

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.

Saturday, 17 November 2022

14:30 - 16:30 (EAT; GMT + 3)

Online

### **Bureau Summary**

## **REPORT OF THE FIRST 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**

**17 NOVEMBER 2022, ONLINE**

### **ITEM 1 OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA.**

1. The first meeting of the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution was opened at 12:30 CET on 17 November 2022 by the interim OEWG Chair, Ms. Saqlain Syedah. The meeting was convened in an online setting.
2. Ms. Syedah started by welcoming members of the Bureau and indicating that several important issues would be discussed over the course of this first meeting. Ms. Syedah then invited Mr. Kevin Helps, Principal Officer of the OEWG Secretariat to provide opening remarks, in which he thanked the Bureau members for participating in the process and their flexibility in finding a suitable meeting time.
3. During the ensuing tour de table, Bureau members briefly introduced themselves and reiterated their strong support towards collectively achieving a successful outcome for the process to establish a science-policy panel.
4. The chair then invited the Bureau to consider and adopt the provisional agenda circulated prior to the meeting. The agenda was adopted without any modification.

### **ITEM 2 ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING FOR THE RESUMED FIRST SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON A SCIENCE-POLICY PANEL TO CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS AND WASTE AND TO PREVENT POLLUTION (OEWG1.2)**

#### ***a.* Update on the election of officers to the Bureau**

5. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on the status of the election of officers to the Bureau, which is expected to be finalized at the resumed first session of the OEWG 1.
6. The Secretariat noted that it had been informed by the Asia Pacific region that China had been designated to replace Iraq as a Bureau member and that procedures were underway to formalize the process. In addition, the election of officers from the CEE region was still pending. The Secretariat indicated that six self-nominations were received but no formal nomination was received from the regional group as a whole. The Secretariat further indicated that a secret ballot may be necessary to finalize the nomination of Bureau members from this region. Finally, with regards to the election of the remaining WEOG candidate, the Secretariat highlighted that an in-person secret ballot would be required to confirm such appointment.
7. In response to the information provided, members of the Bureau expressed their concerns regarding the election process and the secret ballot procedure. Some concerns were around the need for a secret ballot given that the UNEA rules of procedure has provisions for voting through a roll call. There were also concerns regarding the in-person nature of the meeting and inquiries on whether the election process can be adapted to take place in a hybrid manner to accommodate Member States that may not be able to attend in person.

8. In response to the inquiries from the Bureau, the Secretariat clarified that should the OEWG not agree to elect a candidate through acclamation, the default procedure as per Rule 56 of the UNEA rules of procedure is that elections be held by secret ballot unless otherwise decided. The Secretariat also noted that the rules of procedure made a distinction between voting on proposals and amendments on procedural matters, which can be carried out through a roll call as provided for under Rule 50, and elections which are governed by rule 56.

9. The Secretariat also explained the default expected procedure to be followed to initiate the election process in accordance with rule 56, while noting that should a Member State have an objection to the procedure proposed, the Member State may provide an alternative for consideration by the OEWG.

10. With regards to the possibility of holding the election in a hybrid format, the Secretariat noted that while there were some examples of hybrid voting processes in smaller informal setting, there are no prior examples of elections being held in a hybrid format at meetings of this size. The Secretariat also emphasized that prior practice does not preclude future practice.

11. Bureau members concluded by noting that it would be critical for the Secretariat to be prepared for the different possible scenarios at OEWG 1.2.

#### **b. Organization of work**

12. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on the proposed tentative timetable for the organization of work for OEWG 1.2.

13. The Secretariat introduced the tentative timetable that will be shared in the meeting scenario note, including a description of possible contact groups on the scope and functions of the panel and provisions for regional and stakeholder group meetings, including meetings of the Bureau. The secretariat further indicated that provisions are being made to hold a Multistakeholder Dialogue on the Scope and Functions of the Panel on the Sunday prior to the opening of the OEWG.

14. In considering the information provided by the Secretariat, the Bureau highlighted the need for sufficient time on the Sunday prior to the opening of the OEWG for regional group consultations and coordination. The Bureau also inquired about the aim of the Multistakeholder Dialogue and the feasibility to adjust its timing to accommodate additional time for regional group consultations and coordination.

15. With regards to the tentative timetable for the OEWG 1.2, the Bureau welcomed the proposal made by the Secretariat, including with respect to the establishment of contact groups focusing on the issues of scope and functions of the panel, and also requested that agenda item 6 be taken up earlier in the week, preferably on the Monday afternoon to allow for more time to deliberate on the agenda item. Finally, one Bureau member proposed that discussions on other important issues, such as institutional arrangements of the panel, be initiated at the meeting, including possibly through some informal settings.

16. The Secretariat responded to indicate that they will explore the options for rescheduling the Multistakeholder Dialogue to accommodate additional time for regional group meetings, noting the need to leave sufficient time available during the lunch period throughout the week for possible contact groups. In addition, the Secretariat agreed to update the tentative timetable such that Agenda item 6 be opened sooner than currently scheduled. Options would be shared with the Bureau at its next meeting.

17. The Secretariat also noted that the aim and format of the Multistakeholder Dialogue was still under discussion and could be adjusted to integrate any relevant ideas from Bureau members, inviting them to also share names of potential speakers that could participate in the Multistakeholder Dialogue.

18. With regards to initiating informal discussions on other important issues such as institutional arrangements, the Secretariat noted that the meeting's focus on scope and functions follows the recommendations made by OEWG1.1, however, avenues for the consideration of institutional arrangements and governance were flagged in the current meeting documents as areas where work could be initiated.

### **c. Update on the preparation of meeting documents**

19. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on the status of the proposed documents that are being prepared for consideration by the OEWG 1.2.

20. The Secretariat indicated that, in line with the feedback provided by OEWG1.1, three substantive meeting documents had been prepared in addition to the agenda and annotated agenda for the meeting, looking at (1) options for the scope of the science-policy panel, (2) options for principal functions of the science-policy panel and finally (3) work timetable and budget. These were at advanced stages of drafting, with the intention that they be made available in all 6 official languages at least 6 weeks prior to the meeting as per standard practice.

21. The Bureau took note of the list of documents provided by the Secretariat and requested that it also prepared a document mapping existing chemicals, waste, and pollution related science-policy bodies to facilitate the work of the OEWG and enquired about the status of the report of the first part of the first session of the OEWG1.1. In response the Secretariat confirmed that such a mapping document was indeed in the course of preparation and would be made available to the OEWG 1.2 as an information document. The Secretariat also confirmed that the report of the first part of the first session of the OEWG is being finalized and will be made available in time for the resumed first session.

22. The Bureau also inquired about the status of the Executive Director's Technical Advisory Group. The Secretariat noted that the terms of reference for the Technical Advisory Group are being finalized and that representatives that could take part in the group are being identified. It also emphasised that the Group would serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Director and will provide a mechanism to ensure strong multidisciplinary and multistakeholder engagement. It was also emphasised that UNEP will use its own resources to support the work of such Group.

23. Finally, responding to a request for clarification on the scope of the document on the Update from the Secretariat on Resource Mobilization efforts, Budget and Provisional Work Plan, the Secretariat indicated that it focused on the work of the OEWG Secretariat and not that of the panel.

### **d. Consideration of possible side-events**

24. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on the possible side events at OEWG 1.2.

25. The Secretariat indicated in its presentation that due to limited funding and staffing capacity, side events as such were not foreseen to be held during the resumed first session of the OEWG. However, in light of the previous discussion, the Multistakeholder Dialogue on the Scope and Functions of the Panel could be spread out during the course of the week and considered in lieu of side events, should the Bureau so decide. The Secretariat also indicated that it had not received any requests from participants to hold side events.

## **ITEM 3. UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARIAT ON COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

26. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on its communications and outreach activities.

27. The Secretariat presented information on its communications efforts to date, including past and future webinars, the Multistakeholder Dialogue, and efforts to engage with Member States in the margins of relevant meetings, such as the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution, meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions as well as of the Minamata Convention, as well as the SAICM fourth meeting of the intersessional process and fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5). A summary of the status of the nomination of focal points to the OEWG process was also provided. Finally, an overview of the stakeholder engagement survey was provided, where it was noted that 160 responses were received to date and that the survey would remain open until 30 November 2022.

28. The Bureau expressed its concern over the relatively low response rate for the nomination of focal points from some regions. The Bureau also inquired on how the responses from the survey will be utilized to facilitate the discussions of the OEWG and noted that it would be useful for the OEWG to consider the value of the data in deciding whether additional surveys should be held. With regards to the planned engagements in the margins of relevant meetings, the Bureau inquired as to the nature of these engagements, for example, in the form of side events or bilateral meetings, etc. The Bureau also noted that any outreach activities should be planned in collaboration with WHO. Finally, the Bureau requested more information on the content of future webinars and strongly encouraged that all relevant actors and sectors be invited to participate in the webinars.

29. Considering the limited meeting time, the Secretariat proposed that the responses to the queries put forward by the Bureau under paragraph 28 be addressed in the meeting report. The questions and responses can be found below:

*a. How will the responses from the survey will be utilized to facilitate the discussions of the OEWG?*

The Secretariat views the survey tool as a useful component of the overall stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure as wide a set of opinions and views on key issues are reflected. The analysis will aim to ensure an adequate reflection of the views of a wide cross section of stakeholders that are involved in the OEWG discussions, in line with the provisions of the resolution. The views provided through the surveys will be reflected in documents that will be prepared for consideration by the OEWG at its future meetings.

The Secretariat welcomes suggestions from the Bureau on how to improve the format and questions in subsequent surveys in the lead up to future OEWG meetings.

*b. What activities or consultations has the Secretariat planned for the upcoming events, for example, Plastic INCI, BRS COPs, ICCM5, Minamata COP?*

It was decided that due to the heavy agenda at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution, no activities were planned. Furthermore, the secretariat has been focusing on development of meeting documents in preparation for OEWG 1.2 during this time.

With regards to other events, specifically, the resumed IP4, BRS and Minamata COPs and ICCM5 (the corrected dates for the ICCM5 meeting are noted) the Secretariat will work with the respective secretariat and develop a stakeholder engagement plan based on the participation of relevant stakeholders at each meeting. This may include bilateral consultations, Bureau meetings, or side events, as appropriate.

The Secretariat welcomes specific suggestions from the Bureau on how best to maximise potential impacts from these events.

*c. All relevant actors and sectors of the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Cluster should be involved and represented. Does the Secretariat have any further information about the exact dates for the webinars 3 and 4 on the scope and functions?*

The Secretariat recognises the need to ensure that a diverse set of stakeholders is represented in the webinar series and has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in the two webinars completed to-date. The Secretariat will continue with its practice of ensuring a broad cross-sectoral representation moving forward and welcomes any suggestions of panel membership in future events.

Due to limited resources and time pressure on the Secretariat to develop the documents for OEWG 1.2 it was decided to hold the next webinar to early January 2023, ahead of OEWG 1.2, exact dates to be confirmed a month before the event to allow for registration and planning. The session will cover an examination of both the possible scope and possible functions of the panel. It is planned to include representatives from academia, national regulators, civil society and industry, taking into account gender and regional representation balance. The outcomes of this webinar will feed into the Multistakeholder Dialogue on the Scope and Functions of the Panel.

If the Bureau has any suggestions as to high level panel members who could contribute to this session, they would be welcome by the Secretariat.

#### **ITEM 4. UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARIAT ON BUDGET AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION EFFORTS**

30. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to provide an update on Secretariat budget and resource mobilization efforts.

31. The Secretariat expressed its gratitude to countries that had provided pledges and contributions to support the work of the OEWG to date and provided a summary of the budget needed to support the work of the OEWG through to 2024, as per the mandate set forth under UNEA Resolution 5/8. The Secretariat also stressed that the current limited availability of financial resources may result in the work of the OEWG being put on hold following the completion of the resumed first session of the OEWG. The secretariat noted that Switzerland had expressed its interest in hosting the third session of the OEWG, which is scheduled to take place in 2024, however indicated that there have been no expressions of interest to host the second session in October 2023.

32. The Bureau inquired on whether there is a resource mobilization strategy for the Secretariat of the OEWG and sought suggestions on how it can help the Secretariat's resource mobilization efforts.

33. The Secretariat clarified that resource mobilization is driven by bilateral discussions with traditional donor countries and emphasised that while donors are voicing enthusiastic support for the process, donors were faced with conflicting funding priorities, including to support the plastics INC process. The Secretariat requested support from the Bureau for its resource mobilization efforts by requesting that they talk to the countries in their regions to encourage them to consider hosting the second session of the OEWG and provide funds if they are in a position to do so.

#### **ITEM 5. ORGANIZATION OF WORK FOR THE BUREAU**

34. The Chair invited the OEWG Secretariat to present relevant information on the organization of work for the Bureau.

35. The Secretariat shared the relevant UNEA rules of procedure that guide the scope of the work of the Bureau and provided a timetable of scheduled Bureau meetings leading up to the resumed first session of the OEWG.

36. The Bureau thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of the present meeting and reiterated the importance for meeting documents to be made available enough in advance of the meetings such that Bureau members consult with their respective regions. The Bureau also suggested that the Secretariat explores opportunities for its subsequent meetings to be held in the margins of upcoming BRS, Minamata or SAICM meetings. Some Bureau members also expressed concerns regarding their availability on some of the proposed meeting dates.

37. The Secretariat took note of the requests from the Bureau and indicated that a poll will be issued to determine the Bureau members' preferred availability.

#### **ITEM 6. OTHER MATTERS.**

38. No other matters were considered.

#### **ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING.**

Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed at 14:45 CET on Thursday, 17 November 2022.

**Participants:** Mr. Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Mr. Oumar Diaouré Cisse (Mali, for Africa), Ms. Salma Qadoori Jabir (Iraq, for Asia Pacific), Mr. Cyrus Mageria (Kenya, for Africa), Ms. Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan, for Asia Pacific), Mr. Michel Tschirren (Switzerland, for the Western European and Others Group), Ms. Valentina Sierra (Uruguay, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Ms. Gudi Alkemade (the Netherlands, in an observer capacity), Mr. Jinhui Li (China, in an observer capacity) and UNEP Secretariat.