

Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

Bureau meeting

Thursday, 26 March 2026

15:00- 17:00 EAT

Online

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 26 MARCH 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: Dr. 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 expressing appreciation to the Bureau for its engagement with constituencies, which contributed to strong participation in the first informal virtual Heads of Delegation (HODs) meeting. He emphasized the importance of commencing implementation of the roadmap laid out in his second letter of 16 March¹. He noted that the Bureau members must draw on the knowledge of their constituencies to ensure that plans leading toward INC-5.4 respond to the needs of all Members of the Committee.
5. In her opening remarks, the Executive Secretary noted that the informal virtual HODs meeting held on 12 March was well-attended, with 219 participants representing 119 Members of the Committee, and interventions from 35 Members. The save-the-date for the next informal virtual HODs meeting, to be held on 30 April, was circulated on 17 March. The invitation will be issued shortly, with the agenda and supplementary documentation to follow.
6. The Executive Secretary recalled that invitations have been sent to Members for the informal in-person HODs meeting, scheduled for 30 June to 3 July in Nairobi. She urged eligible Members to apply for travel support by the deadline of 12 April to ensure that the INC

¹ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/49341>

Secretariat can coordinate with the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions regarding travel arrangements, given the Basel Convention Open-Ended Working Group meeting to be held during the week immediately preceding the informal in-person HODs meeting.

7. She conveyed to the Bureau that the first Observers' webinar, held on 24 March, was attended by 326 participants, with 24 oral interventions given. The recording of the webinar has been placed on the INC website under the 'Observers' tab, along with additional information about the webinar series.²
8. She informed the Bureau that the results of the participants' survey following INC-5.3 have been published on the INC website.³ She further informed that the draft report of INC-5.3 was published on the INC website following its review by the Rapporteur.⁴ A notification regarding the availability of the report was sent to all Members on 26 March.
9. Under the agenda item on 'Adoption of the report of the Bureau meeting of 5 March 2026', a request was made during the meeting to include references in the Bureau report of 5 March to maintaining flexibility on the timing and duration of INC-5.4 and to reflecting that INC-5.4 does not overlap with key holidays. The report was adopted following amendment to reflect this proposal.
10. Under agenda item 3 on 'Reflections on informal virtual HODs meeting of 12 March 2026', the Chair underscored the crucial role played by the Bureau in providing strategic advice and guidance on the way forward. He noted that diverse views were expressed during the HODs meeting, and that the meeting allowed for re-engagement on substantive matters and provided a platform to hear views on modalities of work that can help advance toward a successful conclusion of the work of the Committee.
11. The Chair noted clear support expressed by many Members during the HODs meeting on the roadmap which was subsequently laid out in his second letter of 16 March. He further noted support expressed on the need for a single informal reference document that captures progress made without prejudging outcomes in areas where divergent views remain, and without introducing new elements or ideas.
12. The Chair noted that many Members emphasized the value of Member-led meetings that remain outside the scope of the roadmap, with some concerns expressed by Members around transparency and inclusivity of these initiatives. He encouraged Members to continue to engage with each other, particularly on exploring areas where diverging positions remain. He underscored that Member-led initiatives would not yield results unless the outcomes were shared in a timely manner with the full Membership so that relevant discussions could be presented with full transparency. The Chair further emphasized that any solution or common understanding reached on any part of the future instrument must be able to be considered by the Membership of the Committee, underscoring that decisions may only be taken in a formal setting.
13. In this regard, the Chair thanked Ambassador Ryo Nakamura for facilitating the informal small group meeting organized by Japan from 1-3 March, as well as for the summary of the meeting that was distributed to Regional Groups through the Bureau shortly afterwards.

² <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/observers>

³ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/49362>

⁴ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/49349>

14. The Chair acknowledged that many Members emphasized during the HODs meeting the importance of developing a clear timeline with dates for the roadmap. He added that he was working closely with the Secretariat to find available dates and a venue for INC-5.4 and other in-person meetings set out in the roadmap. He hoped to inform the Bureau of developments in due course.
15. Bureau members noted strong support among the constituencies for the Chair's roadmap, as well as the Chair's letters and proposed steps forward, which were considered to contribute to transparency, predictability and inclusivity. Bureau members also expressed support for the development of a new informal reference document that reflected progress made without prejudging outcomes on areas of divergence.
16. Bureau members conveyed questions from their constituencies in relation to how the informal reference document would be developed; how it would differ from previous versions of the Chair's Text; how guiding questions for the informal meetings proposed in the roadmap would be developed; how Member-led initiatives relate to the work outlined in the roadmap; and how work will be carried forward from each meeting in the roadmap.
17. Bureau members supported future informal virtual HODs meetings being organized with a strategic approach that allows the Membership to move forward in the process, particularly as the meetings increasingly engage with substantive matters. It was noted that this could be facilitated by ensuring each milestone in the roadmap has a clear outcome, including a statement on what will be achieved during the meeting.
18. It was emphasized that the Bureau could assist in determining the approach for each informal HODs meeting, and that Bureau members can continue to seek feedback from the Regional Groups on how best to proceed through the roadmap.
19. Bureau members conveyed an understanding among their constituencies that Member-led initiatives remain outside the scope of the roadmap, but that these initiatives could still provide a forum to make progress that could then be introduced into the formal process.
20. Bureau members presented suggestions for consideration regarding the meetings, including suggesting that the timing of future informal virtual HODs meetings be rotated to ensure all regions are able to equally participate and that written outputs summarizing the discussion could be produced following each meeting.
21. The Chair noted that, in moving forward with the roadmap, transparency must remain at the forefront of every activity, and all viewpoints must be acknowledged to ensure Members are able to reach a common understanding. He conveyed that the roadmap was published as a preliminary framework, with further details to be added as Members move toward INC-5.4. The roadmap will include additional details on milestones as events progress in order to ensure the Membership continues to have a clear indication of the next steps in the process.
22. The Chair informed the Bureau that he will continue to release letters or reflection documents as the roadmap evolves in order to capture progress, further promote discussions amongst Members and provide wide visibility on the state-of-play toward INC-5.4.
23. In relation to the development of an informal reference document, the Chair proposed to use the in-person and virtual HODs meetings as a forum to engage on substantive issues and ensure that all views, priorities and understandings are heard before any draft document is produced. He emphasized that he remains open to engaging with all Members to ensure all positions are regarded.

24. In response to comments from the Bureau, the Chair reiterated that Members would continue to receive guiding questions and documents well in advance of any informal HODs meeting. He acknowledged that the first informal virtual HODs meeting engaged with general content, but that future meetings would be based on guiding questions designed to frame the discussion around specific key topics.
25. The Chair informed the Bureau that he has already had discussions with several Regional Groups and remains available and committed to working with all Regional Groups to address any concerns these Groups may have and ensure continued inclusivity in the process.
26. Under agenda item 4 on 'Next steps to INC-5.4', the Chair noted that further details for the 30 April informal virtual HODs meeting would be circulated by the Secretariat in due course. He indicated that this next meeting would be held as a focused exchange of views.
27. The Chair acknowledged concerns raised by one Regional Group regarding a lack of interpretation services for the informal HODs meetings and stressed that he will continue to engage with the Secretariat on how best to determine a way forward, that remains in accordance with UN rules, including through the use of web-based tools, in the case of virtual meetings. He further acknowledged the substantial cost implications of providing full interpretation services into all six UN official languages for in-person meetings and noted that these costs could not be covered under the current programme budget.
28. Recounting the Observers' webinar held on 24 March, the Chair noted a clear concern conveyed by Observers in relation to the level of engagement and communication between Observers and Members, and regarding the availability of spaces for Observer engagement in the process. He emphasized that it is important to continue to build a strong working relationship with Observers, noting that they are a possible source of inspiration for solutions. He further noted that Observers also provide a valuable indication of how the work of the Committee is received more broadly.
29. The Chair stressed that any consideration of Observer engagement must be premised on the understanding that the work of the INC is a Member-led process and that decisions are the exclusive prerogative of Members. However, he stated that Observer engagement could be reviewed to determine whether it could be improved with a view to strengthening the process. He informed the Bureau of planned consultations with thematic groups of Observers in order to hear inputs from Observers over the coming days.
30. In relation to the in-person meeting envisaged for Autumn, the Chair informed the Bureau that the format of the meeting remains open and will be clarified following further consultations with the Bureau and Membership. Bureau members noted that both the timing and nature of this in-person meeting should remain flexible, particularly if INC-5.4 is held later than January 2027.
31. Bureau members emphasized the importance of circulating preparatory materials, such as workplans, guiding questions, notes by the Chair or other relevant materials, ahead of virtual and in-person meetings to ensure delegations and regions are sufficiently prepared and can effectively participate. Clear communication of meeting objectives was further highlighted as a means of ensuring transparency. It was proposed that the upcoming informal virtual HODs meeting on 30 April be used as a forum to gather viewpoints from Members on the organization of the substance of the in-person HODs meeting, as well as key elements to be discussed.
32. On Observer engagement, the Bureau welcomed the Chair's initiative in convening webinars to ensure Observers have regular interactions with the Chair. Bureau members acknowledged that Observers remain a critical component of the process, while also recognizing the need to

maintain a clear distinction between Observer contributions and Member inputs within the intergovernmental process. Bureau members discussed possible approaches to ensure effective engagement of Observers, including through hosting Observer sessions to facilitate technical exchanges and convening joint consultation sessions between Members and Observers. The importance of engaging with UN system entities was also highlighted as a means of ensuring complementarity between the work of the Committee and existing multilateral regimes. While Observer engagement remains important, it was also emphasized that Members must be able to continue to engage amongst themselves in informal settings.

33. To ensure that Members have continued visibility of key priorities and concerns raised by Observers, one Bureau member suggested that the Chair could provide a summary overview of his engagement with Observers at the next informal virtual HODs meeting. One Bureau member also conveyed the intention of Members of their constituency to invite Observer engagement on key topics and encouraged other regions to consider similar modalities of Observer engagement. The Chair acknowledged suggestions by the Bureau and reaffirmed the importance of strengthening Observer engagement while respecting the Member-led nature of the intergovernmental negotiating process. He further informed the Bureau of his intention to engage with Observers at upcoming meetings related to other multilateral instruments.
34. Under agenda item 5 on ‘Other matters’, the Chair invited Bureau members to raise any additional matters for consideration. A Bureau member requested the Chair respond to a recent correspondence received from civil society organizations. The Chair ensured a response would be provided to any outstanding correspondence.
35. In his closing remarks, the Chair expressed appreciation to the Bureau for reflections on preparations for forthcoming informal meetings and constructive engagement on the proposed modalities of work outlined in the Chair’s roadmap. He reaffirmed his commitment to maintaining a transparent and inclusive dialogue with the Bureau and all Members of the Committee as deliberations advance toward INC-5.4.