

Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting of the second session of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group (OEWG 2) on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

7 October 2023

08:00 – 17:00 (GMT -3)

In-person [Brasilia]

Meeting Summary

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

1. Ms. Valentina Sierra, Bureau member of the OEWG and co-chair of the regional meeting, opened the meeting, and welcomed all participants.
2. Ms. Valentina Sierra invited all participants to introduce themselves.
3. Ms. Valentina Sierra gave opening remarks. Ms. Sierra emphasized the timely momentum given by the recent adoption of the new Global Framework on Chemicals last September 2023 in Bonn. She also stressed the need to base regional decisions on science to address the three planetary environmental crises and looked forward to fulfilling the UNEA mandate of concluding the work of the OEWG by 2024.
4. Following the welcoming interventions by the host government, Brazil, Victor Bahia Diniz, and UNEP, Gustavo Mañez Gomis, head of the Brazilian Office, and Tessa Goverse, Principal Officer of the SPP Secretariat, the meeting agenda was presented and adopted with one change. One Member State requested the Secretariat and GRULAC countries to hold a closed session to agree on a common understanding for the regional opening intervention at the OEWG 2. The co-chair expressed the feasibility of holding a closed session after lunch.

Agenda item 2: Recap of UNEA Resolution 5/8 and summary of the first session of the Open-ended Working Group

5. The Secretariat provided a recap of UNEA Resolution 5/8, the overall timeline of the OEWG process, and a summary of the outcomes of OEWG 1.1 and 1.2.
6. One Member State requested clarification on “capacity building,” and “technology transfer.” The Secretariat clarified that capacity building was agreed at OEWG 1.2 as a function of the panel, with the understanding that further discussion is needed on the text.
7. One Member State proposed that GRULAC countries could draft some text about capacity building to present during OEWG 2, in line with needs of developing countries.
8. One Member State mentioned the special needs of developing countries and highlighted the importance of involving experts from the region in producing, analyzing and compiling data based on scientific evidence, including the use of traditional knowledge of local communities and indigenous people.
9. One Member State proposed that government representatives should be trained to understand, analyze and reflect technical information on pollution in public policies. The Member State further called for the following principles to be considered in the panel: (i) objectivity; (ii) regional balance in terms of gender, (iii) transparency, and (iv) credibility.

10. One Member State wondered if a function of the panel will be to contribute with physical and technological infrastructure for research, and expressed the view that this would be beyond the scope of the function of capacity building.
11. One Member State reflected on the definition of “capacity building”, being aware of the African position and the limitations of the panel. The Secretariat noted that *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3* contains the two text proposals that will serve as the basis for further consideration to describe the capacity building function.
12. One Member State inquired on the role of academia in the panel and requested a clear definition of its functions and scope. The Secretariat responded that all the stakeholders who are engaged in this issue, including the academia, would have a role to play in the Panel. The working document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/5* describes the relationship of the panel with relevant key stakeholders. The document will be supplemented by an information document.
13. One Member State suggested analyzing regional realities in the countries of the region and expressed its concern on pending discussion on the role of indigenous people and human rights approaches in the panel.
14. One member State asked whether other regional meetings discussed the text of capacity building. The Secretariat confirmed that the Asia-Pacific group and the Africa group met. Comments on capacity building may have been discussed at the Africa group in closed session. Asia Pacific did not specifically comment on this issue.

Agenda item 3: Organizational matters for the second session of the Open-ended Working Group

15. The Secretariat introduced document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/7 Draft update from the Secretariat on intersessional work undertaken since OEWG1.2, budget and expenditure and the provisional workplan.*¹ The Secretariat provided an overview of the Bureau and regional meetings as well as intersessional outreach activities. The Secretariat further presented a revised budget for OEWG.
16. One Member State expressed concern regarding the broad scope of the panel and the lack of a well-defined theme.
17. One observer and one Member State raised the need for a mechanism to avoid duplication of efforts and for ensuring access to funding sources. The Member State further recommended coordination with future instruments or panels working in similar areas, such as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC) and its future work with chemicals in plastics. The Secretariat replied she is in regular contact with the INC Secretariat and ensured that progress of both for a will keep being communicated.
18. One observer mentioned the need of reviewing the term “chemicals” in Spanish, which does not reflect the broad scope of its meaning in English.
19. The Secretariat then presented documents *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/1 Draft annotated agenda for OEWG 2*, the *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/1 Draft scenario note*, and the document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/2 Proposed draft skeleton outline of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel*, including a visual of how the working and information documents being prepared for OEWG 2 connect to the draft skeleton outline.
20. The Secretariat further presented document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 Draft scope and*

¹ Refer to the Pre-Session Documents uploaded on the GRULAC Regional Meeting event page available at [this link](#).

objective, functions, and operating principles.

21. One Member State asked about the institutional arrangement for the election of the governing body. The Secretariat responded that it had looked at examples and this has been done through desk studies.
22. One Member State requested clarification on the process for submissions on operating principles and needs and questions that may be addressed by the panel requested by the Secretariat. The Secretariat reported that the submissions on operating principles have been summarized in an information document. With regard to the second request for submissions, they are currently under analysis.
23. One Member State requested the Secretariat to provide a document that analyzes existing panels and the best models for the panel. The Secretariat responded that effectiveness evaluations of existing panels were reviewed and that lessons learnt are reflected in the working documents of this meeting. Information documents that supplement the working documents with examples from existing panels will be made available in due course.
24. One observer stressed inclusive public participation and urged the region to consider this kind of language at the OEWG 2. The inclusion of the precautionary principle as an operation principle was suggested.
25. One Member State asked whether the table in document *OEWG 2.3* will be presented or whether the work will be done in accordance with Annex 1, which includes very important principles, such as gender balance. The Member State further proposed adjusting the language related to gender balance.
26. One Member State emphasized the need of replacing “sound management of chemicals” by “safe, sustainable, and pollution”. They further requested to eliminate conflicts of interest to guarantee confidence in the panel by national decision-makers authorities.
27. One observer suggested the inclusion of inter-generational balance.
28. One Member State requested the Secretariat to review other panels’ principles. They asked to clarify the selection process for experts participating in the panel, considering and ensuring the following elements: (i) interdisciplinarity; (ii) academical and inter-generational balance; (iii) recognition of indigenous knowledge and local management of chemicals and waste; (iv) geographical balance ensuring participation of experts from developing countries; and (v) gender balance. The Secretariat informed that working document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6* provides further discussion on these topics.
29. One Member State asked about a list of countries’ submissions on operational principles. The Secretariat notified that submissions are all made available online on the OEWG website.
30. One observer expressed concern about the lack of available technology and capacity building in the region that may generate gaps in the participation of scientists from developing countries.
31. One Member State expressed that the lack of translation of research published in Spanish into English would result in the underrepresentation of scientists from the region in international panels. Scientists from the region are unable to access the international scientific community if they lack the funding for translation.
32. One of the observers asked about the way in which technical documents produced by the panel will be shared or disseminated. The Secretariat indicated that the Panel is responsible for deciding on

the dissemination and communication of technical documents, guided by a work programme to fulfill this function and consider communication-related elements.

33. One Member State requested clarification on the rules of procedure and the way they will be developed. The Secretariat noted that *document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/2* provides an outline of the rules of procedure, which will serve as a basis to be completed based on discussion on the various aspects of institutional arrangements.
34. One Member State requested clarification on the election process, highlighting the importance of defining rules for both decision-making and scientific oversight bodies. The Secretariat responded that elements, modalities and functions that are in other science policy interfaces as key features of the decision-making body, are presented in table 1 in document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/4*, including composition, modalities of work, etc. The document refers to the election process, but the Secretariat took note of the need for early consideration.
35. One Member State further expressed the importance of having agreed institutional arrangements and organization in order to define specific rules to be followed by the panel. They suggested to the Secretariat to prepare one or two proposals of options framed in the field of chemicals and waste by December.
36. The Secretariat subsequently presented document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/5 Draft relationships with relevant key stakeholders*, which addresses the questions “who are stakeholders to the panel”, “what roles that stakeholders may generally undertake in the panel’s operation” and “how can stakeholders participate in the panel”, as well as a proposal on the way forward.
37. One Member State made a statement on the importance of having access to, receiving and sharing information from other international agreements and other scientific institutions. The needs of the panel may be identified on an ongoing basis.
38. One Member State expressed concern on the way to enhance higher participation of GRULAC countries in the different bodies of the panel.
39. One observer suggested having more meaningful participation of civil society and Afro-descendant and traditional communities. The observer further suggested simplicity and translation of the documents related to the formalization of the panel in order to ensure broad participation. Another observer requested clarification on youth engagement. The Secretariat responded that inclusivity is a key consideration in the work of the panel through the engagement of stakeholders.
40. One Member State requested clarification on how procedures are going to be established, including the view of diverse groups so that all perspectives will be considered and that no one's perspective will be ignored. The Secretariat responded that document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/5* has been prepared to describe the relationship of the panel with relevant key stakeholders. The document will be supplemented by an information document.
41. The Secretariat presented document *UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6 Draft overview of work-related processes and procedures*, including process for determining and executing the work programme of the panel, procedures for the review and adoption of reports and assessments produced by the panel, arrangements for identifying and engaging with experts to contribute to the work of the panel, and conflicts of interest policy.
42. One Member State expressed its concerns around the conflict-of-interest committee and the way confidential information will be addressed. The Secretariat responded that the Secretariat has been looking at how others science policy interfaces have addressed these issues.

43. One Member State highlighted the importance of ensuring quality of documents and avoiding conflicts of interest. One observer suggested referring to the rules established for choosing scientist in other conventions, such as those set out in the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.
44. One Member State appreciated the inclusion of the election of geographically and gender balanced, and multidisciplinary experts. Additionally, the importance to evaluate actions to fill knowledge gaps, especially in relation to indigenous communities, was expressed.
45. One Member State requested elaboration on outreach activities to broader stakeholders, considering gender mainstreaming and education to raise awareness. Another observer asked about the participation of youth in the OEWG process. The Secretariat responded that inclusivity is a key consideration in the work of the panel through the engagement of stakeholders. Widespread outreach has been put in place to engage a wider audience, which includes major group stakeholders, academia, and stakeholders accredited to other institutions such as WHO and ILO. Webinar content is available online for public access.

Agenda item 4: Logistical preparations for the second session of the Open-ended Working Group

46. The Secretariat reported that invitations to OEWG 2, taking place from 11 to 15 December 2023 were sent out. OEWG 2 will be preceded by meetings of regional and other groups on 9 and 10 December. The Secretariat highlighted the key registration deadlines of 30 September 2023 for funded travel and of 31 October 2023 for all other participants. *[Post-meeting note: the deadlines for registration and funded travel were extended to 20 November 2023 and 17 October 2023 respectively.]*
47. Several questions were raised by Member States regarding the number of contact groups at OEWG 2 considering the small delegations that will be present in the meeting. One Member State suggested to gain more understanding of delegations' participation so all Member State would be able to participate on equal terms. The Secretariat expressed that these concerns will be considered and conveyed to the Bureau and emphasized that funding support is provided to one eligible per delegation. The Secretariat informed that no more than two contact groups will run in parallel.
48. One observer requested clarification on stakeholder engagement in contact groups. The Secretariat clarified that to keep stakeholders abreast of the OEWG process, the plenary meeting at OEWG 2 will be live-streamed. One way to broaden the stakeholders' engagement is that stakeholders accredited to other bodies, e.g., WHO, ILO, are also invited to participate in the OEWG process.
49. To facilitate the circulation of information, the co-chair encouraged Member States to nominate national focal points to the OEWG if they have not already done so.

Agenda item 5: Other matters

50. The co-chair announced that GRULAC Member States will propose some arrangements to reduce the number of contact groups.
51. The co-chair announced that Judith Torres will replace her as the Bureau member of the OEWG for the region.
52. No other matter was raised.

Agenda item 6: Closure of the meeting

53. The co-chair closed the meeting at 17:00 (GMT -3).