

Note on Cost-Saving Measures for INC-5.3

Note by the Secretariat

20 November 2025

I. Introduction

1. The [third part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee](#) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-5.3), is scheduled to take place on 7 February 2026 at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) in Geneva, Switzerland, as decided by the Bureau of the INC at its meeting held on [30 October 2025](#). The one-day resumed INC session is to be convened for organizational and administrative purposes with the focus on election of officers including for the position of Chair.
2. This note has been prepared at the request of the Bureau of the INC, which, at its meeting on 12 November 2025, emphasized the importance of conducting the election of officers, including for the position of Chair, in a cost-effective manner and requested the INC Secretariat to provide a detailed breakdown of the current projected expenditures and to explore further cost-saving measures in addition to those previously discussed with the Bureau.
3. In response to that request, this note provides an overview of:
 - a) the estimated costs associated with the organization of a one-day in-person resumed INC session in Geneva;
 - b) cost-saving measures already being undertaken; and
 - c) additional options not yet explored in an effort to maximize cost-savings across all associated components of a one-day session for the purpose of elections

II. Detailed breakdown of projected expenditures for INC-5.3

4. The estimated budget for a one-day resumed INC session is based on the following cost items:

Cost item	Cost in USD
a) Conference Services (interpretation and conference service staff)	20,650
b) Documentation (translation and report writing)	12,589
c) Travel (flights, daily subsistence allowance, UNDSS replacement costs) UN Secretariat Staff, inc. UN Department of Safety and Security	54,106
d) Travel (flights and daily subsistence allowance)	508,248 ¹

¹ These estimated assume 1 delegate per country in the [UNDESA Country classification](#) list for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Actual expenditures are expected to be lower, as the number of travel-support requests will be less than the budgeted amount. As reported to the Bureau at its meeting on 3 December 2025, the expected number of travel-support requests is below 100, which is comparatively lower than in previous INC sessions.

Delegates (based on 1 delegate per eligible country)	
e) Administrative Overhead	2,327
f) Contingencies (5%)	1,778
g) Programme Support Costs (13%)	77,961
Overall Total	677,659

- a) **Conference Services:** This item covers full conference services for the resumed session, including simultaneous interpretation in the six official United Nations languages, operation of audio systems, and the services of meeting room attendants, technicians, and conference officers, as well as associated session support staff and coordination costs. As per UN Headquarters principle rule, since UNEP is headquartered in Nairobi, the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) serves as the conference servicing duty station for UNEP meetings. Therefore, UNON Division of Conference Services provides all documentation and interpretation services. For meetings outside Nairobi, UNON strives to assemble cost-efficient teams while maintaining high service quality. For example, for Geneva meetings, local interpreters are typically hired, with one UNON team leader overseeing operations and coordinating freelance interpreters.
- b) **Documentation:** This item covers the translation, processing, and issuance of pre-session, in-session, and post-session documentation into the six official United Nations languages, in accordance with UN documentation standards. It also covers costs related to report drafting, editorial review, formatting, and the production of the final meeting report and related official records. The cost indicated here is an estimate and may be reduced once the total number of words and pages in documents for the resumed session are finalized.
- c) **Travel of UN Secretariat Staff:** The Secretariat will seek to travel the minimum number of staff to Geneva. This item covers the travel of Secretariat staff whose presence is essential for the smooth conduct of the meeting, as well as staff from the UN Department of Safety and Security. It includes transportation, terminal expenses, and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) in accordance with UN rules and applicable rates. The INC Secretariat is coordinating with the ISP Secretariat and Multilateral Environment Agreements based in Geneva, and costs under this item may be reduced further by utilizing additional staff already present on-site.
- d) **Travel of Delegates²:** This item covers the travel of one funded delegate from eligible developing countries and countries with economies in transition. It includes air travel, terminal expenses, and DSA in accordance with UN rules and applicable rates.
- e) **Administrative overhead:** This item covers general administrative costs associated with organizing and supporting the session.

² These estimated assume 1 delegate per country in the [UNDESA Country classification](#) list for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Actual expenditures are expected to be lower, as the number of travel-support requests will be less than the budgeted amount. As reported to the Bureau at its meeting on 3 December 2025, the expected number of travel-support requests is below 100, which is comparatively lower than in previous INC sessions.

- f) **Contingencies:** A contingency provision of five per cent is included to cover unforeseen costs that may arise during the preparation or conduct of the meeting, such as emergency logistical requirements, or unexpected increases in service rates.
 - g) **Programme Support Costs:** In accordance with UN Administrative and Financial Regulations, a standard PSC rate of 13% is applied to the total direct costs. This charge covers indirect costs incurred by UNEP in providing overall management, administrative, financial, and operational support to the implementation of the activities related to the organization of the resumed session.
5. The venue expenses are not included in the budget estimates, as the INC Secretariat is still finalizing the procurement process before proceeding with the contract.

III. Cost-saving measures already being undertaken

6. To ensure the efficient and effective use of resources, and to minimize costs associated with the organization of INC-5.3, the Secretariat has undertaken a range of measures, including:
- a) **Venue and room arrangements efficiencies:**
 - i. **Venue:**
 - INC-5.3 will be held immediately after, and at the same venue as, the first session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP). The INC Secretariat will use the meeting rooms already allocated for ISP. An additional meeting room will be required for regional consultations, as the INC includes additional regions.
 - The INC Secretariat will also utilize interpretation and technical support infrastructure already in place for ISP, extending those services for an additional day.
 - ii. **Room setup and configuration:**
 - The CICG has been secured on the condition that room configurations remain unchanged between the two meetings. Should there be any requests to alter room configurations, it would result in additional costs.
 - Considering the organizational and administrative focus of this short, resumed session, only the plenary room, regional consultation rooms, and an overflow room for following plenary proceedings when allocated seats in the plenary room are full will be provided for this one-day resumed session.
 - Rooms for regional consultations by Members of the Committee will be available from 08:00 on Saturday, 7 February. Extending the length of use of these rooms is not possible due to the allocation of the rooms by the ISP in the days prior. Extending the regional consultations would also incur additional room rental costs and potentially increase DSA for delegates.
 - Delegation rooms and bilateral meeting rooms will not be available at INC-5.3.
 - No dedicated space will be allocated for additional stakeholder activities, including observer coordination, media briefings, or other purposes.
 - iii. **Plenary hall and delegates' seating:**
 - The allocated plenary hall has a capacity of approximately 490 delegates. The delegation of each Member of the Committee will be allocated two seats: one at the table with access to a microphone, and one seat directly behind. Simultaneous

interpretation into all six official UN languages will be provided in the plenary room.

- Remaining participants can follow the proceedings from the limited plenary room seats or the overflow room. The overflow room will have video live stream in English, and participants should note that a maximum seating capacity will apply. No additional overflow rooms are planned, as adding further facilities would incur additional costs.
- While registration of delegations from Members of the Committee is not subject to limitation, national delegations are encouraged to consider space constraints when determining the size of their delegations to INC-5.3.

b) Staffing efficiencies:

- i. Wherever possible, existing staff in Geneva, including those already supporting the ISP meeting, will be assigned to support INC-5.3, reducing travel and DSA costs.
- ii. For UNON Conference Services staff, the INC Secretariat will share costs for the Meeting Coordinator and assistant, interpreter coordinator, report writers and editors with the ISP Secretariat.

c) Delegates travel efficiencies:

- i. Considering the organizational and administrative focus of this short, resumed session, Members of the Committee are strongly encouraged to consider extending their delegates already attending the first session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP), or have delegates already based at Permanent Missions in Geneva participate in INC-5.3 to ensure resources are used efficiently and in the most cost-effective and sustainable way possible.
 - ii. If the participation by the national delegates attending the ISP or by delegates based at the Permanent Missions in Geneva is not feasible, the Secretariat will fund one delegate per eligible country. In these cases, the Secretariat will not be able to accommodate last-minute changes or cancellations after a ticket has been issued as this results in financial loss.
 - iii. This item represents the **highest cost** for INC-5.3. Therefore, to reduce expenses and achieve cost-savings, Members are strongly encouraged to maximize synergies between delegates attending both ISP and INC-5.3, and possibly a Minamata Working Group beginning on 9 February, as well as by considering representation through their Permanent Missions in Geneva.
 - iv. No travel support will be provided for participants from observer organizations due to the nature of the resumed session.
7. In addition, and in line with past practice, the plenary meeting during the resumed session will be broadcast via a webcast platform, enabling participants to follow the proceedings in real-time. However, the webcast is for public viewing only and does not allow for online participation during the in-person session.

IV. Cost-saving measures and the conduct of voting without a resumed in-person meeting

8. In accordance with the request of the Bureau of the INC at its meeting on 12 November, the Secretariat has considered the following potential cost-saving measures for consideration to further

ensure the efficient and effective use of resources for the election of officers, including the Chair of the INC:

a) Virtual/hybrid participation:

- i. In its resolution [77/262](#), the General Assembly endorsed the Advisory Committee's observations that the provision of hybrid and virtual meetings requires a mandate from the General Assembly along with approved legal parameters and technical requirements³. At present, no such mandate has been issued. Consequently, and in line with guidance from UN Headquarters in New York, UN-recruited interpreters cannot be assigned to virtual or hybrid meetings. This directive applies to all duty stations and reflects the current institutional framework governing the provision of remote simultaneous interpretation. Therefore, holding INC-5.3 in a hybrid format would mean that simultaneous interpretation would be provided only in the plenary room, and not for meeting participants joining remotely.
- ii. Accordingly, a virtual or hybrid meeting is not considered an option.

b) Decision under silence procedure:

- i. As indicated in the Secretariat's note on 'Process considerations arising from the announcement by the Chair of his intention to resign,' prepared at the request of the Bureau of the INC at its meeting on 7 October 2025, Members of the Committee may consider electing through a decision under silence procedure (outline in detail under Option 3).
- ii. Should Members of the Committee so decide, the use of silence procedure for the election of all officers would enable Members to take a decision without holding the in-person meeting in Geneva.
- iii. It should be noted that while the INC rules of procedure do not include any specific rules on silence procedure, other intergovernmental bodies have relied on such procedure to adopt decisions. Any decision under silence procedure would be open to all Members and would, therefore, be made by the Committee in accordance with Rule 9 of the draft rules of procedure.

c) Secret ballot following the procedure for holding elections in the United Nations General Assembly by secret ballot without a plenary meeting during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic:

- i. In May 2020, the United Nations General Assembly had used procedures for holding elections by secret ballot without a plenary meeting during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Set out below is a summary of those procedures which can be used for the INC.
- ii. If secret ballot is required, the Secretariat can also make arrangements for representatives from the Permanent Missions accredited to one of the United Nations Headquarters, with the specific Headquarters to be designated by Members, to visit a designated room at the designated UN HQ and cast their ballot in the presence of tellers who represent Members of the Committee, as well as secretariat staff. Those countries not represented by a Permanent Mission would be encouraged to nominate proxies from Missions present at the designated UN

³ United Nations, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions*, [A/78/7](#) (2023), para. I.106.

HQ to enable them to cast their vote. Members of the INC would be requested (i) to nominate a representative from their Permanent Mission to cast the ballot and to communicate the name of that representative via a Note Verbale to the Secretariat or (ii) to nominate a proxy from the Permanent Mission of another country.

- iii. Upon their arrival at designated UN HQ, the Secretariat would check the name of the representative against the list of nominated representatives. The representative would then be given a ballot paper to cast his/her vote. Voting would be open for a limited period of time to be determined and communicated in advance to all Members. A majority of the Members of the INC would have to participate in the voting process. Once the voting process is completed the Secretariat would count the ballots in the presence of the tellers and communicate the result to the Bureau. Upon receipt of the results certified by the tellers, the Vice-Chair presiding shall immediately circulate a letter to all INC Members in order to inform them of the results and to declare elected the candidate who has received the greatest number of votes and a required majority of the members present and voting.

d) Secret ballot following the procedure for the straw poll previously used by the Asia-Pacific Group for the election of their Bureau Members:

- i. Previously, the Asia-Pacific States Group had requested the Secretariat to conduct an informal voting process (straw poll) to assist the Group in selecting the two Officers who would represent the Group on the Bureau. This option follows the procedure for this informal voting process/straw poll.
- ii. Members of the INC will be requested to submit the name of its representative who will cast the ballot of that Member from a list of candidates. It would be up to each Member to determine if they wish to have its INC focal point register as its representative to cast the ballot. To facilitate this process, an online registration form will be sent from the INC Plastic Secretariat for Members to register. The deadline for registration will be [24 hours] / [48 hours] / [72 hours] from the time the link to the registration form has been emailed.
- iii. One working day prior to the voting process, the INC Plastic Secretariat will communicate to the registered delegates the specific time when the voting will begin and the duration of the voting period. The duration of the voting period will be [24 hours] / [48 hours] / [72 hours]. The list of agreed candidates will be communicated in the same e-mail.
- iv. At the start of the voting process, the representatives who have registered will receive from the INC Plastic Secretariat an electronic copy of the ballot paper, in a PDF format.
- v. The names of the candidates [country name] will be printed on the ballot paper. Representatives will only be allowed to vote for the candidates on the ballot paper. No other names will be accepted.
- vi. The voters will be requested to use only those ballot papers that will be provided to them through the e-mail and to put an "X" in the box next to the name of the candidate whom they wish to vote for.
- vii. Only ballots cast within the duration of the voting period will be accepted.
- viii. Delegates will be invited to vote for one candidate only. Therefore, the total number of checked boxes should not exceed one. A ballot paper containing more

than one checked box will be declared invalid. If a ballot contains any notations other than votes in favour of a specific candidate, those notations will be disregarded.

- ix. The representatives who have registered will then have [24 hours] / [48 hours] / [72 hours] to send the ballot paper back. The ballot paper can be filled in off-line (printed and filled) and a scanned copy will have to be emailed to the INC Plastic Secretariat before the conclusion of the voting period.
 - x. At the conclusion of the voting period, representatives who have registered will be informed that the voting period has concluded and no more ballot papers will be accepted.
 - xi. The ballots will be tallied by the United Nations Environment Programme staff and supervised by tellers designated from among representatives from the Members of the Committee, as well as a UNEP Legal Officer.
9. Given the need to proceed with contractual arrangements and travel preparations, any decision to cancel the in-person meeting would need to be taken by mid-December.
10. The Secretariat reaffirms its commitment to prudent financial management and the efficient use of resources, while ensuring that logistical arrangements fully support the effective conduct of the resumed session in line with Committee requests and Bureau decisions.