
Western Europe and Others Group Regional Briefing of the second session 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

8 and 9 November 2023

13:00 – 16:00 (CET)

Online meeting

Proposed draft skeleton outline of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note contains the proposed draft skeleton outline of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel. The ad hoc open-ended working group for the science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. The annex is an advance edited version.

Proposed draft skeleton outline for proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its resumed fifth session, held in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly decided, by its resolution 5/8 of 2 March 2022, to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, with details to be further specified according to the resolution. The Assembly considered that the panel should be an independent intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its member Governments to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive.
2. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided to convene, subject to the availability of resources, an ad hoc open-ended working group that would begin work in 2022 to prepare proposals on a set of issues for the science-policy panel to consider (para. 5), with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024. The Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to provide a secretariat for the ad hoc open-ended working group and to prepare the analytical and summary reports necessary for the group's work.
3. The Assembly also requested the Executive Director to convene, upon completion of proposals prepared by the ad hoc open-ended working group, an intergovernmental meeting for the purpose of considering the establishment of a science-policy panel.
4. The present document provides a skeleton outline for an outcome document containing the proposals to be developed by the ad hoc open-ended working group for consideration at the intergovernmental meeting. The outline is based on the elements laid out in Assembly resolution 5/8 concerning the establishment of a science-policy panel and takes into account meeting outcomes from the working group's first session. It is envisaged that the working group will work towards agreed text for the relevant sections of the skeleton outline.
5. The current skeleton outline suggests describing the panel's scope and function, operating principles and institutional arrangements in the main document. The rules of procedure, financial procedures and work-related processes and policies are proposed to be included in annexes, which would allow flexibility for future updating of these elements when the need arises.
6. The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to agree on which parts of the proposed skeleton outline need to be finalized by the group in order to establish the science-policy panel at the intergovernmental meeting,¹ and which parts may be finalized by the science-policy panel itself, once established.

II. Proposed skeleton outline for proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

A. Scope[, objective] and functions of the panel

7. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraphs 5 (b) ("Name and scope of the panel") and 5 (c) ("Principal functions of the panel, while respecting the mandates of relevant multilateral agreements and other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, avoiding overlap and duplication of work, and promoting coordination and cooperation").
8. At its resumed first session, the ad hoc open-ended working group decided on the following outcomes (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/7, annex II):

¹ As a reference, the following elements were agreed upon for the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in 2012 in Panama City (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9): functions, operating principles and institutional arrangements of the Platform, and rules of procedure for the plenary of the Platform.

[The objective of the panel is to strengthen the science-policy interface to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution for the protection of human health and the environment, with the following functions:]²

- (a) Undertaking “horizon scanning” to identify issues of relevance to policymakers and, where possible, proposing evidence-based options to address them;
- (b) Conducting assessments of current issues and identifying potential evidence-based options to address, where possible, those issues, in particular those relevant to developing countries;
- (c) Providing up-to-date and relevant information, identifying key gaps in scientific research, encouraging and supporting communication between scientists and policymakers, explaining and disseminating findings for different audiences, and raising public awareness;
- (d) Facilitating information-sharing with countries, in particular developing countries seeking relevant scientific information;
- (e) Capacity-building.

9. It was agreed by the ad hoc open-ended working group that further discussions were needed to finalize the text of the function concerning capacity-building. The working group further decided that the following two texts would serve as the basis for further consideration to describe the capacity-building function at the group’s second session:

- (a) Provide capacity-building through all the functions of the panel and facilitate technology transfer, in particular to developing countries, to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels, including activities to ensure effective, geographically balanced and gender-responsive participation of scientists in the assessments of the panel, strengthen data generation capacity, enhance knowledge and skills that will support country infrastructure and human capacity, and facilitate connection and matchmaking of capacity-related needs and potential solutions;
- (b) To build capacity to support the functions and work of the panel in order to strengthen the science-policy interface for sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

10. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP--CWP/OEWG.2/3, UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/2, UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/3 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/9.

B. Operating principles of the panel

11. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (j) (“Rules of procedure and the operating principles governing the work of the panel”). This section would describe the operating principles that would apply to the panel once established, while it is proposed that the rules of procedure be presented as an annex.

12. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/2.

C. Institutional arrangements for the panel

13. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraphs 5 (a) (“Institutional design and governance of the panel”) and 5 (h) (“Arrangements for secretariat support for the panel”). This section would describe the governance of the panel, including the plenary and its functions, membership, officers, function of the chair, subsidiary bodies (including their administrative or scientific functions), the secretariat and its role, partnership arrangements and financial arrangements.

14. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/4 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/4.

² This text is bracketed with the understanding that the ad hoc open-ended working group could update the wording based on future discussions.

D. Annexes

1. Annex 1. Rules of procedure

15. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (j) (“Rules of procedure and the operating principles governing the work of the panel”).

16. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/4 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/4.

2. Annex 2. Financial arrangements

17. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (i) (“Options for voluntary financing of the work of the panel”).

18. The following working document has been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/4.

3. Annex 3. Relationship with relevant key stakeholders

19. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (d) (“Relationships of the panel with relevant key stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, and civil society”).

20. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/5 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/5.

4. Annex 4. Process for determining and executing the work programme, including the prioritization criteria

21. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (e) (“Processes for determining and executing the work programme of the panel”).

22. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6, UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/6 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/9.

5. Annex 5. Procedures for the review and adoption of reports

23. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (g) (“Procedures for the review and adoption of reports and assessments produced by the panel”).

24. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/7.

6. Annex 6. Arrangements for identifying and engaging with experts

25. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution 5/8, paragraph 5 (f) (“Arrangements for identifying and engaging with experts to contribute to the work of the panel”).

26. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/7.

7. Annex 7. Conflict of interest policy

27. This section of the skeleton outline corresponds to Assembly resolution, paragraph 5 (l) (“Any other matters that the ad hoc open-ended working group believes should be addressed”) and paragraph 6 (f), according to which the ad hoc open-ended working group should take into account the need to ensure that the panel has the ability to address potential conflicts of interest and safeguard commercially sensitive information.

28. The following working and information documents have been prepared to inform the ad hoc open-ended working group for its consideration of the matter at its second session: UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/8.

Edited Advance