United Nations Environment Programme

24 April 2026

Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment
Bureau meeting
Thursday, 23 April 2026
15:00- 17:30 EAT
Online

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 23 APRIL 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); Ms. Irma Gurguliani (Georgia);

   Latin American and Caribbean States: Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez (Peru);

   Small Island Developing States: Mr. Linroy Christian (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 the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Julio Cordano.

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

4. The Chair opened the meeting by thanking the Bureau members for their continued efforts toward assisting in the implementation of the roadmap set out in the Chair's second letter of 16 March 2026. He noted that his third letter, sent to INC focal points on 17 April, reflects his optimism in the progress made thus far in the process, and emphasizes a step-by-step approach that must be taken in the lead-up to INC-5.4. He further noted that such an approach will allow the Committee to continue to build on its successes and progress made, ensuring that there will be no surprises at INC-5.4.

5. In her opening remarks, the Executive Secretary began by thanking the Chair and his team for a productive in-person retreat in Nairobi the week before the Bureau meeting. She provided an update on the second informal virtual meeting of Heads of Delegation to the INC, scheduled for 30 April, noting that 292 delegates from 136 countries had registered at the time of reporting. She reminded the Bureau of the 24 April deadline for registration.

6. The Executive Secretary also provided an update on the informal in-person meeting of Heads of Delegation to the INC, scheduled for 30 June to 3 July, noting that 258 delegate registrations had been received from 126 countries at the time of reporting. She informed the Bureau that

the deadline to apply for travel support for eligible Members had passed as of 12 April, and she urged Members to register their attendance as soon as possible to ensure a smooth process.

7. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that she attended the in-person meetings with the Nairobi-based representatives of Regional Groups, conducted by the Chair during the previous week's retreat held in Nairobi, and that there was clear support for the Chair and roadmap. She also noted that there was support for the roadmap expressed in interventions from across all regions during the 173rd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 20 April.

8. In response to requests from the Bureau to ensure dedicated discussion on strengthening Observer engagement in the process, the Chair proposed to amend the meeting agenda to include an item on 'Observer Engagement' following the discussion on 'Next steps to INC-5.4'. Following this oral amendment, the agenda was adopted.

9. Under agenda item 2 on 'Adoption of the report of the Bureau meeting of 26 March 2026', the report was adopted with no amendments.

10. Under agenda item 3 on 'Updates on the implementation of the Roadmap' the Chair noted that an important part of the roadmap, as set out in his second letter, is ensuring regular and frequent conversations with all Members, including the Regional Groups. He informed the Bureau that he was able to meet in-person with Nairobi-based representatives of all Regional Groups in Nairobi during the week of 13 April and heard strong support for the steps set out in the roadmap. In these meetings, the Regional Groups had expressed support for the development of an informal reference document that could be used as a tool for discussions leading up to INC-5.4. He also noted widespread support for ensuring continued transparency, inclusivity and predictability at all stages in the process.

11. The Chair summarized common themes that arose frequently across the meetings with the Regional Groups, including the importance of universal participation, engagement with Regional Groups and individual Members, and the exclusive prerogative of the INC to consider possible solutions. Also, in these consultations, representatives highlighted the importance of the process to recognize unique priorities and departure points of different countries, among other issues.

12. The Chair informed the Bureau of meetings held with Observers since the last Bureau meeting, including virtual meetings held with specific groups of Observers that allowed for dedicated exchanges and open discussions on issues of priority. He also informed the Bureau that meetings with Observers would continue, with additional meetings scheduled throughout the remainder of the week and in the future. The Chair then invited the Bureau to provide any updates on meetings held within the constituencies between Members, including any outcomes of the meetings that could be useful for the Committee.

13. One Bureau member provided an update on an informal meeting that took place among a group of Members to take stock of the progress made since INC-5.2 on the topic of product design. The Bureau member noted the intention of the group to convey progress made to the Committee through the informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting of 30 April as well as the informal in-person Heads of Delegation meeting beginning 30 June. The Bureau member requested that, in the interest of transparency, the Chair allocate time during the 30 April informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting for all Members to provide updates on self-organized initiatives, including from the group that intended to update on progress made on product design.

14. Other Bureau members expressed appreciation for this update and noted that such updates remain important to the work of the Bureau and Committee. The Chair was requested to

consider how best to incorporate progress made in Member-led initiatives into the work of the Committee.

15. The Chair agreed on the importance of hearing updates on Member-led meetings and noted that there will continue to be dedicated time for such updates at future meetings.

16. Under the agenda item 4 on 'Next steps to INC-5.4' the Chair provided an overview of his third letter. He outlined the methodology set out in his letter, including the objectives of Conceptual discussions; Clarity in the text; Connections between parts of the instrument; and Comprehensive view of the instrument. He underscored the step-by-step approach set out in the letter, which recognizes that there has been significant progress made in the process and that the Committee must continue to build on the foundation of progress made thus far.

17. The Chair emphasized that the Committee must also explore areas where additional work is needed in order to expand the common space and work through remaining divergences toward a deeper level of understanding. He stressed that the Committee must take a balanced approach between issues of varying levels of convergence, noting that issues of lower convergence must be raised in a manner that does not widen the gap between perspectives. He emphasized the need to preserve the unity of all discussions as a means of building consensus in the process.

18. The Chair informed the Bureau that he intends to employ the methodology set out in his third letter at all upcoming meetings, including the informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting of 30 April.

19. The Bureau expressed support for the Chair's third letter, including the methodology contained within. Bureau members emphasized the need to operationalize the methodology through a detailed plan of work, including clear topics and timelines for each step in the roadmap. Bureau members underscored the need for Members of the INC to have sufficient time to review any topics and documents for meetings well in advance of those meetings.

20. Bureau members encouraged the Chair to consider how best to utilize the Bureau as a means of strengthening the impact of the Chair's letters and other materials. It was proposed that the Chair could communicate the rationale for future materials to the Bureau in advance so that Bureau members could provide additional context to their constituencies if requested.

21. In response to comments from the Bureau supporting the proposed informal reference document, the Chair reiterated that the informal document would be a 'no surprises' document that does not present new ideas. He emphasized that the document would only reflect the progress made thus far in the process. He noted that a version of the document would be produced following the informal in-person Heads of Delegation meeting, and that it is intended as a tool that can evolve alongside the ongoing discussions.

22. The Chair acknowledged the need to produce documentation well in advance of meetings and noted that this process would become more streamlined in light of the methodology outlined in his third letter. On operationalizing conceptual considerations, the Chair noted that there is no clear point at which conceptual considerations would transition to textual considerations. He noted the importance of taking a comprehensive approach that balances conceptual discussions and textual considerations as progress evolves.

23. In response to comments from Bureau members, the Chair affirmed the importance of co-facilitators in conducting discussions in a manner that does not lead to an over-expanded text and acknowledged the importance of identifying co-facilitators as early as possible. He acknowledged that co-facilitators must be chosen from among those that have robust experience in moving toward convergence and a deep understanding of the process as they will play a key role in discussions.

24. Bureau members noted that, without an understanding of the topics to be discussed at the in-person Heads of Delegation meeting, it would be difficult for Members to identify delegates to participate in the meeting. It was also noted that it would be important to understand how to build on the progress made in informal meetings to ensure the Heads of Delegation meetings contribute to the overall process.

25. The Chair informed the Bureau that the objective of the in-person Heads of Delegation meeting is to facilitate a comprehensive view of all topics requiring significant work, including some that may have a high level of convergence. He noted that the meeting would explore the interconnected nature of many topics, including in the process and structure of the future instrument. He further noted that the meeting would include a balance between technical and conceptual discussions, reflecting that some topics remain more political in nature while others have significant technical elements requiring discussion. He informed the Bureau that he would have a role in guiding those discussions that are more conceptual in nature. He also indicated his intention to organize stocktaking exercises during the in-person meeting.

26. The Chair acknowledged the importance of determining how best to ensure a connection between discussions at the informal Heads of Delegation meetings and the formal process at INC-5.4. He informed the Bureau of his intention to produce a reflections document following the in-person Heads of Delegation meeting that would be informed by discussions taking place during the meeting.

27. A Bureau member representing the Africa Region informed the Bureau of a Member-led meeting to be convened among a group of Members in Dakar, Senegal between 10-12 May. The Bureau member also informed the Bureau that the discussions and outcomes of this meeting would be reported back to the Bureau at its next meeting, as well as to the broader Committee in due course. The Chair thanked the Bureau member and informed the Bureau that he would be in attendance at the meeting as an Observer.

28. On the topic of informal virtual Heads of Delegation meetings, the Chair underscored the importance of these meetings as a forum for engaging on key topics that will facilitate and streamline the in-person work to be carried out at the informal in-person Heads of Delegation meeting to be held in Nairobi.

29. On the informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting of 30 April, the Chair recalled that the 'Meeting Outline and Guiding Questions' had been sent to the INC focal points on 21 April and included guiding questions related to the topics of scope; and interlinkages with existing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and international legal regimes. He informed the Bureau that he intended to propose two additional topics of discussion for the informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting of 28 May and would communicate these topics and any guiding questions well in advance of that meeting.

30. The Chair informed the Bureau that the topics for the informal virtual Heads of Delegation meetings are chosen based on feedback received from individual Members, Regional Groups and ongoing discussions that have taken place to date. He stressed that it was his belief, as well as the position of many Members, that progress on key issues to be discussed at the virtual Heads of Delegation meetings could potentially unlock progress on additional issues leading up to INC-5.4.

31. He noted the importance of working toward a common understanding on the scope of the future instrument and emphasized that it would also be important to understand the lines of collaboration that could be identified between the future instrument and existing international legal regimes. He also noted that, by identifying the interplay with other international legal regimes, and in particular those that have relevant mandates to address plastic pollution, this

may facilitate a common understanding of the scope of the future instrument by outlining its possible contribution to the landscape of existing legal regimes.

32. Bureau members expressed appreciation to the Chair for outlining the rationale for the topics for the 30 April informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting and reiterated that Bureau members could assist in conveying the rationale for topic selection to their constituencies, provided the rationale is shared with the Bureau ahead of time. It was also noted that the discussion on interlinkages between other MEAs and international legal regimes should emphasize complementarity with other legal regimes by complementing actions and not overlapping with or duplicating mandates.

33. On request of the Bureau, the Chair noted that the 28 May informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting would be held during a different time slot than the 30 April meeting to ensure participation across time zones. He acknowledged the important role of the Bureau in providing input on how best to structure discussions around topics, while noting that there is already clarity on the topics requiring deeper discussions but that the sequencing and structure of discussions may require further consultation.

34. The Chair noted that he has heard the importance of identifying possible dates for INC-5.4 as early as possible in order to have a more tangible outlook on the implementation of the roadmap. He informed the Bureau that he had consulted with the Secretariat at length about identifying possible dates, noting that a decisive element in determining dates for INC-5.4 was that there must be enough time to develop an informal reference document reflecting progress made that can serve as a possible basis for negotiations at INC-5.4.

35. He reminded the Bureau that scheduling must account for six weeks for document translation into all six official languages of the United Nations, and for ensuring that those translated documents, including the informal reference document, could then be published on the INC website at least six weeks ahead of the meeting. He noted that these timelines are important as all Members must have sufficient time to prepare based on all available documents and information. He also noted that the Membership would benefit from convening at least twice in-person leading up to INC-5.4 to ensure Members are able to discuss key issues that will be reflected in the informal reference document.

36. In considering available dates for INC-5.4, the Chair informed the Bureau that the Secretariat had also taken into account the need to avoid observed holidays; the need to avoid conflicts with major global environmental meetings; and the need to ensure adequate time for regional meetings taking place leading up to INC-5.4. The Chair informed the Bureau that, taking into account all necessary factors, INC-5.4 could be held within the window of 13-24 March 2027. He noted that this would allow for a resumed session of up to 10 days, with an unscheduled day approximately halfway through to allow for group, regional and Member discussions. Included in the allocated time would also be a day for regional meetings to be held immediately before INC-5.4.

37. The Chair emphasized that the allocated time is not meant to prejudge the length of the resumed session, stating that the dates represent only a maximum duration and not a minimum duration. He assured the Bureau that a shorter resumed session could be organized within the same window of time if Members approach INC-5.4 in a position that allows for such a shorter resumed session.

38. He informed the Bureau that there has yet been no offer from any Member to host INC-5.4 and encouraged Members to notify the Secretariat by the end of June of any intention to host in order to ensure sufficient time for all administrative processes to take place. Absent of any offer to host, space has been reserved for INC-5.4 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

39. Bureau members noted the importance of ensuring sufficient time for in-person regional meetings to take place leading up to INC-5.4, in addition to the one-day proposed regional meetings immediately preceding the resumed session.

40. The Chair also informed the Bureau that there is availability in the international calendar of events for the second in-person meeting leading up to INC-5.4 during the week of 27 September in Nairobi and requested the Bureau to revert to the Chair and Secretariat with any further reflections on this. The Chair also noted that this date differs from previous discussions as there will be a UNFCCC pre-COP meeting to be held in Fiji during the week that had initially been planned for the in-person meeting.

41. Under the agenda item 5 on 'Observer Engagement', the Secretariat provided information to the Bureau on the number of participants from non-governmental organizations as Observers in the INC process, noting the increase in participation since INC-1.

42. The Chair noted that the significant number of Observers attending each INC session represents a high level of public interest in the process while also presenting a challenge to ensure there is effective interaction with Observers, given the large number and wide variety of thematic areas of interest among the Observer community.

43. Emphasizing that the INC process is foremost a Member-led process, the Chair expressed that he remained invested in continuing his engagement with Observers in the lead-up to INC-5.4 and that the process could benefit from enhanced engagement with Observers. He raised several possible approaches to enhance Observer engagement:

    - Hosting ongoing virtual meetings between the Chair and different Observer constituencies and organizations;
    - Convening in-person meetings with Observers during attendance at other international meetings, including meetings of the Conference of the Parties to various multilateral environmental agreements; and
    - Organizing virtual informal meetings, workshops or technical dialogues, open to both Observers and Members of the Committee, in order to foster a direct interaction on selected topics.

44. The Chair requested the Secretariat to explore possible approaches to identify the thematic interest areas of Observers, such as through use of an online form. In this regard, he indicated that, based on these areas of interest, a system of self-registration could be envisaged, which would allow for more structured participation and easier communication.

45. He recalled the upcoming Observers' webinar of 19 May, noting that it would be held in two parts in order to facilitate participation across different time zones and ensure wider representation and inclusivity. He informed the Bureau that the upcoming Observers' webinar would be used as a forum to solicit feedback on this approach and to provide a space for Observers to present questions and comments on enhanced engagement. The webinar will also be used to consult with Observers on better ways to self-organize to facilitate a more efficient and effective interaction. He noted that one possibility could include Observers designating representatives to engage with the Secretariat or Chair, acting to disseminate information and engaging in consultations when needed.

46. The Bureau noted with concern the large number of letters that had been sent to some Bureau members from Observer organizations in the days leading up to the Bureau meeting, and discussed possible approaches to address the letters. The Bureau agreed on the importance of ensuring transparency and engagement with Observers in accordance with the draft rules of procedure, and expressed appreciation for the knowledge and expertise possessed by Observers.

It was also emphasized that it should not become a general practice for Observers to send a large volume of letters to the Bureau on the same topic.

47. On request of the Bureau, the Chair noted that he would work with the Secretariat to outline some proposals on Observer engagement for further consideration by the Bureau. He emphasized that he remains available to have virtual and in-person meetings with Observers.

48. Under the agenda item 6 on 'Other matters', the Chair proposed that the Bureau could meet in advance of the next informal virtual Heads of Delegation meeting taking place on 28 May as well as the informal in-person Heads Delegation meeting beginning 30 June. The Secretariat was requested to identify a time and date for the next Bureau meeting in May, ensuring no scheduling conflicts. The Bureau agreed to also meet on 18 June.

49. In his closing remarks, the Chair expressed appreciation to the Bureau and thanked the Bureau members for remaining united in their constructive engagement.