for the work programme and budget.

17. **Budget and timetable factors.** In assessing options for the timetable and programme of work for the ad hoc open-ended working group, the secretariat took into account the following factors:

- (a) Feedback from Member States on the proposals made at the first part of the first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group, including with respect to the clustering of issues in order to facilitate the working group's discussions and the organization of its work;
- (b) The ambitious timetable for the preparation of proposals for the science-policy panel as called for in paragraph 5 of Environment Assembly resolution 5/8;
- (c) Consideration of the need to allow sufficient time for the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group and to undertake intersessional work to enable more effective negotiations;
- (d) An assessment of the number of sessions and the nature of the intersessional work required to establish other similar science-policy bodies.

18. **Number of meetings.** The number of ad hoc open-ended working group sessions to be held was not specified in Environment Assembly resolution 5/8. At the first part of its first session, the ad hoc open-ended working group confirmed that there should be three subsequent sessions in order to effectively fulfil the mandate outlined in the resolution. Owing to the need to complete the election of officers of the ad hoc open-ended working group, the resumed first session is exceptionally being held as an in-person meeting. Based on the recommendations of Member States, it is proposed that subsequent sessions and intersessional processes such as regional meetings and bureau meetings use a hybrid format to ensure strong Member State and stakeholder representation. This is reflected in section III above. Following the ad hoc open-ended working group sessions, an intergovernmental meeting will be held in the second half of 2024 to consider the establishment of a science-policy panel.

19. **Preparations for the second part of the first session.** At the first part of its first session, the ad hoc open-ended working group requested the secretariat to focus, at the resumed first session, on the scope and functions of the new science-policy panel. The secretariat has therefore prepared notes on those two elements for the consideration of the ad hoc open-ended working group at its resumed first session (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/4 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/5). Depending on the progress made in the consideration of those elements, the ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider requesting the secretariat to prepare material for consideration by Member States at the group's second session.

20. **Timetable scenarios.** The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider the provisional timetable and programme of work presented in table 3 (on p. 6), including the two options for the dates of its sessions and the proposed activities and milestones. Currently, available funding is insufficient for either timetable option, and Member States are encouraged to offer financial contributions to allow the ad hoc open-ended working group process to continue as outlined.

21. **Host country.** The Executive Director has issued a call for Member States to signal their interest in hosting sessions of the ad hoc open-ended working group. It should be noted that the host country would be expected to cover costs incurred when the working group meets outside of a United Nations duty station, bearing in mind that other countries may also support the meeting through voluntary contributions.

Table 3
Provisional timetable and programme of work for the establishment of the science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

<i>Session</i>	<i>Option 1 dates</i>	<i>Option 2^a dates</i>	<i>Proposed activities</i>	<i>Proposed (or achieved) milestones</i>
First session, first part	October 2022 (held)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching of the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group • Election of officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers elected (to be completed) • Environment Assembly rules of procedure adopted mutatis mutandis • Secretariat requested to focus on panel scope and functions at the resumed first session
Intersessional period 1			<p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop options paper on the principal functions of the panel, as agreed at the first part of the first session • Develop options paper for the scope of the panel, as agreed at the first part of the first session • Launch questionnaire series on country priorities • Host webinar series to ensure consultations and information-sharing on key issues 	All completed
Resumed first session	January/February 2023		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the election of officers • Considerations of options on the panel's scope and principal functions • Roundtable technical discussions on scope and functions of the new panel 	<p>Agreement on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of remaining officers and a chair • A process for the development of proposals for the scope of the panel • A common understanding on the proposals for the principal functions of the panel • A resource mobilization strategy • Sequencing and clustering of issues and any intersessional work for the period leading up to the second session • The preferred dates and venue of subsequent sessions, particularly the second session
Intersessional period 2			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of questionnaire series on country priorities • Continuation of webinar series to ensure consultations and information sharing on key issues • Implementation of the process for developing proposals for the scope of the panel • Finalization of any outstanding work related to the principal functions of the panel as agreed at the resumed first session <p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop draft options papers on the related operating principles, procedures and institutional arrangements 	

<i>Session</i>	<i>Option 1 dates</i>	<i>Option 2^a dates</i>	<i>Proposed activities</i>	<i>Proposed (or achieved) milestones</i>
Second session	October 2023 (the secretariat is informed that Q4 2023 has a very congested meeting schedule and options for translation and interpretation may be limited)	January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake logistical preparations for the hosting of the second session • Implement the resource mobilization strategy • Continued consideration of options on the scope of the panel • Finalization of any outstanding issues related to the principal functions of the panel • Initial discussions on proposals on operating principles, procedures and institutional arrangements of the panel • Initial discussions on the rules of procedure governing the work of the panel • Initial discussions on the panel's work programme and budget 	<p>Agreement on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalizing discussions on the scope of the panel • Finalizing discussions on the principal functions of the panel • Draft proposals on the related operating principles, procedures and institutional arrangements and guidance to the secretariat on the way forward • Guidance to the secretariat on a way forward with regard to the rules of procedure governing the work of the panel • Guidance to the secretariat on a way forward with regard to the work programme and budget for the panel • Any intersessional work to be carried out during the period leading up to the third session • The date and venue of the third session
Intersessional period 3			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of questionnaire series on country priorities • Continuation of webinar series to ensure consultations and information-sharing on key issues <p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop draft options papers related to the rules of procedure governing the work of the panel and the work programme and budget for the panel • Undertake logistical preparations for the hosting of the third session • Call for proposals to host the secretariat of the panel 	
Third session	July 2024	December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize the proposal for the scope, principal functions and name of the panel • Finalize the proposals for the institutional design and governance of the panel • Finalize the proposal for the rules of procedure and policies governing the work of the panel • Finalize the proposal for the initial work programme and budget for the panel • Finalize any other proposals for the panel per paragraph 5 of resolution 5/8 	<p>Agreement on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for secretariat support for the panel • Options for voluntary financing of the work of the panel • Rules of procedure and the operating principles governing the work of the panel • An indicative work programme and budget for the panel

<i>Session</i>	<i>Option 1 dates</i>	<i>Option 2^a dates</i>	<i>Proposed activities</i>	<i>Proposed (or achieved) milestones</i>
Intergovernmental meeting	Fourth quarter of 2024	First/second quarter of 2025	Consideration of the establishment of a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution	Panel established

^a These dates take into account possible delays in resource mobilization and associated delays in work by the secretariat to support the ad hoc open-ended working group process. They also take into account initial information from the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Nairobi regarding the availability of conference services, taking into consideration other meetings scheduled for late 2023. The secretariat has taken note of the desire expressed by many representatives at the first part of the first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group to maintain the initial ambitious time frame and will work to ensure that the 2024 deadline is met, subject to the availability of resources.