Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment
Bureau meeting
Thursday, 20 February 2025
15:00- 17:00 EAT
Online

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2025

Note by the Secretariat

1. The meeting was attended by the following members:

   INC Chair: Mr. Luis Vayas Valdivieso (Ecuador);

   African States: Ms. Juliet Kabera (Rwanda); 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).

2. The Bureau meeting was joined by the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme, Ms. Inger Andersen.

3. The Secretariat was represented by the Executive Secretary of the INC, Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp.

4. The INC Chair opened the meeting by emphasizing that the purpose of the meeting was to take stock of the progress made in preparing for the second part of the fifth session of the INC (INC-5.2) and to engage in a discussion on the key planning and logistical components in the lead-up to INC-5.2.

5. In his opening remarks, the Chair acknowledged the commitment of Member States and thanked the Bureau members for their constant engagement and dialogue, highlighting that he continues to welcome a diversity of viewpoints from all Members as a constructive part of this alive process. He reiterated the importance of the Bureau meetings and noted that it was gratifying to receive the continued support of the Bureau. He welcomed the Executive Director to the Bureau meeting and informed the Bureau that she would provide an update on logistical preparations towards INC-5.2.

6. The Bureau considered the provisional agenda for the meeting. A proposal was made to consider, at the beginning of the meeting, the summary and action points arising from its

previous meeting as previously circulated to the Bureau for comments and subsequently made available on its website. In addition, on the proposal of the Chair, the Bureau agreed to consider letters received by it from observers under the agenda item on Other Matters. On this understanding, the provisional agenda for the meeting was adopted.

7. The Bureau considered and approved the summary and action points from its meeting held on 21 January 2025.

8. In her intervention, the Executive Director emphasized that it is imperative to gavel an agreement at INC-5.2 and that this Bureau meeting will advance the groundwork toward achieving the mandate provided by UNEA Resolution 5/14. She underlined that it is essential to be creative and decisive, stressing the importance of discussing ideas, but also taking concrete steps.

9. The Executive Director informed the Bureau that the Secretariat is in active discussions with the Government of Switzerland and the UN Office in Geneva towards finalizing the date and venue of INC-5.2, with the expected venue in Geneva in the first half of August. The current discussions concerned a venue for 11 days, with the Government of Switzerland covering the venue costs. It was expected that the session would include a high-level segment. While highlighting the importance of determining a date and venue as early as possible, she underscored the complexities associated with finding an appropriate time for INC-5.2 that does not conflict with other multilateral processes and still enables broad participation and attendance. She indicated that the Secretariat expects to have confirmation of the date and venue within the coming days, at which point the Bureau will be advised and Members will be informed through the formal UNEP notification system. Responding to an inquiry from the Bureau, the Executive Director clarified that while the venue at the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi remained a possibility, the planned renovations of the meeting facilitates there in the summer 2025 meant that meeting room availability was limited and might not meet the minimum requirements of the INC.

10. Bureau members reiterated the importance of determining the date and venue as early as possible to ensure broad participation and the need to provide for ministerial engagement. Some members noted that July dates would have been preferable but, given the challenges with the scheduling and the need to keep the momentum, August dates would be acceptable. Bureau members urged the Secretariat to liaise with the host country to ensure visas will be facilitated for all Members of the INC well in advance of INC-5.2. The Executive Director took note of these comments and assured the Bureau that visas will be issued according to United Nations standards and practices.

11. The Bureau noted that, while information on financial contributions was publicly available, it would be helpful to receive a briefing from the Secretariat on the financial situation of the INC, including details in relation to INC-5.2.

12. The Bureau discussed a document setting out key dates and events in the lead-up to INC-5.2, including Bureau meetings, Heads of Delegation (HODs) meetings, regional meetings, possible high-level UNEP events on the margins of other MEA processes, and a proposed Bureau retreat, which the Chair circulated to the Bureau members on 13 February 2025. The Chair explained the strategic rationale for the document and highlighted that it was intended to serve as a starting point to facilitate discussions on the roadmap. Bureau members thanked the Chair for the document, recognising the importance of having a clear outline for the period leading up to INC-5.2.

13. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare a roadmap document in advance of the next Bureau meeting setting out key dates, required documentation, objectives, possible outcomes of each meeting and how they can contribute to a successful INC-5.2. The Executive Director

noted that the UNEA roadmaps prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to Member States may provide a useful template.

14. The Bureau discussed the proposed in-person HODs meeting provisionally planned for May 2025. The Chair suggested that the meeting could be used to discuss areas of the text with higher convergence and/or engage on complex issues with more divergence, highlighting the need for inputs from the regions through their Bureau members for an effective planning of the HoDs. The need to discuss the organization of work for INC-5.2 was also highlighted. An idea was raised that the work could potentially be organized in two working groups on control measures and on means of implementation facilitated by the Co-Chairs appointed at INC-5.1.

15. Bureau members underscored the importance of effectively using the limited time at the in-person HODs to ensure meaningful progress on key issues. They emphasized that the HODs should focus on matters of substance rather than only procedural matters. The possibility of organizing an additional virtual HODs meeting was also noted.

16. The issue of the number of delegates from each Member at the HODs was also discussed, with some noting the possible need to increase participation to one HOD plus two delegates, whereby delegations could for example draw on the Permanent Missions in Nairobi. The Executive Director clarified that while the Secretariat does not pronounce on the size of delegations, it would only be in a position to fund travel of two delegates from eligible countries. In response to requests from Bureau members, she noted that the Secretariat can prepare, for the consideration of the Bureau, possible scenarios for the organization of the HODs.

17. The Bureau discussed letters that it received from civil society and observer groups. The Executive Secretary indicated that eight letters have been received since 11 February 2025, in addition to the letter of 17 January 2025 addressed to the Chair which the Bureau discussed at its previous meeting. The letters included communications from observers representing Indigenous Peoples, waste pickers, women, scientists, local and sub-national governments and regional coalitions of NGOs and raised concerns about transparency and participation of observers at INC-5.1, as well as requests on the clarity of the organization of work moving forward. She noted that the letters requested the Bureau to discuss these matters.

18. Bureau members acknowledged the concerns expressed in the letters and underscored the importance of effective observer inclusion in the INC process, noting that the mandate in UNEA Resolution 5/14 emphasizes the value of observer participation. They emphasized the need to address engagement and communication with observers. In this regard, proposals were made to consider the timing of interventions in opening and closing plenaries to allocate time for observer interventions, providing adequate premises to facilitate observer participation in contact groups and strengthening communication with observers regarding closed sessions. At the same time, Bureau members noted that informal meetings limited to Member-only consultations and drafting groups played an important role in negotiations and were a well-established practice in the UN processes, in line with the principle of transparency and the draft rules of procedure.

19. The Chair emphasized his strong belief in the importance of contributions and participation from observers, as well as his commitment to transparency and inclusion. He underscored that process decisions made at INC-5.1 were fully in line with the draft rules of procedure applied to the work of the INC on a provisional basis and with the existing practice of intergovernmental processes, and that the work done at INC-5.1 received support from Members and from observers. At the same time, he noted the need to strengthen communication with observers and to provide space for their statements, as well as to address concerns in a way that supports the INC process. The Chair also expressed strong reservations about the appropriateness of calling into question the relevant mandates and consistency of decisions made with the draft rules of procedure, international law and human rights, as some of the letters appeared to do. He

indicated that he intended to address this matter and reaffirmed his full support for the participation of observers.

20. While noting that there are usually objective limits on the number of observers in rooms due to space limitations at any meeting facility and very high numbers of observers attending INC sessions, the Executive Director indicated that the Secretariat will continue to make every possible effort to ensure dedicated meeting space for observers at INC-5.2. She further noted that transparency in the INC process is critical, and the Secretariat will continue to support the Bureau in identifying ways to ensure transparency and inclusion of observers.

21. The Bureau also discussed participation of observers in meetings held in the intersessional period. Both the desirability of having such meetings open and the need to provide for informal meetings space for Members were raised. The Bureau agreed that purpose, modalities and outcomes of any intersessional meetings would need to be defined before their format can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

22. The Bureau agreed to prepare, with the assistance of the Secretariat, a response to the letters received.

23. The Chair reiterated the importance of the Bureau engaging in regional consultations for any upcoming meetings and requested the Secretariat to continue in its dialogues with regions on organizing regional consultations.

24. In his closing remarks, the Chair summarized the key elements discussed and thanked Bureau members for their inputs, highlighting that the key to success at INC-5.2 is working together and recognised the continuous work of Member States in this regard.

25. The Bureau provisionally scheduled its next meeting for 18 March 2025. One member notified that he might not be able to participate in the meeting due to prior commitments.