

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

Bureau meeting

Tuesday, 19 December 2023

15:00- 18:00 (GMT+3)

Online meeting

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair of the INC, H.E. Mr. Luis Vayas Valdivieso, welcomed Members of the INC Bureau and opened the meeting.
2. The meeting was attended by the following Members:
INC Chair: Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso (Ecuador);
African States: Ms. Juliet Kabera (Rwanda); Mr. Cheikh Ndiaye Sylla (Senegal)
Asia-Pacific States: Mr. Hiroshi Ono (Japan); Mr. Mohammad Al-Khashashneh (Jordan);
Eastern European States: Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia); Ms. Irma Gurguliani (Georgia);
Latin American and Caribbean States: Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru);
Small-Island Developing States: Ms. Asha Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda);
Western European and Other States: Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz (Sweden); Ms. Larke Williams (United States of America).
3. The Secretariat was represented by Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Executive Secretary; Ms. Brenda Koekkoek; Ms. Kerry Allbeury; Ms. Marianna Bolshakova; Ms. Shuang Zhu; Ms. Laura Anes; and Ms. Helena Lindemann.
4. In attendance for parts of agenda Item 3 was Ms. Cynthia Bainbridge, representative of INC-4 Host Country, Canada.
5. The INC Chair, Amb. Vayas Valdivieso, provided opening remarks, thanking Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadro for his role as previous INC Chair and welcomed him and Mr. Harry Liiv as Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of the INC. The Chair highlighted the need for INC-4 to be effective and inclusive and expressed his intention of continued engagement with Bureau Members.
6. The Executive Secretary, Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, congratulated Ambassador Mr. Luis Vayas Valdivieso on his election as INC Chair and echoed the Chair's welcome to the Bureau members. In her opening remarks, the Executive Secretary informed the Bureau of the attendance numbers of Members of the Committee and observers at INC-3, and provided an

update on the request by the Committee for the Secretariat to compile, into a single “revised draft text”, the merged texts put forward by contact groups 1 and 2, and the outcome document of contact group 3, which is expected to be online by 31 December. The Executive Secretary recalled that the Committee decided that this text would form the starting point and basis for textual negotiations without prejudice to the right of any Member to propose additions, deletions or modifications during the negotiations. She proposed an additional AOB item to update the Members on suggestions to update three documents that had been prepared by the Secretariat at INC-1 due to new developments.

7. Two additional agenda items were proposed by the Bureau under AOB: the dates agreed by the Committee for INC-4 and INC-5, as well as an update from the Secretariat on the availability of the meeting report for INC3.
8. The agenda was adopted with the proposed additions under AOB.

Agenda Item 2: Lessons learned from the third session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-3)

9. The INC Chair recalled the questions under Agenda Item 2, requesting reflections from the Bureau and informing them on his proposal to hold a Heads of Delegation meeting in January, to be organized at two different times to accommodate all time zones. The Bureau supported the proposal of the Chair to hold a Heads of Delegation meeting.
10. The Executive Secretary highlighted the lessons learned from Secretariat-side. These encompassed firstly, in terms of facilitating in-session submissions, the provision of a new submission system for future INC sessions, expected to be fully operational by INC-4. Secondly, Bureau Members were encouraged to relay to their regions the importance of reading the Information Note to Participants prepared by the Secretariat and host country that provides extensive information on logistics for INC-4, as well as on how to apply for entry visas to Canada. The Executive Secretary also encouraged all delegates to register and apply for visas as soon as possible due to the short time remaining before INC-4. Thirdly, the Executive Secretary updated the Bureau that three teams of interpreters will be made available on the last day of INC-4 to allow for sessions to continue into the night, if necessary. Lastly, updates were given on the INC-3 survey, the results of which are being evaluated and will be shared shortly with the Bureau and uploaded to the INC-3 website.
11. The Bureau Members congratulated on the organization of the third session of the INC and asked for the INC-3 meeting report to be made available as soon as possible. The Executive Secretary confirmed that the meeting report will be made available in English in January.
12. Several Bureau Members expressed mindfulness of the remaining two sessions available to conclude the process. In this context, the Chair stressed that he would continue to reach out to Members of the Committee on the outstanding issues, namely on the rules of procedure. He also stated that he intended to inform Members of the Committee on elements such as the number of contact groups to be established at subsequent sessions, the terms of reference for each contact group and any other issues that may arise in order to facilitate a successful and timely conclusion of negotiations at INC-5, in December 2024. Regarding the Bureau meetings, the Chair informed that one meeting has been scheduled for every month, however openness was expressed to schedule more extraordinary meetings, if so requested. The INC Chair raised keeping the pathway to INC-5 under discussion throughout the year.

13. Webinars and side events were discussed by Bureau Members. There was agreement that a webinar on navigating the revised zero draft text should be held. Regarding side events, the Bureau expressed support for including thematic side events at INC-4, while suggesting that the Secretariat may consider reducing the total amount of events, in order to allow for focus on substantive discussions.

Agenda Item 3: What is needed to prepare the fourth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-4)

14. Under this agenda item, the Bureau invited a representative of the host country of INC-4 to provide an overview of logistical and visa arrangements underway. Following the decision at INC-3, the exact dates for INC-4 were confirmed for 23 – 29 April 2024, at the Shaw Center in Ottawa. Ms. Cynthia Bainbridge reiterated that Canada is committed to ensure the meeting space requirements and further remains available to continue supporting all Members of the Committee to obtain visas, encouraging the Bureau Members to inform their regions that countries should use the [Secretariat visa website](#) for any questions related to visa applications. The Bureau was further informed that regional consultations will be held on 21 April, and that Canada is looking into holding an event on Earth Day, which was welcomed by the Bureau.
15. Canada also informed the Bureau that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada, Honourable Steven Guilbeault, will be hosting a Ministerial Meeting in preparation for INC-4 on 28 February, on the margins of UNEA-6. The meeting is scheduled for 18:00-19:30 and is open to all Ministers of Environment. A save the date has been circulated in December 2023.
16. The Executive Secretary reminded the Bureau that registration for INC-4 is already open and will close on 26 February. Funding for two delegates is available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the deadline for which is 12 January.
17. Potential contact group mandates were discussed in view of INC-4. Members requested clarification on whether the contact group mandate was to be changed. Several Members discussed whether more than two contact groups could be established at INC-4 and whether they would run in parallel or not. Views were expressed that there had been feedback to not hold more than two Contact Group meetings in parallel, while at the same time, there may be need for more than two contact groups to advance substantive negotiations, given the tight time schedule to conclude negotiations by the end of 2024. It was suggested that if delegations knew the mandate and configuration of contact groups well in time, this may be an opportunity to advance textual discussions. Members of the Bureau encouraged the utilization of the Bureau for these discussions and to ensure early support of countries. The possibility of delivery of regional as opposed to individual opening statements at INC-4 was raised as a means to ensure efficient management of time.
18. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to provide research on precedents from other INC and Convention processes on whether more than two contact group meetings could be established and run in parallel. Several Members mentioned the need for consistent approaches across the

contact groups. The importance of establishing a clear mandate for the contact groups was agreed among Bureau Members.

19. The INC Chair thanked the Bureau for the rich debate on Contact Groups. It was summarized that there was agreement to focus on advancing the process and that Contact Group mandates should be a priority topic. Regarding the opening statements, the Chair affirmed that having opening Statements by regions only could be a good possibility, if that was so agreed.

Agenda Item 4: Dates for the next Bureau meetings.

20. The Executive Secretary presented dates for the next Bureau meetings tentatively scheduled to be held on:
- 22 January 15:00-17:00 (GMT+3), online.
 - 24 February 15:00-17:00, to be held in Nairobi (right before UNEA).
 - 21 March 15:00-17:00 (GMT+3), online.
 - 20 April 15:00-17:00, to be held in Ottawa.
21. The Executive Secretary presented tentative dates for the regional meetings, highlighting that the Secretariat had consulted all the UNEP Regional Directors and based on their advice and office capacity, given the short period to INC-4, the regional consultations are proposed to be held at the seat of the regional offices, presenting various benefits, such as cost-effectivity, and no need for lengthy procurement processes or Host Country Agreements. The proposed regional meeting dates were presented as:
- 4-5 March 2024 Africa Group, to be held in Nairobi.
 - 5-6 March 2024 Asia Pacific Group, to be held in Bangkok.
 - 13-14 March 2024 Latin America Caribbean, to be held in Panama.
 - 20-21 March 2024 Eastern European Group, to be held in Geneva.
22. One Member stated that their region may prefer organizing their own regional meeting at a different location and raise funding for it. The Executive Secretary indicated that the Secretariat would have difficulties in organizing regional meetings outside the seat of UNEP regional offices, in view of the necessary logistics. Should regions decide to hold such meetings in other locations, they may need to undertake the organization of the event and related logistical and financial arrangements themselves. This was acknowledged by the Bureau.
23. One Member raised the overlap of the proposed Bureau meeting dates with the proposed EEG meeting date. The Executive Secretary took note and will consult further with the respective regional office.

Agenda Item 5: Any other matters

24. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau on document updates the Secretariat is proposing to support the work of the Committee for INC-4:
- [UNEP/PP/INC.1/7 Update: Plastics science](#) (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/1)
 - [Addendum Document - UNEP/PP/INC.1/INF/10 Update: Overview of existing funding currently available for addressing plastic pollution through international funding arrangements, including from other processes, programmes, multilateral](#)

[funds, development banks and private sector initiatives](#) (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/2)

- [UNEP/PP/INC.1/6 Update: Secretariat compiled document of definitions submitted by Members](#), (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/3)

25. Bureau Members agreed that updating documents UNEP/PP/INC.1/7 and UNEP/PP/INC.1/INF/10 would be helpful but requested further discussions within the Bureau on updating document UNEP/PP/INC.1/6.

26. The Executive Secretary noted that INC-3 agreed on the dates and venue for INC-5, with the INC-5 session scheduled to be held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 25 November to 1 December 2024.

Agenda Item 6: Closing of the Meeting

27. The meeting closed at 18:20 GMT+3.

Annex I: Action Points

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Issue	Action Point	Responsibility for the action
INC-4 Preparation & Planning	To present proposal and dates for the webinars on how to read/navigate the revised draft	Secretariat
	To inform their respective regions about Information Note to participants/INC Secretariat Visa tab and to apply early for visa applications for INC-4, registration deadlines (26 February) and travel support information for two	Bureau Members with information from the Secretariat
	To inform their regions that registration for INC-4 will close on 26 February	
	To inform the region that travel support is available to 2 delegates per developing country and countries with economies in transition, the deadline for application is 12 January	
	To provide updates on: support to Regional consultations; in-session support (interpretation, etc.); registrations to date; budgetary issues (if any), assisted travel; and intranet.	Secretariat
	To send a calendar invite to the Bureau members for their upcoming meetings and inform about locations (ensure that EEG regional meeting dates do not clash with the Bureau meeting in March)	Secretariat
Documentation	To circulate the INC3 report in January	Secretariat

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	<p>To update two documents in light of new developments and information available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP/PP/INC.1/7 Update: Plastics science (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/1) • Addendum Document - UNEP/PP/INC.1/INF/10 Update: Overview of existing funding currently available for addressing plastic pollution through international funding arrangements, including from other processes, programmes, multilateral funds, development banks and private sector initiatives (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/2) 	Secretariat
Further consider possibility/modality of update of definitions document ahead of INC-4	UNEP/PP/INC.1/6 Update: Secretariat compiled document of definitions submitted by Members, including attributions Glossary of Key Terms (to be updated as UNEP/PP/INC.4/INF/3)	Secretariat
Internal documents / information requested by the Bureau	To share with information with the Bureau on other INC/Conventions on the organization and timeslots of contact groups.	Secretariat
Heads of Delegation Meeting	To host a Heads of Delegation meeting in January (i.e. two sessions to accommodate the different time zones). Chair to share questions to guide the discussion of the meeting with the Bureau members for suggestions.	Chair with the logistic support of the Secretariat