

Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

Bureau meeting

Wednesday, 28 January 2026

15:00- 17:00 EAT

Online

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 28 JANUARY 2026

Note by the Secretariat

1. The meeting was attended by the following members:
African States: Mr. Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal);
Asia-Pacific States: Mr. Hiroshi Ono (Japan); Mr. Mohammed Albarrak (Saudi Arabia);
Eastern European States: Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia); Ms. Irma Gurguliani (Georgia)
Latin American and Caribbean States: Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez (Peru);
Small Island Developing States: Ms. Asha Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda);
Western European and Other States: Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz (Sweden); Ms. Larke Williams (United States of America).
2. The meeting was presided over by Vice-Chair Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz, as agreed by the Bureau during its meeting held on 30 October 2025.
3. As also agreed by the Bureau during its meeting held on 30 October, the meeting was attended by Mr. Julio Cordano (Chile) in an observer capacity as the nominee of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) for the vacant position for the region.
4. The Secretariat was represented by the Executive Secretary of the INC, Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp.
5. The Vice-Chair Presiding opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the limited time remaining before INC-5.3. She expressed deep appreciation to all Bureau members for devoting significant time to the process and for the confidence and trust placed in her. She noted that all constituencies look to the Bureau to prepare for an effective and smooth INC-5.3 and emphasized that the Bureau should aim to fulfill those expectations.
6. The Vice-Chair Presiding then outlined the proposed agenda, which was adopted without comment.
7. Under agenda item 2 on 'Adoption of the report of the Bureau meeting', the Vice-Chair Presiding acknowledged written comments received from Bureau members on the draft report of the Bureau meeting of 12 January. While comments were received after the deadline for written comments of 23 January, she noted that a Bureau member had signalled at the previous

meeting their intention to submit comments. These comments were received and circulated by the Secretariat to the Bureau on 26 January, and were followed by additional written comments in response.

8. In relation to the section of the 12 January Bureau report on majorities required for elections, one Bureau member canvassed the possibility of discussing voting by proxy for elections for those Members that could not attend INC-5.3 due to visa issues. The Vice-Chair Presiding proposed to instead discuss this matter under agenda item 3 on 'Preparations for INC-5.3'. This proposal was accepted by the Bureau member. The Bureau report was then adopted, taking into account the comments of Bureau members.
9. Under agenda item 3 on 'Preparations for INC-5.3', the Vice-Chair Presiding recalled the details of a letter she had sent to the Bureau on 23 January relating to key outstanding matters recurrent in Bureau discussions. In it, she referred to the understanding among Bureau members that nominations by regions of candidates were to be submitted by 31 October 2025. She expressed gratitude for the continued work of the three candidates for Chair and encouraged them to use the remaining time to engage with Members of the Committee and amongst themselves to explore possibilities to move toward elections by acclamation at INC-5.3 where feasible.
10. The letter stressed that the Bureau has been continuously working together to ensure smooth, transparent and inclusive preparations for INC-5.3. It underlined that, through continued constructive engagement and respect for the processes agreed within the Bureau and the applicable draft rules of procedure, the Bureau can move forward in a way that reassures all delegations, supports the effective conduct of the Bureau's work and continues to provide transparency and unity.
11. In the letter, the Vice-Chair Presiding expressed her hope that the Bureau could unite around a strong message that the regional nomination process should be fully respected. She expressed further hope that all Members of the Committee could be encouraged to make every effort to move toward a single candidate by acclamation. She noted that there has been sufficient time to understand each regional group's priorities and concerns and emphasized the importance of arriving in Geneva with a clear and shared understanding of the resumed session. She also reiterated her proposal to commence with the election of the Chair, followed by the elections for any remaining vacant positions in the Bureau. In this context, she recalled that Ms. Asha Challenger, Bureau member representing the small island developing States, indicated to the Bureau her intention to resign but will remain in the Bureau until INC-5.3.
12. The Vice-Chair Presiding sought support for the message in the note and for a common approach to agenda item 2 on election of officers at INC-5.3, in which the Chair would be elected first, followed by any remaining positions on the Bureau.
13. The Bureau unanimously conveyed strong support for the contents of the letter from the Vice-Chair Presiding, including the need to fully respect the regional nomination process while ensuring alignment with the draft rules of procedure. Bureau members also reiterated the importance of reducing the list of candidates rather than expanding the list at this stage in the process. In support of the contents of the letter, the Bureau agreed to append it to the meeting report.¹ Bureau members agreed to also socialize the contents of the letter within their respective constituencies and convey the common understanding of electing a Chair first under agenda item 2 followed by any remaining positions on the Bureau.

¹ Attached to this report as Appendix I.

14. The Vice-Chair Presiding thanked the Bureau for its unified support for the contents of the letter and for its flexibility in moving forward to elect the Chair first at INC-5.3, followed by any remaining positions on the Bureau.
15. The Executive Secretary provided an update on logistics and approved registration relating to INC-5.3, noting a total of 368 delegates from 155 Members and 195 representatives from 195 Observer organizations, bringing the total number of approved participants for INC-5.3 to 581. She noted that the registration portal for Members of the Committee had been exceptionally reopened until 31 January due to the high volume of requests and encouraged delegations yet to register to do so as soon as possible. She also noted that, owing to high registration numbers, the plenary and overflow rooms for the INC-5.3 venue are approaching capacity. She strongly urged registered delegates to exercise patience on seating availability in-session.
16. On the topic of visa issuance, she recalled that participants had been consistently informed, and Bureau members reminded to inform their regions, of the need to apply for an entry visa, where applicable and as early as possible to facilitate the issuance process. She noted that, as indicated in the information note to participants, visa processing requires a minimum of 15 days. She further reported that some delegates had only recently begun their application process, which is less than the required 15-day period, and cautioned that, while the Secretariat would provide support to the extent possible, it may not be in a position to ensure the timely issuance of these visas.
17. Reverting to the matter raised by one Bureau member on voting by proxy for elections, the Vice-Chair Presiding requested the Principal Legal Advisor to provide information on the possibility of Members using a proxy for voting in the INC process.
18. The Principal Legal Advisor noted by way of example that proxy voting at the United Nations Headquarters is generally used when a Member State (the Principal State) does not have a permanent mission, or where its representatives cannot attend a UN meeting, when a vote takes place in the General Assembly. The Principal State requests in advance the representative of another Member State to represent the Principal State for the purpose of exercising a right to vote at a specific meeting, which can also be in an election. Proxy voting would only be permissible where the representative is duly accredited and does not represent more than one Member State, meaning a representative of a Member State cannot in the same meeting exercise a vote for their own State and another Member State.
19. When authorizing a proxy, Member States would generally need to submit a formal communication in advance of the meeting for which the proxy is to be used, indicating, *inter alia*, the name of the representative authorized to act on behalf of the Principal; the Member State to which the representative belongs; and an express reference to the meeting where the proxy is to be exercised. In the case of the INC, the Committee would decide on whether to use proxy votes, as well as the specific modalities of any proxy voting process.
20. Bureau members acknowledged that proxy voting is used in other United Nations processes. It was also noted that consideration of proxy voting at this stage would involve introducing a new element to the process of INC-5.3 shortly before the resumed session and that it would be difficult to fully set out the details of proxy voting before convening in Geneva. Bureau members remarked that proxy voting requires careful consideration. Noting the need to minimize surprises on procedure ahead of INC-5.3, Bureau members expressed support for possibly reverting to the matter of proxy voting at a subsequent session of the INC in order to ensure transparency and clarity of its procedural requirements.
21. The Vice-Chair Presiding acknowledged the question of one Bureau member on the possibility of proxy votes and recognized the views of other Bureau members on possibly reverting to the issue at a future INC based on the complexity of the topic. She noted the short time remaining

until Members convene in Geneva and reiterated the need to ensure there are no surprises in advance of INC-5.3.

22. Under agenda item 4 on ‘Other matters’, the Vice-Chair Presiding provided a summary of the informational webinar for Observers held on 22 January. She noted that, during the webinar, she provided an overview of the scenario note, followed by an update from the Secretariat on the logistical and practical arrangements for the resumed session. She further noted that approximately 200 participants had attended, and that a recording of the webinar had been made available on the INC website.
23. On request of the Vice-Chair Presiding, the Secretariat provided an update on the request to organise an additional webinar ahead of INC-5.3 to provide an opportunity for all three current candidates for Chair to engage with Members of the Committee. As only two candidates had expressed interest in participating in the proposed webinar by the deadline of 22 January, the Secretariat had not been able to make necessary arrangements to organize the webinar.
24. Several Bureau members noted that their constituencies had been engaging with the candidates for Chair through virtual meetings, while another Bureau member noted the intention of their constituency to convene such a meeting in advance of INC-5.3. The Vice-Chair Presiding expressed support to all Bureau members for continuing to facilitate engagement between their respective constituencies and the candidates for Chair and encouraged this engagement to continue until INC-5.3.
25. Before closing the agenda item, the Vice-Chair Presiding noted strong encouragement from the Bureau for all regional groups to continue to work toward the possibility of elections by acclamation while noting the importance of preparing for the possibility of elections by secret ballot.
26. She noted strong support from the Bureau in the contents of the letter circulated on 23 January² and noted agreement from the Bureau on the sequencing of elections at INC-5.3 to proceed with electing the Chair first, followed by any remaining positions on the Bureau. She requested Bureau members to convey this shared understanding to their constituencies.
27. In her closing remarks, the Vice-Chair Presiding thanked Bureau members for their ongoing contributions, dedication and constructive engagement ahead of INC-5.3 and invited Bureau members to continue engaging bilaterally on any outstanding issues ahead of the next meeting of the Bureau.
28. Before closing the meeting, the Vice-Chair Presiding noted the next Bureau meeting would be held on 6 February 2026 at 14:30 CET. She noted the meeting would be delivered in a hybrid capacity, with Bureau members invited to attend either virtually or in-person at the International Environment House in Geneva, subject to their availability. She confirmed further information would be circulated by the Secretariat ahead of the meeting.

² Attached to this report as Appendix I.

Appendix I

Ms. Johanna Lissinger Peitz
Vice Chair Presiding over the INC
23 January 2026

To: Vice-Chairs of the INC

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your continued support and engagement throughout this demanding phase of our work as we prepare for the election of officers at INC-5.3. We are all mindful of our shared responsibility to facilitate a process that reflects the diversity of views across all regional groups while supporting a clear, inclusive and transparent process.

At our meeting on 20 January, we were unable to reach a common understanding on the sequencing of elections and discussed possible alternative approaches that align with the draft rules of procedure. Following exchanges with many of you, it appears that these alternative approaches are unlikely to provide the workable solution that we are all seeking.

I wish to fully acknowledge the extensive preparatory work of the Bureau to date, as well as its commitment to ensuring a smooth and effective INC-5.3 through diligent and careful efforts.

During our exchanges, we also highlighted the understanding at the Bureau meeting on 16 October 2025 that nominations by regions of candidates for the position of Chair were to be submitted by 31 October 2025. We are grateful to the three outstanding candidates for Chair and for their readiness to guide this important process. I encourage all three candidates to use the remaining time to engage with Members of the Committee and among themselves to explore possibilities to move toward an election by acclamation at INC-5.3, where feasible.

We have been continuously working together to ensure smooth, transparent and inclusive preparations for INC-5.3 to enable Members of the Committee to make informed decisions with clarity and confidence. I wish to acknowledge the shared interest of the Bureau, and of the constituencies we represent, in ensuring an efficient process at INC-5.3 so the Committee can continue with its substantive work.

I remain confident that, through continued constructive engagement and respect for the processes agreed within the Bureau and the applicable draft rules of procedure, we can move forward in a way that reassures all delegations, supports the effective conduct of our work and continues to provide transparency and unity.

At our meeting on 28 January, I hope that we can unite around a strong message that the regional nomination process should be fully respected. It is my further hope that we can encourage all Members of the Committee to make every effort to move toward a single candidate by acclamation.

I look forward to our discussions on 28 January.

Regards,

Johanna Lissinger Peitz