

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 (SPP OEWG)

18 February 2025

15:30 - 17:30 (EAT; GMT + 3) virtual

Meeting Summary

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

1. The Chair, Ms. Gudi Alkemade, opened the meeting and introduced the provisional agenda. The agenda was adopted without any changes.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the meeting summary

2. The summary of the Bureau meeting held on 15 January 2025 was adopted without any comments.

Agenda item 3: OEWG 3.2 preparations

(a) Roadmap for the establishment of the Panel

3. The secretariat presented the draft roadmap towards the resumed third session of the OEWG and the Intergovernmental Meeting (IM), reflecting timelines for documents submission, Bureau meetings, an in-person Bureau retreat, planned briefings and webinars, as well as a possible timeline for the first session of the governing body of the panel.

4. Bureau members expressed general support for the proposed roadmap. One member noted their region's expectation that the meetings can be successfully concluded with the establishment of the Panel. Another member expressed appreciation for the webinar on examples from other panels for the establishment of a science-policy panel on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention. This had helped clarify the difference between multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and science-policy panels, and provided valuable lessons learned and best practices, which can be used for the OEWG process.

5. Bureau members further noted that given the international meeting calendar which includes many relevant meetings towards the end of the year (UNEA, UNFCCC COP, Minamata COP, Montreal Protocol MOP), it may not be realistic to hold the first meeting of the governing body of the panel at the end of year 2025. It might instead be tentatively scheduled for early 2026. They also suggested that the proposed in-person Bureau retreat may be better scheduled back-to-back with the OEWG 3.2 preparatory meetings on 14 June. It was furthermore emphasized that for the success of the resumed third session, it is crucial that governments and stakeholders receive the documentation well in advance of the meeting so that there is sufficient time to prepare.

6. With regard to the briefing on the scenario note, the Chair explained, at the request of one member, that this was intended to provide clarity to all OEWG focal points on the expected outcomes and the organization of work, to ensure the smooth running of the meeting. The Chair

noted that a Bureau meeting would be held soon after the briefing to take stock of the feedback and further finalise the scenario note as needed.

7. At the request of one member, the secretariat informed the Bureau that the invitation letters for the OEWG 3.2 and for the Intergovernmental Meeting (IM) are being processed. The letter of invitation for OEWG 3.2 is expected to be sent shortly, and the letter of invitation for the IM will follow soon after. It was noted that the invitation letters cross-reference each other as the meetings will be held back to back.

8. The secretariat further indicated that the deadline to submit the working documents and make the advance English versions available on the OEWG website is 22 March 2025. However, efforts are being made to make the documents available earlier, by the end of February or early March. The secretariat also noted that the translated versions of the foundational document and the rules of procedure for the governing body of the panel are available in the OEWG 3.1 meeting report.

9. The secretariat was requested to update the roadmap following the Bureau's discussion and make it available on the Bureau meeting page after the meeting.

(b) Organization of work

10. The secretariat presented the proposed clustering of topics to be discussed in three contact groups (CGs), based on the document made available in advance of the Bureau meeting. Since no further comments were received on the tentative meeting schedule, it was assumed that there was general support for providing as much time as possible for the contact groups to finalize the text.

11. Regarding the sequencing of the topics to be addressed, the Chair clarified her intention to schedule discussions on the more difficult issues early in the meeting. The expectation is that solutions to those issues, such as those related to decision making, membership, observers and operating principles, will help unlock discussions on other topics.

12. Bureau members expressed general support for the approach to cluster related topics, including text from the foundational document and the relevant rules of procedure for the governing body of the panel. They noted that the distribution of topics across the proposed contact groups may not be evenly divided and emphasized the importance of good time management. One member suggested considering the possibility of splitting Contact Group 1 into two contact groups, while ensuring that closely related topics such as membership and decision-making are addressed in the same contact group.

13. One member also asked whether it is strictly necessary to finalize the rules of procedures for the governing body of the panel to establish the panel. The Chair reminded the Bureau that, following the outcome of the first part of the third session of the OEWG, the working group had agreed to focus the resumed session on finalizing the foundational document and the rules of procedures for the governing body of the panel, while noting that it is the governing body of the panel that adopts its own rules of procedures. This agreement cannot be ignored, as it was part of the package that enabled the meeting to resume its work, indicating that at least the key elements should be resolved. For the establishment of the panel, the foundational document and the related decision should be prioritized to enable the panel's establishment.

14. Members further emphasized the importance to clearly communicate which texts the contact groups will be working on at any given time.

15. The Chair clarified that the difference in workload among the contact groups could be managed by either having more contact groups or by allocating more time for the proposed contact groups with heavy workload. Considering the need for informal discussions, the decision to have three contact groups also considered the availability of co-facilitators. She further clarified that the organization of work will be developed in more detail ahead of the meeting, with a specific focus on the sequencing of the contact groups and the topics to be addressed in the first one or two days, as was the practice in previous meetings.

16. Following the discussion, the Bureau agreed to request the secretariat to provide a document presenting the texts to be addressed in the proposed clustering of topics, as well as the proposed sequencing of the discussions, for consideration by the Bureau at the next meeting.

17. The Chair also confirmed her intention to reach out with key governments and regions and welcomed the offer of Bureau members to support outreach efforts in advance of the meeting.

(c) Budget

18. The secretariat provided an update on the budget situation, indicating that, with the latest pledges from the European Union, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for 2025, the remaining funding gap is USD 419,333.

Agenda item 4: Preparation for the Intergovernmental Meeting (IM)

19. The secretariat presented the provisional agenda for the IM, which will commence its work on 19 June in the afternoon. It was clarified that the IM is expected to apply the UNEA rules of procedure *mutatis mutandis* and elect two co-chairs (one from a developing country and one from a developed country) to preside over the IM.

20. Following questions from Bureau members, the secretariat clarified the following:

- the IM is expected to be set up as a high-level, ceremonial meeting to adopt the outcomes of OEWG and establish the panel.
- for the establishment of the panel, no legal scrub is expected, but the secretariat will make arrangements for editing and translations to be done following the completion of the work by OEWG, overnight and ahead of the IM, as has been the practice in other meetings, including UNEA.

21. It was furthermore suggested that the secretariat, with the help of the Bureau members, could perform outreach to Member States on the proposed application of the UNEA rules of procedure and the election of officers.

Agenda item 5: Other matters

22. WHO clarified its continued engagement in the process and preparations for the meeting. Ms. Onyon further informed the Bureau that the report on WHO's engagement, provided to the WHO Executive Board, did not raise any comments or questions, and confirmed WHO's continued commitment to the process and the possible provision of secretariat services.

23. Ms. Onyon also confirmed that it was recommended that UNEP's Executive Director request the WHO Director-General to draw attention to its members to the invitation for the IM, upon which the secretariat confirmed that this was being actioned.

24. Following questions of Bureau members, the Chair clarified that, based on the discussions at OEWG 3.1 and the clear need for governments to be better informed in order to make a decision on who should provide the secretariat services, the discussion in OEWG 3.2 will focus on the functions of the secretariat, rather than who will be invited to host it and its location. The latter will be for the governing body of the panel to decide. This approach will also allow time for governments to consider possible options and for organizations to provide more details on the secretariat services to be offered and possible hosting arrangements.

Agenda item 6: Closing of the meeting

25. The Chair thanked the secretariat for all their work on the preparations and the Bureau members for their valuable input. The Bureau agreed that its next meeting will be held on Thursday, 3 April 2025. The meeting was closed at 17:40 EAT.

Participants

Bureau members

Ms. Gudi Alkemade, Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Policy Coordinator, International Affairs Directorate Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, The Netherlands

Ms. Linda Kosgei, Rapporteur of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Head of MEAs, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry of Kenya, Kenya

Prof. Jinhui Li, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Distinguished Professor, School of Environment, Tsinghua University, China

H.E. Saqlain Syedah, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Ambassador of Pakistan to Germany, Pakistan

Mr. Michel Tschirren, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Senior Policy Advisor at the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland

Mr. Alexandru Roznov, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Assistant Counsellor, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania

Mr. Roman Filonenko, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Senior Specialist of the Environmental Safety Division of the Government of Ukraine, Ukraine

Ms. Judith Torres, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and International Relations and Cooperation Office of the Ministry of the Environment, Uruguay

Mr. Linroy Christian, Vice Chair of the Bureau of the OEWG SPP and Director of Department of Analytical Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda

UNEP SPP Secretariat:

Ms. Tessa Goverse

Ms. Nalini Sharma

Mr. Stadler Trengove

Mr. Alvin Gachie

Ms. Irene Galan

Ms. Kaai Tung Chan

Ms. Leonie Greene

Ms. Pia Kohler

Mr. Richard Miesen

Mr. Zhanyun Wang

Observer(s):

Ms. Lesley Onyon, World Health Organization

Regrets

Bureau member:

Mr. Oumar Diaouré Cisse, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the SPP OEWG and Point Focal SAICM, Ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Assainissement et du Développement Durable, Mali