

SPP OEWG2 INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Nairobi, 9 December 2023

UN Compound, Conference Room 1

Introduction

The second session of the ad hoc Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG 2) scheduled to take place in Nairobi, 11–15 December will continue its substantive discussions commenced at the resumed first session (OEWG1.2). OEWG 2 aims to develop proposals for consideration by the Intergovernmental Meeting mandated to the United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director to be organized to establish a Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of Chemicals and Waste and to prevent Pollution (SPP), as mandated by UNEA Resolution 5/8.

In order for Member States to have a better understanding on areas of convergence and areas of divergence, the Chair of the OEWG, Mrs. Gudi Alkemade, invited Member States and stakeholders to informal consultations on key elements of the work to be discussed at the OEWG 2, in advance of the regional and stakeholder consultations on 10 December. The informal consultations were held under Chatham House Rules to create space for an open exchange.

1. Setting the Scene

Opening and welcoming remarks

Mrs. Alkemade opened the meeting and clarified the background and nature of the meeting. While in the intersessional period, much information was provided through the documents prepared by the Secretariat and the webinars, there has been limited opportunity for Member States and stakeholders to exchange views on the issues that are on the table.

Mrs. Alkemade then introduced H.E. Mohammed Khashashneh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the representative of the host government for OEWG 2, as co-facilitator of the informal consultations. Mrs. Alkemade further expressed gratitude, on behalf of the Bureau and the delegations, for the continued support from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host the meeting, despite the change of venue.

H.E. Khashashneh reminded delegates on the initial thoughts about the need for an SPP resulting from discussions in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process and the promise it may hold to fill the gaps to include science in the international chemicals and waste discussions, including in the Global Framework on Chemicals. H.E. Khashashneh emphasized the need to negotiate a strong panel, and highlighted the achievements of OEWG 1 and the intersessional work leading up to OEWG 2.

Expected outcomes of the OEWG

Mrs. Tessa Goverse, Principal Coordinator of the SPP OEWG secretariat, presented the [Skeleton Outline \(UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/2*\)](#) and the [associated information document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/10 \(INF.10\)](#), highlighting that in response to the request from the Bureau to develop draft text as a basis to populate the Skeleton Outline, some slight revisions to the Skeleton Outline have been suggested.

In reflecting on the Skeleton Outline and the draft text included in INF.10, participants raised the following key points:

- Many expressed general support for the Skeleton Outline as presented, while some indicated the need to focus on what is necessary to establish the panel, in particular sections A, B, C and D of INF.10, and to take into account what elements/texts can be done later and issues that merit discussions including expertise from the panel.
- Many expressed general support to use the draft text in INF.10 as a starting point for discussions, while emphasizing the following aspects:
 - Recognizing the opportunity to build on existing science-policy interfaces to not reinvent the wheel.
 - Highlighting that it will not be a copy and paste exercise, but rather to identify and consider, from experience in different existing science-policy interfaces, what works, what does not work and what is missing for the purposes of the Science-Policy panel.
 - Highlighting the need to populate text as much as possible at OEWG 2, including possible agreement on many important elements such as the preamble, objective, scope and functions (including on capacity building).
- The need to consider the need to avoid duplication of work with other panels, as well as to consider how to address cross-cutting issues.
- The need to ensure that the outcomes of the OEWG provides flexibility for the panel to build upon scientific evidence.
- The need to keep in mind the different needs and capacities (related to science) between developing and developed countries.
- The need to consider how the needs of vulnerable groups can be addressed by the panel and how their findings can reach those groups.

Promise of a Science Policy Panel

Mrs. Goverse presented [a synthesis of the written submissions on the questions and needs the panel may handle](#) to inspire participants thinking on the features of the panel to establish.

For further inspiration, H.E. Khashashneh introduced Mr. Santos Virgilio (Ministry of Environment, Angola) to facilitate discussion in a fire-side chat on the promise of a Science-Policy Panel.

Mr. Santos then introduced two scientist speakers, Dr. Noriyuki Suzuki (National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan) and Ms. Melissa Wang (Greenpeace International and University of Exeter) to shared reflections and visions based on their experiences:

- Need for a new science-policy structure such as the science-policy panel to enable comprehensively summarize all relevant scientific information of different aspects on specific issues (including across the life cycle of chemicals and associated impacts on human health and ecosystems), contributing to holistic management of chemicals and waste.
- Need by scientists to be guided and supported through capacity development in order for them to effectively participate in science-policy interfaces.
- Highlighting that the science-policy panel is critical in helping scientists to contribute to policy development and bringing scientists to policy processes in a formalized way to facilitate the translation of scientific evidence into policy action.
- The science-policy panel can contribute to elevate the science on chemicals, waste and prevention of pollution, facilitate integrated approaches, strengthen and support participation of scientists across regions and disciplines, and improve and enable communication of policy-relevant science.

In exchange with the panel, delegates raised the following key points:

- Need for considering how the science-policy panel should be linked with capacity development of scientists and policymakers at the national level.
- Highlighting that the panel may provide an opportunity for scientists to share knowledge and bridge disciplinary silos, and sectoral and regional divides (e.g., information from the Global North or the Global South can help to inform the other).
- Need to consider how scientific evidence can be communicated effectively to be picked up by policy makers at all levels.
- Need for ensuring balanced participation in the panel's work, considering transparency, regional balance, gender equity, intergenerational equity, and so on.
- Need for discussing the how, where and by whom does the science happen in the science-policy panel, and where policymaking starts.
- Need for careful consideration of addressing conflicts of interest to ensure the relevance, usefulness and credibility of the science-policy panel.
- Need for public awareness and public participation.

2. Brief Surprise Exercise

Participants were encouraged in a 'weeting' exercise to introduce themselves to fellow participants.

3. Informal Consultations

Institutional Arrangements

In addressing the key considerations on institutional arrangements, participants raised the following key points:

- Highlighting that the clients of the panel may include Member States, regional institutions, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and others.
- Suggestion that some proposed functions of a scientific committee may be assigned to the plenary, which would be the main governing body, and the plenary may be supported by a policy committee constituted of country representatives. The policy committee may take over some proposed functions of the scientific committee (e.g., prioritization of proposals for the development of new work programmes), or may be in addition to the scientific committee.
- Need for considering the linkages between the scope and functions of the panel and the institutional arrangements when designing the panel so that "form can follow function", e.g. through an iterative process.
- Need for clearly defining roles between scientists and policymakers in the panel's work.
- Need for considering not only natural sciences, but also social and economic science, in the panel's work, for ensuring the independence, objectivity and policy relevance of science (while not being policy prescriptive), and for ensuring equitable contribution from regions, different languages and knowledge systems, learning from existing science-policy interfaces.
- Need for the panel being inclusive and gender sensitive, considering local conditions, and considering modalities for the participation of non-state actors and the relationships with MEAs and their scientific bodies.
- Need for avoidance of duplication of work with other panels and ensuring complementarity.
- Taking into account needs for communication and outreach, monitoring implementation of the panel's recommendations, and capacity building.
- Need for considering financing of the panel.

Relationship with relevant key stakeholders

H.E. Khashashneh introduced the following questions for participants to consider: How to address stakeholder engagement in the Panel's bodies? If and how to include stakeholders in the nomination and selection of experts, including how to include Indigenous and local knowledge? Who are the clients of the products of the Science-Policy Panel, including relationships with MEAs? How to cooperate with the scientific community, the private sector and existing science-policy interfaces on data, modelling and science? Participants raised the following key points:

- Need for considering stakeholders in all relevant parts of the panel, including possible differentiation of stakeholders (e.g., using a Major Groups approach, differentiation between stakeholders from developing and developed countries).
- Highlighting strategic partnerships as a good modality of relationships with stakeholders, while noting the need for flexibility.
- Need for linking with and proper recognition of the scientific community, while protecting their freedom of scientific production.
- Need for formal linkage with MEAs and other science-policy interfaces.
- Need for all forms of diversity related to representation of stakeholders (including representation of different expertise, vulnerable populations, the private sector) and stakeholder engagement (based on levels of expertise and added value), while having clear rules for addressing conflicts of interest.
- Considering that experts in the science-policy panel may be in a better position to consider how they want to engage with stakeholders to collect information.
- Need for recognizing different knowledge systems.

Work-related processes and procedures

Mrs. Alkemade introduced four areas participants may reflect upon: key considerations on the determining of the work programme, including the development of a prioritization mechanism, on the identification of experts, on the procedures for review and adoption of reports and assessments, and on addressing conflicts of interest. Participants raised the following key points:

- Need for linkages with other processes and procedures, e.g., under related MEAs.
- Need for transparency in the determination of work programmes (including the mechanism of prioritization) and for inclusivity and interdisciplinarity in the identification of experts (including the participation of developing countries).
- On the prioritization, a possible focus on the policy relevance of proposed work and avoidance of work on areas where science is clear.
- Need for broad outreach of the panel's deliverables, e.g., through some regional schemes.
- Need for clear roles of the scientists, stakeholders and the plenary in the review and adoption of the reports, while properly addressing conflicts of interest.
- Highlighting that the OEWG is not to set priority areas and compositions of experts for the panel, but to define frameworks for prioritization and principles for selecting experts, and that work-related processes and procedures may be fine-tuned by the plenary.
- Recalling the panel's functions beyond making reports and assessments.
- Highlighting possible linkages between conflict-of-interest policy and procedures for commercially sensitive information.
- Highlighting relevance of some pre-session submissions for discussion on the matters.

4. Closure

Mrs. Alkemade thanked participants for their rich and frank exchange and encouraged delegates to continue exchange informally to better understand the different perspectives in preparation for the meeting next week, building upon established relations prior to and during the informal consultations. She also thanked H.E. Khashashneh for co-facilitating the informal consultations.