

Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting in preparation for the third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG 3) on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

23 – 24 May 2024

09:00 – 18:00 (GMT -3)

Montevideo, Uruguay

GRULAC Meeting Summary Report

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

1. The GRULAC regional meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Judith Torres, Uruguay and Mr. Linroy Christian, Antigua and Barbuda, Bureau members of the OEWG for the Latin American and the Caribbean region. Ms. Judith Torres opened the meeting and welcomed all participants on behalf of the Government of Uruguay. She highlighted the importance of the proposed Science-Policy Panel to meeting the challenges in the implementation of the MEAs and other related initiatives on chemicals and pollution.
2. Ms. Gudi Alkemade, Chair of the OEWG, appreciated the active engagement of the region of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in this process. She provided a summary of the progress of the OEWG and outcomes of previous sessions, as well as expectations for OEWG 3.
3. Mr. Alberto Pacheco, Head of the UNEP Office for the Southern Cone of Latin America, thanked the Government of Uruguay for hosting the meeting, and highlighted the unprecedented momentum of the chemicals and waste agenda, as well as the relevance of establishing this Panel to reinforce the science-policy interface to address the triple planetary crises. He also announced the recent ratification of the host country agreement between Uruguay and UNEP, which will facilitate further supporting for the region.
4. The Co-Chair Judith Torres introduced the agenda, which was adopted by all participants, including the addition of a closed session for governments on the afternoon of Day 2.

Agenda item 2: Recap of UNEA Resolution 5/8 and update on the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group process

5. The Secretariat provided a recap of UNEA Resolution 5/8 and summarized the outcomes of previous sessions of the OEWG, including the intersessional work leading up to OEWG 3, expressing gratitude to the Government of Uruguay for supporting this meeting, as well as to Brazil for the initial interest and arrangements to host the session.
6. Member States inquired when the *Scenario note* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/INF/1](#)) would be available, to which the secretariat replied it is expected in first week of June, as well as most of the information documents and it will be addressed in a pre-session webinar.
7. An observer welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting online and requested that all outstanding documents be made available promptly, along with a period of two or three days to provide comments after the documents are uploaded. The Secretariat stated that the document on capacity building and other mentioned documents, will be made available as soon as possible.

Agenda item 3: Organizational matters for the third session of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group

8. The Secretariat provided an overview of the OEWG 3 *Provisional agenda* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/1](#)) and *Annotated provisional agenda* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/1/Add.1](#)), in conjunction with the forthcoming *Scenario note* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/INF/1](#)). Contact groups and informal groups will be open to participation by all governments and stakeholders. The Secretariat mentioned that efforts will be made to ensure that no contact group meets concurrently with a plenary meeting and no more than two contact group meetings are held in parallel.
9. One Member State, supported by another, stressed the need to avoid more than two contact groups running in parallel, as well as to prevent a contact group running in parallel to the plenary session, considering the limited size of delegations.
10. The Co-chair reflected on the differences between the negotiations of a Science-Policy Panel and those related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Agenda item 4: Preparation of proposals for the establishment of a Science-Policy Panel

(a) Foundational documents

11. The Secretariat provided an overview of the *Compilation of proposals for establishing a science-policy panel* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2](#)). Negotiations on foundational elements text proposals already started during the OEWG 2 and have not been updated, as was the Conflict-of-Interest Policy. For the rest of the annexes (1-4) the Secretariat was requested to prepare a draft text for consideration by OEWG. This was followed by a detailed section by section review.
12. On Section Action A (Functions), the Co-chair Ms. Torres recalled that two texts proposals for capacity building function have been proposed, and that this region has been leading consideration of capacity building, along with the Africa region. She also reflected that in comparison to IPBES, some specific characteristics in the field of chemicals and pollution will need to be considered.
13. The following general comments and concerns were shared:
 - GRULAC still faces challenges such as the need to update academic curricula of professionals, the gap between scientific community and decision-makers, the need to further consider health perspectives and the lack of information and research resources.
 - From experience with IPBES, should note the difficulty responding to numerous calls for submissions can lead to biased responses to developed countries.
 - Consideration to merge text proposals and offer a joint proposal with the Africa region.
14. Specific comments on capacity building:
 - Highlighted the relevance of capacity building in the region, with a suggestion to streamline language and improve proposal 1. If the proposal is streamlined, must include fundamental elements like gender and geographic balance. Must reflect GRULACs' needs, should not give up because another region disagrees.
 - Need to ensure balance in representation and participation of Panel deliverables, with capacity building critical to this. Belief that capacity building will fill knowledge gaps, keeping in mind data generation, collection, and analysis is crucial.
 - Not all capacity building needs to be installed at the government level.
15. The co-chair concluded that further consensus is required on what the terms mean to the region, and that putting forward a streamlined text with the main elements of proposal 1, would be a significant achievement.

(b) Operating principles

16. The Secretariat then introduced Section B on operating principles. The Co-chair reflected that the amount of bracketed text in paragraphs a) to o) will be challenging for negotiation.

17. The following comments were provided:

- At OEWG 2 the text was streamlined and can now be used as a basis for negotiation.
- Importance of inter-generational equity as a core operating principle.
- Toxic exposure prevention should be considered in addition to pollution prevention.
- Importance of ‘nondiscrimination’, so that all regions, people, languages, etc. are represented. The term ‘linguistics inclusion’ referring to scientific publications in the local language follows this.
- Support for gender equality and consideration of human rights approach.

(c) Institutional arrangements

18. The Secretariat presented a diagram describing the possible institutional arrangements and relations between the different bodies, as well as clarifications on the related terminology.

19. The following comments were provided:

- Sought clarifications on the terminology for Governing Body, Plenary, and Panel
- Noted the lack of clear definition or rationale for strategic partnerships.
- Suggestion for a Multidisciplinary Youth Expert Group/subcommittee to ensure youth participation is founded under the Interdisciplinary Youth Expert Committee.
- Support for conflict-of-interest committee to ensure integrity.
- Caution against subsidiary bodies outside UNEA 5/8 mandate that could delay/limit outputs.
- Suggestion to have working groups/expert teams instead of subsidiary bodies.
- On membership requires differentiation between Governing Body and scientific components. Scientists should provide tools, not make political decisions.
- Call for guidelines on nomination of focal points, scientists, and representatives.
- Must ensure participation of vulnerable or at-risk groups.
- Concerns about the proposed policy committee overlapping Governing Body and Bureau roles, with a belief that existing bodies may cover this function.
- Clarification on the Bureau relationship with other bodies and their proposed role for resource mobilization.
- Proposal for independent trust on financial arrangements, with debate open to the type of contributions. Should remove reference to GEF, as it would act through implementing agencies.
- Need to determine sustainable funding amount and whether the UN voluntary indicative scale of assessments will be used as a reference.
- On the mechanism to transmit submissions from civil society.

20. The Secretariat, in response to the comments:

- Noted Plenary refers to Governing Body meetings, while Governing Body exists beyond meetings.
- The strategic partnerships are still open to discussion
- The subsidiary bodies are established under the Governing Body, whereas the Bureau is more like a standing committee, that also follows up on decisions of the Governing Body between the plenary sessions.
- Transmission of submissions could be considered under paragraph c, subparagraph d, as it encourages consideration of alternative suggestions and inputs.

(d) Evaluation

21. On Section D (Evaluation), Member States queried how the other panels deal with independent evaluation,

questioning whether they have an internal or external review. The Secretariat replied that in IPBES, this is an external process, provisioned and costed in the work programme.

(e) Addendums to OEWG.3/2

22. The Secretariat presented *Draft rules of procedure* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.1](#)), noting its consideration of existing rules and procedures of IPCC and IPBES. The appendix to the document includes a draft policy and procedure for admission of observers.

23. In response to the document, the following comments and concerns were raised:

- The documents are still open for discussion and negotiation.
- On the role of the European Union in the decision making, noting consistency throughout the documents is essential. Request for further clarification on the definition and modalities for observers.
- Call for clarity on special procedure under Article 7.12 to recognize observers.

24. In response to the comments, the Secretariat said:

- The modalities of EU participation follow UNEA rules, stating they are limited to sessions of the Governing Body. For example, the IEC is a subsidiary body with limited membership.
- The Governing Body, which is the decision-making body, will identify and potentially add observers as they see fit.

25. The Secretariat presented the document *Draft Financial Procedures* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.2](#)).

26. A Member State inquired about the rationale behind the limitation on contributions from the private sector.

27. The Secretariat informed that this is not based on a UN rule, but is the result of discussions during OEWG 2, where the intention to cap contributions from private sector was proposed, to ensure the agenda is not driven by the private sector.

28. The Secretariat presented the *Draft process for determining the work programme, including prioritization* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.3](#)) and *Supporting information on work-related processes and procedures* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/INF/4](#)). There were no comments from participants.

29. The Secretariat presented *Draft procedures for the preparation and clearance of panel deliverables* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.4](#)), recalling INF 4.

30. With regards to the Add 4, the following comments and concerns were raised:

- Reflected on capacity building under this document would be a cross-cutting element, noting that subject to discussions during OEWG 3, capacity building may be considered a deliverable.
- Concern on ensuring the operating principles are applied to nomination and selection of experts, and whether geographical, interdisciplinary and gender balance were considered

31. In response to the comments, the Secretariat replied;

- Capacity building has been put forward in the list of deliverables and the guidelines for supporting materials.
- Specific Terms of Reference are defined and can incorporate these criteria, with the IEC remaining

guided by the operating principles of the Panel.

32. The Secretariat presented the *Draft conflict-of-interest disclosure form* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.5](#)).

33. Comments and concerns from the participants include:

- While the procedures look sound, the challenge will be implementation.
- How to prevent voluntary contributions affecting or influencing the dynamics of the Panel, especially considering while the conflict of interest is for individuals, they represent organizations or industries. Therefore, a call for how to evaluate this transparently was made.
- Whether peer advocacy would be linked to the work programme, and if would be determined by the Governing Body first.
- Further clarity on whether the IPCC or Ozone Secretariat have a conflict-of-interest committee, who will be on said committee, and how will it be formed, considering resource availability and budgetary implications.
- Note that the conflict-of-interest committee is not a decision-making body and further proposals to solve conflict-of-interest beyond their given abilities may be necessary.
- Proposed specific adjustments to question 3 of the form, should broaden the scope or perhaps include examples of research institutes as other organizations with vested interests.
- The form does not reflect the past, only present.
- Need to specify how often a member of the committee will need to update the forms to reflect significant changes, and if a member comes across some sort of sensitive information that actually is not disclosed as partly of a derivable, it will be necessary to make some sort of consideration for like a non-disclosure agreement.

34. The Secretariat provided the following responses:

- Explained that in looking for models of a person IPCC, so it usually applies to all the individuals when they come on board including the Bureau, the Governing Body, also the IEC and other subsidiary bodies, and experts that hold the pen on the actual assessment work.
- Clarified the Conflict-of-Interest Committee would be pertinent to this body that will be established and therefore it is proposed as a subsidiary body
- The Secretariat mentioned that in the Draft procedures for the preparation and clearance of panel deliverables (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.4), under section G, there are procedures for safeguarding commercially sensitive information.

Agenda item 5: Recommendations to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for the preparation of the intergovernmental meeting to establish the science-policy panel

35. The Secretariat presented the working documents *Proposals on the establishment of the Panel to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/3](#)) and *Proposals to give effect to arrangements to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting* ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/4](#)), pointing out that the proposals outlined on these documents provide draft decisions that would be necessary to bring about the Panel's establishment and early operation.

36. The following questions and concerns were raised:

- Whether a time frame should be included in paragraph 2 of OEWG.3/3.
- If the Governing Body would meet at the beginning of each year.
- If UNEP hosts the Secretariat will give suggestions of a timeline of events and activities, and whether they can facilitate those engagements as well.
- Under OEWG.3/4, article 4.c, concern was expressed about the incremental manner field post

subject to resource availability and development of the work programme. Provisions similar to those under 4.b could be recommended.

37. The Co-chair called for views and proposals on the name of the panel. Retaining simplicity and validity, the following suggestions were provided: Intergovernmental Panel on Pollution; Science Policy Panel on Chemicals; Intergovernmental Panel on Chemicals and Waste; Intergovernmental Panel on Chemical Pollution; Intergovernmental Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution; Science Policy Panel on Pollution; Intergovernmental Panel for Chemicals and Waste Pollution Prevention; Chemicals and Waste Panel.

Agenda item 6: Logistical preparations for the third session of the Open-ended Working Group

38. The Secretariat presented the logistical arrangements for OEWG 3, which will take place in Geneva, International Conference Center Geneva (CIGC) from 17 to 21 June 2024, with preceding regional, stakeholder and informal meetings taking place on 16 June 2024.
39. The Secretariat noted that all working documents are available on the website in all six UN languages and recalled that governments and stakeholders are invited to provide written comments on the documentation for OEWG 3 by 31 May 2024.
40. The Secretariat provided an update on the status of registrations, with a total of 733 registrations approved to date, including 26 countries from GRULAC.
41. One Member State asked if there will be live streaming of plenary sessions, which was confirmed by the Secretariat, adding that the link to a YouTube channel will be provided.
42. One Member State inquired on the organization of contact groups. The Secretariat replied that the Scenario note will provide further information and it was also announced that a webinar on this topic will take place on June 6th.

Agenda item 7: Other matters

43. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 8: Closure of the meeting

44. Ms. Tessa Goverse, on behalf of the SPP OEWG Secretariat, thanked the Government of Uruguay for hosting the meeting, and Co-chairs Judith Torres and Linroy Christian, for facilitating the proactive engagement of the region and thanked all participants for their contributions.
45. Some observers expressed appreciation for the opportunity to actively engage in the discussions, and the willingness to contribute to this process.
46. Co-chairs Ms. Judith Torres and Mr. Linroy Christian appreciated the positive and constructive engagement of all participants, thanked the Secretariat for all the support and dedication, and expressed the commitment to work hard to bring this process to a successful conclusion.
47. The co-chairs closed the meeting on May 24th, 2024, at 16:00 Uruguay time (GMT -3).