United Nations Environment Programme

22 January 2026

Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment
Bureau meeting
Tuesday, 20 January 2026
15:00- 17:00 EAT
Online

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 20 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);

   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 by noting that the meeting would have an abbreviated agenda. She proposed that the Bureau focus on hearing reflections on the Members' webinar, held on 15 January, and on continuing discussions on key issues where differing views remain, including the sequencing of elections at INC-5.3. Under 'Other matters', she proposed to raise the possibility of a webinar for the three candidates for Chair, as was suggested during the Members' webinar. One Bureau member requested to raise the issue of visa issuance under 'Other matters'. With this addition, the agenda was adopted.

6. Under agenda item 2 on 'Preparations for INC-5.3', the Executive Secretary provided a logistics update relating to INC-5.3, noting that rooms will be available for regional group meetings at the venue on the morning of 7 February 2026 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Regional groups are requested to inform the Secretariat of the timing of their regional meeting as soon as possible through their respective Bureau members or regional coordinators. She provided a

brief update on the approved registrations, noting that there were 305 delegates from 150 Members and 192 representatives from 192 Observer organizations, bringing the total number of approved participants for INC-5.3 to 497.

7. The Vice-Chair Presiding provided an overview of the Members' webinar, noting that the support heard for the scenario note and pathway presented toward INC-5.3 was a testament to the extensive work carried out by Bureau members in engaging with their respective regional groups. She recalled several issues that were raised in the Members' webinar, including the sequencing of elections and geographical rotation for candidates for the position of Chair. She noted that, while these are essential issues to consider under agenda item 2 of the meeting, at this point in time no additions to the scenario note were foreseen on these issues as divergent views remained.

8. The Vice-Chair Presiding thanked the Bureau members from the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) for reassuring the Bureau that one of the current Bureau members from the APG would resign if the candidate for Chair from the regional group was the successful candidate at INC-5.3.

9. She remarked that, based on the feedback from the previous Bureau meeting, the Scenario Note would be adjusted to include reference to seats for duly registered observers being made available at INC-5.3 on a first come, first-served basis. The Bureau agreed that, following the addition of the sentence on seats for observers, the scenario note could be translated into all six official United Nations languages.

10. She identified two key issues that were discussed at the Members' webinar and proposed that these issues should form the basis of the Bureau's discussion during the meeting: the sequencing of elections for Chair and other vacant Bureau positions; and the view of some Members that rules 9 and 11 of the draft rules of procedure suggest that the new Chair should not come from the same region as the previous Chair. She recalled that the draft rules of procedure are silent on the matter of regional rotation of a Chair while remarking that the Bureau should engage in a discussion on the matter to ensure there is a common understanding of how INC-5.3 will be carried out. Before opening the floor, she requested that Bureau members work to identify creative solutions within the rules of procedure to move forward rather than restating existing positions.

11. Bureau members expressed support for the constructive and informative webinar, noting widespread support among the regional groups for the content of the webinar, scenario note and information note on elections.

12. On the issue of sequencing of elections, some Bureau members expressed strong support for holding elections for Chair first while others continued to support holding elections for other vacant Bureau positions before the election for Chair. Other Bureau members expressed flexibility on the approach. One Bureau member recalled that rule 9(1) of the draft rules of procedure permits only one Chair and ten Vice-Chairs on the Bureau while noting that holding all elections for Vice-Chairs before the election for Chair would result in eleven Vice-Chairs on the Bureau.

13. On the issue of regional rotation raised by some Members during the informal webinar on 15 January, a Bureau member restated the position of some regional group members that the new Chair should not come from the same region as the previous Chair. On request of the Bureau, the Principal Legal Advisor advised that there is no requirement for rotation of the Chair position between regional groups under the draft rules of procedure. Any candidate from any regional group may stand for election for Chair, regardless of whether the previous Chair was also from that regional group.

14. It was proposed that equitable regional representation and gender balance may be factors for Members of the Committee to consider when deciding how to exercise their votes, but that these factors should not affect the eligibility of any candidate. It was also noted that the principle of inclusivity should continue to apply to ensure all candidates for Chair remain eligible.

15. On the sequencing of elections, the Principal Legal Advisor noted that the draft rules of procedure do not include reference to the order in which elections must be held. The draft rules only note that the Committee shall elect a Bureau composed of one Chair and ten Vice-Chairs and that one Vice-Chair shall act as Rapporteur. Within United Nations practice, the Chair is typically elected first, after which the newly elected Chair presides over the remainder of the session, including any additional elections for vacant positions in the Bureau. The draft rules do not refer to a two-stage process whereby all Vice-Chairs are elected and then the Chair is elected from among those Vice-Chairs. The draft rules of procedure also contain limitations on the number of Vice-Chairs, limiting this number to no more than ten.

16. One Bureau member conveyed the understanding from their regional group that the Bureau includes only the Vice-Chairs, one of whom acts as Rapporteur, and that the Chair is considered outside this composition. The Bureau member noted that the regional group considered that a candidate for Chair must first be elected as Vice-Chair before being eligible for the position of Chair.

17. A Bureau member proposed that an alternate approach could involve holding elections for vacant Vice-Chair positions in the Bureau followed by election for Chair with the understanding that no decision on elections would be gavelled until all elections have been held. This would ensure that the elections are held consistent with the draft rules of procedure and that all elections are gavelled at the end of the agenda item. Another Bureau member emphasized the importance of considering the recommended deadline of 31 October 2025 for regional nominations for Chair in light of the possibility of additional nominations for Chair before elections at INC-5.3.

18. The Vice-Chair Presiding reiterated that her preference was to hold the election of the Chair first followed by elections for any Vice-Chairs, as advised by the Principal Legal Advisor and consistent with United Nations practice. She also acknowledged the need for flexibility and emphasized that the Bureau should work to find a way forward in the informal setting before arriving at the formal setting of INC-5.3. She noted that some Bureau members preferred efficient elections at INC-5.3 with other Bureau members proposing that it may be preferable to plan for smooth elections that flexibly account for all views. Based on the discussions and proposed approaches, the Vice-Chair Presiding acknowledged that it may be a suitable compromise to move forward with a proposal from Bureau members to hold some elections for Vice-Chairs before the election for Chair and some elections of Vice-Chairs after election for Chair. She reiterated her statement from previous meetings that, regardless of the order of sequencing of elections, all three candidates will remain eligible for Chair.

19. A Bureau member highlighted that the draft rules of procedure did not contemplate the current situation and emphasized the need to look for a way to account for the unique circumstances that have arisen. There was support among Bureau members for a possible compromise approach to the sequencing of elections that takes into account differing views while also ensuring that the approach is consistent with the draft rules of procedure, including by ensuring that there would not be a point at which there are eleven Vice-Chairs.

20. On request of the Bureau, the Principal Legal Officer advised that working toward a common understanding of the process for elections in advance of INC-5.3 would ensure clarity in the process and facilitate swift progress to voting for each position. As the draft rules of procedure are silent on the sequencing of elections, the Committee may decide on the order in which

elections are held. However, the Principal Legal Advisor noted the procedure for elections must be made clear before voting commences so that it can be read aloud to the Committee, ensuring Members have the same understanding of the process.

21. The Principal Legal Advisor further clarified that each election is held for a specific position, and that a candidate is elected to a specific role of either Chair or Vice-Chair and not to solely become a non-specific member of the Bureau. If a Member of the Committee is elected as a Vice-Chair, then chooses to remain a candidate for Chair, and is the successful candidate, they would need to resign from their position as Vice-Chair before being elected as Chair. A Vice-Chair must resign from their role in order to assume the position of Chair.

22. The Vice-Chair Presiding noted that the preferred approach would be to ensure the Committee agrees on the way forward to elections. She emphasized the importance of Bureau members engaging with each other in the lead-up to INC-5.3, including outside of the scheduled Bureau meetings, in order to arrive at a common understanding in advance of the resumed session. She further noted that differing views expressed on sequencing of elections suggest that a compromise approach to elections may provide the flexibility required to reach a common understanding. She noted that, if no common understanding on the elections process is reached by INC-5.3, she would make a ruling at the resumed session based on the views expressed, advice of the Principal Legal Advisor and past UN practice.

23. The Vice-Chair Presiding encouraged Bureau members to continue engaging with their constituencies to reach a common understanding on the elections process. With a view to finding an approach to elections that takes into account the differing views, she proposed to work with the Secretariat to set out a document outlining a possible compromise approach to elections that consider differing views of regional groups while also ensuring compliance with the draft rules of procedure. She noted that, until there was agreement on the path forward, her preferred approach would be to elect the Chair first, which was supported by several Bureau members.

24. One Bureau member recalled discussions from previous Bureau meetings on the need to consider approaches to narrow the list of candidates ahead of INC-5.3 to support efforts towards reaching elections by acclamation. The Bureau member further proposed that gender balance and equitable geographical representation be considered as a means of narrowing the list of candidates toward the possibility of acclamation.

25. The Vice-Chair Presiding emphasized that all three candidates are highly qualified, and all remain eligible for election. She clarified that her proposal for sequencing of elections will not address the issue of narrowing down the list of candidates towards acclamation and will only be focused on finding a middle-ground solution to differing views on sequencing of elections while ensuring the approach remains within the draft rules of procedure. She reiterated that, absent a common understanding on the sequencing of elections, she would propose to proceed by electing the Chair first, followed by elections for any vacant Vice-Chair positions.

26. Before closing discussions under agenda item 2, the Vice-Chair Presiding reiterated the strong preference amongst the Bureau and Members of the Committee for elections to occur by acclamation and encouraged the Bureau to continue consulting towards this objective. She then recalled her proposal from the 17 December 2025 Bureau meeting to facilitate a virtual meeting of all candidates towards this objective and noted that no such requests had yet been received. She reminded the Bureau that, if election by acclamation was not possible, the Committee must prepare for elections by secret ballot. She restated her preference to follow the advice of the Principal Legal Advisor and elect the Chair before the Vice-Chairs while also reiterating that she remains committed to finding a common path forward.

27. Under the agenda item 3 on ‘Other matters’, the Vice-Chair Presiding recalled a request raised at the Members’ webinar for an additional webinar to be held ahead of INC-5.3 to serve as a platform for all current candidates for Chair to engage with Members of the Committee in an informal setting. She emphasized that this webinar should only be held if all three candidates agreed and invited the candidates to indicate their interest to participate in a webinar by 22 January 2026.

28. On the topic of visa issuance, one Bureau member conveyed that regional group members were experiencing difficulties in obtaining visas to attend INC-5.3. The Vice-Chair Presiding requested the Secretariat to remain available on addressing this important issue.

29. The Vice-Chair Presiding reminded the Bureau that an informal webinar for observers would be held on 22 January 2026 to provide an overview of the scenario note. She emphasized the importance of ensuring transparency for observers throughout the process.

30. In her closing remarks, the Vice-Chair Presiding thanked Bureau members for their constructive engagement with constituencies ahead of the informal webinar for Members of the Committee and further thanked the Secretariat for the successful organization of the webinar.

31. Before closing the meeting, she thanked the Bureau for its ongoing contributions and invited Bureau members to continue engaging bilaterally on key outstanding issues ahead of the next meeting of the Bureau.

32. Before closing the meeting, the Vice-Chair Presiding proposed for the next Bureau meeting to be held on 28 January at 15:00 EAT to continue discussions on key outstanding issues.