

Meeting of the Bureau 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.

Bureau Meeting

Tuesday, 25 April 2023

16:00 – 18:00 (GMT +3)

Governance Affairs Office Boardroom

Hybrid meeting

Draft Chair's Summary

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

1. Mrs. Gudi Alkemade, Chair of the OEWG, welcomed the participants, including Ms. Ana Berejiani, who was invited to participate in the Bureau as an observer with a view to serve as a resource person in view of her role as co-facilitator of the contact group of OEWG on intersessional work, and to serve as a point of communication to the Group of Eastern European States. The Chair also announced that Ms. Lesley Onyon (WHO) was expected to participate in the meeting for agenda items 4 and 5.
2. The meeting agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 2: Summary of the bureau meeting on 27 February 2023.

3. The meeting summary from the previous Bureau meeting was adopted.

Agenda item 3: Preparations for OEWG-2.

a) Date and venue OEWG-2.

4. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Kingdom of Jordan had requested to reschedule the meeting from 11-15 December to 18-22 December and invited the Bureau to provide guidance on this proposal, taking into account the proximity of the alternative date to the end of the year holiday period and uncertainties relating to the availability of reporting and interpretation services from the UN Office in Nairobi. The secretariat furthermore noted that costs of flights and accommodation may increase for the later dates, and confirmed that Nairobi remains as the default location for OEWG-2.
5. Bureau members emphasized that OEWG meetings should be scheduled in such a way that it allows for the maximum number of stakeholder and member state to participate, and expressed a preference for scheduling OEWG-2 as close to the originally proposed dates as possible, taking into account the constraints related to the availability of conference services.
6. The Chair requested the secretariat to confirm whether interpretation and reporting services for potential meeting dates after 15 December would be available and explore the options

with Jordan, and report back to the Bureau as soon as possible in view of taking a timely decision on the date and venue of OEWG-2.

b) Roadmap towards OEWG-2 and OEWG-3.

7. The Secretariat presented a revised roadmap towards OEWG-2 and OEWG-3, outlining a proposed timeline for the OEWG process, including planned intersessional work, a list of working documents for OEWG 2 and their production timeline, as well as an overview of a “skeleton outline” document and requested the Bureau for further guidance on how to follow up on the request by the OEWG1.2 to invite submissions on the needs and questions the panel may handle.
8. Bureau Members provided the following guidance:
 - Expressed general support for the revised roadmap, including the timelines and list of documents. One member indicated that the need for a working document on prioritization criteria/mechanism for the Panel was questioned by a member of the regional group.
 - Requested the Secretariat to identify further options for outreach in the form of webinars or side events with MEAs and intergovernmental processes in the broader area of pollution.
 - Requested the Secretariat to ensure that the so-called “parking lot” issues mentioned in paragraph 80 of the OEWG 1.2 meeting report will be addressed in the documentation.
 - Requested clarification on the external review of the documents, including which entities should participate.
 - Supported the development of an outline or “skeleton decision” for establishing the panel to be adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference.
 - Proposed that the skeleton outline of the proposal by the OEWG on the establishment of the panel will clarify the link to the respective working documents.
 - Requested clarification on which decisions are expected to be taken at OEWG 3.
 - Emphasized the importance to provide guidance on conflict-of-interest for the Panel.

The Bureau also agreed with a proposal from the Chair to focus discussions in OEWG-2 on substantive elements of the skeleton outline, with a view to consider possible language of a draft recommendation from the OEWG at the third session.

9. The Secretariat clarified that the issue of conflict of interest would be included in the documentation, and that the issue of prioritization of the panels work program was referred to in the report from OEWG 1.2 (para 82 and Annex 3).
10. The Bureau agreed that the outcomes of OEWG-2 should provide the elements to be included in the skeleton outline, as a zero draft proposal for OEWG 3, and requested the Secretariat to begin working on the skeleton outline.
11. The Bureau also supported the plan to invite Member States and Stakeholders to provide written submissions on operating principles, prioritization criteria, governance/institutional arrangements as well as on the needs and questions that the Panel may handle.

12. With regard to the list of side events and webinars proposed by the Secretariat, the Bureau generally supported the planned activities and underlined that the purpose of these webinars and side events need further clarification, for example to raise awareness and share information vs informal consultations in preparation for negotiations.
13. The Bureau supported the plan to organize regional consultations in the margins of the Minamata regional meetings, subject to budget availability, and invited the Secretariat to identify further opportunities for in-person informal consultations. The Bureau further agreed to discuss at an upcoming next meeting possible scheduling of informal consultations between Member States and stakeholders (in person or virtual) on specific topics, as required.

c) Organization of Work for OEWG-2.

14. Following introduction by the Secretariat of the background document on modalities for negotiations in the UN, the Chair introduced a discussion paper which outlined her views on how to best organize the work of OEWG-2, taking into account the lessons learned from OEWG-1 and expected staff changes in the secretariat.
15. The Bureau welcomed the the Secretariat background paper and considered the Chair's discussion paper as a good basis for how to organize OEWG-2, including the proposal to establish parallel contact groups and requested the Secretariat to prepare accordingly.

Agenda item 4: Engagement of civil society and academia in the OEWG meetings and process.

16. The Secretariat presented the background document on the rules and practices applied to support the engagement of civil society and academia in the OEWG process, including accreditation and meeting participation, and highlighted the possibility for representatives from academia to be accredited to OEWG meetings either through a university not affiliated with the government, through another non-governmental affiliation, or through a direct invitation from the Chair.
17. The Bureau underlined the need to ensure inclusive participation of all relevant stakeholders in the meetings, including with regard to plenary interventions and questions were raised whether the Major Groups and Stakeholder approach as applied in UNEA and its subsidiary bodies will allow for that.
18. The Secretariat explained that the Major Groups and Stakeholders approach is sufficiently broad and flexible to allow for all accredited Stakeholders to participate actively, that large Major Groups (such as the NGO Major Group) may choose to be divided, and that jointly prepared statements from the Major Groups may be complemented by additional statements in plenary as well as during informal negotiations, subject to the agreement of the meeting Chair.

19. Chair requested the Secretariat to prepare an additional document outlining the concrete practices applied by Major Groups and Stakeholders when participating in meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies, for further consideration at a future Bureau meeting.

Agenda item 5: Engagement with World Health Organization

20. The Secretariat introduced a background document which outlined the engagement with WHO to date, and options for future engagement with WHO.
21. A representative from the WHO Secretariat highlighted the need to explore further options of engaging with stakeholders from the health sector and suggested further engagement with other science-policy processes under the WHO, noting that WHO has multiple networks that could be engaged, including to consider potential options for engagement with the panel. She also noted that there is currently no mandate from the World Health Assembly to engage in the OEWG process, but that this may change in the future. The representative also requested further clarification on when and which kind of documents the WHO Secretariat would be invited to comment on.
22. The Chair welcomed the inputs and requested the OEWG Secretariat to reach out to the WHO Secretariat in the coming weeks to further clarify and agree on the involvement of the WHO in the OEWG process, including in the preparations of relevant documents, organizing joint side events or webinars, and other options. The Chair also proposed to invite the WHO Secretariat as an observer to future meetings of the Bureau, depending on the agenda.

Agenda item 6: Draft terms of reference for the OEWG Technical Advisory Group

23. The Secretariat referred to the concerns raised by Member States in the Committee of Permanent Representatives with regard the draft Terms of Reference and composition of a proposed OEWG Technical Advisory Group and clarified that, as a consequence, the Secretariat had decided not to finalize the establishment of a formal group. Instead, the Secretariat intends apply an informal approach to invite relevant experts to provide advice to the OEWG Secretariat as well as to other processes, in cases where specific scientific expertise on chemicals, waste and pollution may be useful. The Secretariat also informed the meeting that a new Head of the OEWG Secretariat is under recruitment.
24. Bureau members took note of the information provided, highlighted the importance of balanced regional representation and of maintaining transparency and inclusiveness when seeking inputs from external experts, and suggested to share the information with the CPR.

Agenda item 7: Organization of work.

25. The Chair proposed to decide on a date for the next Bureau meeting at a later stage, after further consultations with the Secretariat.

Agenda item 8: Other Matters

26. The Chair informed the Bureau that she has been invited to provide a brief introduction to the operating principles webinar, and suggested that other bureau members may contribute to future webinars hosted by the OEWG Secretariat. She also informed the Bureau that she had been invited to provide an update on the SPP process in the INC webinar on science.
27. Ms. Berejiani, invited as an observer to the Bureau, informed the Bureau that a regional meeting of the Eastern European Group is scheduled for 26 April, with the purpose of facilitating the election of Bureau members to the OEWG and the INC.

Agenda item 9: Closing of the meeting.

28. The Chair closed the meeting at 19:07 (GMT+3).

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Annex: List of Participants

The OEWG SPP Bureau Members:

Ms. Gudi Alkemade Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Mr. Linroy Christian Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Director of Department of Analytical Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs.

Ms. Saqlain Syedah Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Mr. Michel Tschirren Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Senior Policy Advisor at the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN).

Mr. Li Jinhui Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Distinguished Professor, School of Environment, Tsinghua University.

Ms. Valentina Sierra Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

The UN Environment Program Secretariat was Represented by:

Ms. Nalini Sharma, of the Secretariat of the open-ended working group.

Mr. Ulf Björnholm, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies.

Mr. Stadler Trengrove, Legal Advisor.

Mr. Alvin Gachie, Legal Advisor.

Ms. Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Director, Industry & Economy Division.

Observers to the meeting

Ms. Ana Berejiani, Georgia.

Ms. Leslie Onyon, World Health Organization