

Asia Pacific 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.

May 20th – 21st, 2024

09:00 – 18:00 (GMT +8)

Hangzhou city, China

Asia Pacific Meeting Summary Report

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

1. Professor Li Jinhui (China), Bureau Member of the OEWG chaired this meeting. He opened the meeting at 9 a.m. on 20 May. The other opening statements were delivered by Mr. Huan Jinyuan, Vice Major of the Government of Hangzhou City; Ms. Tessa Goverse, Principal Coordinator of SPP OEWG secretariat; and Mr. Zhuo Zhuang, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), China. Due to the time difference, Mrs. Gudi Alkemade (Kingdom of the Netherlands), the Chair of the SPP OEWG, delivered her opening remarks in an online format during the afternoon session.
- (a) Opening remarks**
2. Prof. Li expressed gratitude to the host country for offering the venue, and extended appreciation to the donor country for their generous financial support towards organizing the regional meeting. He emphasized that we should seize this opportunity to forge strong bonds, exchange valuable insights, and work towards successfully establishing a strong independent intergovernmental science-policy panel.
 3. Mr. Huan expressed a warm welcome to all distinguished guests and introduced Hangzhou as a leading economic powerhouse in China, a city rich in culture and renowned for its scenic beauty. In recent years, Hangzhou has strengthened its cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and successfully hosted the global celebrations for World Environment Day in 2019. It has also launched the "Zero Waste Initiative of Asian Games" in 2023 and organized "International Zero Waste Day" this year. Hangzhou also warmly welcomes international organizations such as SPP and brother cities to frequently come to Hangzhou for project cooperation, academic exchanges, and interactive activities. We will provide relevant support in terms of funding, venues, technology, and talent. If possible, Hangzhou would welcome the permanent establishment of the SPP secretariat in Hangzhou.
 4. Ms. Goverse recapped the UNEA 5/8 decision regarding the establishment of the SPP, highlighting the progress made since 2022 and the key topics to be discussed during OEWG 3. She expressed the hope that this regional meeting would promote a clear and shared understanding of the fundamental aspects and desired outcomes for the panel's establishment. It would facilitate discussions among governments and stakeholders to converge on the essential foundational elements required to develop proposals aligning with our goals and aspirations. Ms. Goverse emphasized the potential of the SPP to mobilize the global scientific community, providing policymakers and decision-makers with crucial scientific and policy-related knowledge. This knowledge is vital for addressing interconnected challenges, and enabling informed decision-making.
 5. Mr. Zhuo provided an overview of the international and Chinese efforts and measures taken to address environmental pollution and advance the management of chemicals and waste. He highly appreciated the collective efforts made by all parties since 2022 towards the establishment of the SPP. He also urged countries in the Asia Pacific region to make full use of this meeting to exchange opinions and viewpoints,

develop a unified position in the region, and jointly advance the SPP process. In conclusion, he emphasized that China will continue to actively and constructively participate in global negotiations and consultations related to chemicals and waste, and rigorously implement the goals and tasks set forth in various conventions.

6. Mrs. Alkemade apologized for not being with the meeting participants. She outlined the resolution regarding the proposals and functions of the panels. It is crucial to prioritize negotiations aimed at ensuring the sound management of chemicals and waste and preventing pollution. Accessing the necessary information is essential for developing a resolution that effectively addresses these issues. She encouraged the participants to finalize the proposal to ensure the establishment of the panel.

(b) Adoption of the agenda

7. Prof. Li invited the participants to consider the meeting agenda. The participants adopted the provisional agenda.

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

8. Prof. Li invited the secretariat to give a brief recap of UNEA Resolution 5/8 and update on the OEWG process, including the intersessional work leading up to OEWG 3. Then, Prof. Li opened the floor for discussion. One representative suggested that all delegates actively engage in pragmatic discussions on the necessary actions to be taken by the Asia Pacific region.

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

9. The secretariat presented the OEWG 3 provisional agenda (OEWG.3/1) and annotated provisional agenda (OEWG.3/1/Add.1). The secretariat outlined the need to establish contact groups and the modalities that need to be considered.
10. Prof. Li opened the floor for discussion. One representative highlighted the issue of having parallel meetings, and the need to get prepared in advance. Another representative suggested that contact groups should be finalized by 10 pm during OEWG 3, and asked whether there is any document regarding how the contact groups to be formed. The secretariat replied that information on the contact groups, including the OEWG 3 tentative schedule will be included in the OEWG 3 Chair's scenario note (OEWG.3/INF/1).

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

11. Prof. Li invited the secretariat to present the OEWG 3 working documents. The secretariat presented the working documents and explained the clustering and linkages between the working documents. One representative inquired about the possibility of considering the addendum documents after OEWG 3.
12. Following an initial round of review of all the working documents, Prof. Li suggested the secretariat to summarize the key topics to be considered at OEWG 3 in the individual working documents, including the scope of the panel, the capacity-building function, operating principles, membership of the plenary/governing body and bureau, and role of consensus. Prof. Li proceeded to invite representatives to express the views on these key topics. The following paragraphs present the viewpoints gathered from multiple rounds of discussions.

(a) Scope, objectives and function of the panel

13. One representative expressed that while the objectives of the SPP are clear, an important aspect has been overlooked, which is that the SPP should provide scientific evidence without specifying policies. Another representative suggested keeping the objective of the SPP to state "contribute further to the sound

management of chemicals and waste and prevent pollution" without specifying specific forms of pollution.

14. All the representatives agreed on the inclusion of the capacity-building function for the panel. However, when it came to the two proposals of the capacity-building function as presented in OEWG.3/2, representatives from different countries expressed different positions. A few representatives raised questions about the beneficiaries of capacity building, and the means to receive financial and technical support. Several representatives mentioned that the work of SPP should avoid duplication with other multi-environmental agreements (MEAs). Another representative emphasized the inclusion the role of youth in the panel.

(b) Operating principles of the panel

15. Prof. Li drew attention to the operational principles. In relation to the scope, as described in OEWG.3/2 Section B paragraph 2(j), two representatives proposed expanding the scope of pollution to include air, water, oceans, and plastics, while some other representatives suggested removing the relevant descriptions of the scope of the Panel from the operational principles. In addition, one representative mentioned a recommendation to delete the proposals related to the precautionary principle and human rights. Other representatives emphasized the importance of considering youth when discussing the operational principles, and that the roles of subsidiary bodies and multidisciplinary experts should consider young generation.

(c) Institutional arrangements of the panel

16. Prof. Li invited the meeting to discuss the elements of institutional arrangements currently in the brackets. One representative requested clarification on the terminology. In paragraph 4 of Section C, sub-section I, "Plenary" and "Governing Body of the SPP" are mentioned in brackets, while in paragraph 9 of Section C, sub-section I, only "governing body of the panel" is mentioned. The secretariat responded that the terminology is not yet finalized and further consideration is required at OEWG 3. Then, the representative expressed support for using the term "Plenary" based on the experiences of IPCC and IPBES.
17. One representative proposed that the scope of the membership should not exclude any country. While the State of Palestine is not a member state of the United Nations (UN), they also desire to become a member of the SPP. He suggested using the term "UN member states and member states of UN specialized agencies". He further expressed his support for Section C, sub-section I, paragraph 4 alt. He noted that if paragraph 4 is adopted, it is essential to consider consensus decision-making through consultation with both UN member states and member states of UN specialized agencies.
18. Several representatives requested clarification on what is meant by "each of the regions of the institution hosting the secretariat". The secretariat stated that it refers to the UN organizations that provide the secretariat, and different UN organizations have different regional divisions. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN have different ways for dividing the regions where they work. Another representative said that the wording in this section needs to be amended by a legal team made up of representatives from the regions. He also pointed out that there are still too many square brackets regarding the membership of the governing body and the bureau, and consensus on these issues needs to be reached before OEWG 3. In addition, one representative asked who will provide technical support to the Bureau.
19. One representative noted that the policy committee should avoid duplicating functions with other bodies under the panel and consider regional balance. She also requested clarification on the reference to the "scientific committee" in Section C, sub-section III, paragraph 25. The secretariat responded that it refers to the interdisciplinary expert committee.

(d) Financial Arrangement

20. One representative requested clarification regarding the procedures and the Trust Fund, and how the section of financial arrangements supported by the working document OEWG.3/2/Add.2 draft financial procedures. The secretariat answered that the draft financial procedures supports the implementation of the financial arrangements and they are based on the assumption that UNEP will host the SPP secretariat .
21. One representative asked what is the difference between a voluntary trust fund and a trust fund as presented in the working document. The secretariat answered that regardless the name (being a trust fund or a voluntary trust fund), the fund would be contributed voluntarily, and the whole panel would be supported by voluntarily contribution. It is possible to further refer to the working document OEWG.3/2/Add.2 “draft financial procedures” for further clarification on this.

(e) Draft rules of procedure (OEWG.3/2/Add.1)

22. Several representatives expressed their support for decision-making by consensus, noting that the region will highlight this in their regional statement.

(f) Other working documents

23. No comments were received on the other working documents.

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

24. Prof. Li invited the secretariat to present the OEWG 3 working documents: OEWG.3/3: Proposals on the establishment of the Panel to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting; and OEWG.3/4: Proposals to give effect to arrangements to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting.
25. One representative asked, if there is no agreement on all the words in the bracket in the working document OEWG.3/2, how to reach a conclusion and agreement by the end of 2024. The secretariat replied that the foundational document is the most important to establish the panel. If brackets still remain, it would be up to governments to discuss how to reach conclusions and an agreement.

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

26. The secretariat introduced that OEWG 3 will take place at the CICG in Geneva from 17 – 21 June 2024. Prior to the meeting, on 16 June 2024, there will be preparatory meetings including informal, regional and stakeholder consultations. A total of 733 registrations had been received, with representatives from 30 countries in the Asia Pacific region attending OEWG 3. Written comments had been invited on the OEWG 3 working documents, and should be provided to the secretariat by 31 May 2024.

Agenda item 7: Other matters

27. A representative expressed their appreciation of the regional meeting. They emphasized the importance of considering capacity building and adopting an intergenerational approach to support the integration of science and policy.
28. The representatives agreed that a draft regional statement is a crucial outcome of this meeting. Prof. Li called for the formation of Friends of the Chair, which drafted the initial version of the Asia-Pacific regional statement for the opening session of OEWG 3 during the closed meeting, covering the key topics on operating principles, capacity building, avoidance of duplication, and consensus-based decision-making. During the subsequent plenary session, the Chair proposed to distribute the draft statement to the SPP national focal points for their input. All attending representatives unanimously agreed to this proposal.

Agenda item 8: Closure of the meeting

29. The secretariat provided closing remarks. The representatives express their gratitude to the Chinese government, BCRC China and the secretariat for organizing this meeting. Prof. Li concluded the meeting at 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 21 May 2024.