

## Online meeting of the Bureau of the twelfth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention (OEWG-12)

Friday, 5 June 2020, 4:00– 7:30 p.m. (CEST)

### Participants:

Co-Chairs: Ms. Stina Andersson (Sweden) (Technical), Ms. Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica) (Legal)

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Zaigham Abbas (Pakistan) (Technical), Ms. Kristine Vardanashvili (Georgia) (Legal)

Rapporteur: Ms. Hlobisile Sikhosana (Eswatini)

### 1. Feedback from the regions on arrangements for OEWG-12

At the request of the Co-Chair who chaired the meeting, the representative from the Secretariat reported on feedback received from Parties and observers on the proposed arrangements for OEWG-12, as agreed by the Bureau during its 9 April 2020 online meeting, including written comments and oral queries put forward in the context of a series of regional and global webinars and consultations<sup>1</sup> organized by the Secretariat. The feedback related to the availability of interpretation during the online session; the translation of revised draft decisions being circulated for adoption; the application of the rules of procedure for meetings of the Conference of the Parties; the time period available to Parties for commenting on draft decisions (currently foreseen to be 48 hours); challenges faced by countries for an online meeting, in particular connectivity issues and time zone differences; and the possibility that Parties might propose revisions of a substantive nature to decisions for adoption during OEWG-12. She added that the Secretariat had listened closely to the comments made, developed a frequently asked questions section on the website, provided written responses to written queries addressed to the Secretariat, and made available to the Bureau feedback addressed to its attention. Since the 9 April online meeting of the Bureau, the Secretariat had continued to work on a number of measures in order to address these concerns voiced by Parties regarding the arrangements for the meeting.

The Bureau members then reported on feedback from their regions. One member mentioned that her region had prepared a statement about its concerns related to the proposed arrangements for OEWG-12, in particular regarding the issue of interpretation, and that she had responded to this statement. In the course of regional consultations, the region had indicated that it was not yet ready to support the convening of an online OEWG-12 as proposed, and that it was waiting for further feedback from the present Bureau meeting before providing its final position.

Another Bureau member reported that her region was supportive of an online meeting convened as proposed by the Bureau given the current exceptional circumstances, on the condition that all regions would participate in the meeting. The region preferred a solution that allowed for feedback collected during OEWG-12 to feed into the ongoing intersessional work of the relevant bodies before documents were finalized for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. She added that she had also been contacted by observers who expressed concerns regarding the online format, and some requested further dialogue before taking decision on the way forward.

One Bureau member said that she had not been able to attend the webinars organized for her region. Another Bureau member and the Secretariat, who had attended the webinars of that region, said that a number of questions had been raised by one Party on the legal aspects and rules of procedure applicable to an online OEWG-12 meeting, but that no objection had been voiced thereto. The Co-Chair invited the Bureau member from the region to undertake some further consultations with her region.

One Bureau member then highlighted that his region was concerned with the lack of interpretation of the online session into all UN languages and required clarification on the application of the rules of procedure for an online meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Regional consultations for Parties from the African region: on 12 May 2020 (one in English at 10 am (CEST), with 12 participants, and one in French at 3 pm (CEST), with 5 participants), on 3 June 2020 (French) at 2 pm (CEST) with 3 participants and on 5 June 2020 (English) at 12.30 pm (CEST) with 10 participants; regional consultation for Parties from the Asia-Pacific region on 3 June (English) at 9 am (CEST) with 17 participants; regional consultations for Parties from the Eastern European region on 4 June (one in Russian at 10 am (CEST), with 7 participants and one in English at 4 pm (CEST) with 4 participants); regional consultation for Parties from the Latin American and the Caribbean region on 19 May (one in English at 3 pm (CEST), with 15 participants, and one in Spanish at 5 pm (CEST), with 30 participants) and on 4 June (English) at 5 pm (CEST), with 63 participants; webinars open to all Parties and observers on 3 June (one in French at 11 am (CEST), with 13 participants, and one in Spanish at 5 pm (CEST), with 13 participants, on 5 June (English) at 10 am (CEST), with about 65 participants and another one scheduled to be held on 11 June (English) at 4 pm (CEST); and additional consultations with interested Parties and observers upon request.

Another Bureau member restated her region's position that it was not in favour of an online meeting and asked that the meeting be postponed until a face to face meeting was possible. The main reason for this was connectivity issues in the region, which would prevent Parties from participating in an electronic meeting. Language issues were also a major concern for the region. In response to questions from one of the Co-Chairs, the Bureau member confirmed that the region's concerns would not be mitigated by the fact that OEWG-12 decisions could possibly be limited to decisions of a procedural nature: full participation by all Parties in the region in decision making processes of any kind, whether substantive or procedural, was essential. She also clarified that all focal points from the region had been consulted on this position.

The Bureau took note of the information provided.

## **2. Possibility of interpreting the online session and platform to be used for OEWG-12**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it had been able to identify a meeting platform which could provide simultaneous interpretation into the six UN languages for the online session. It was foreseen to use "Interprefy". In addition, the Secretariat had managed to arrange for the possibility to translate revised draft decisions that would be circulated to Parties for adoption. She said Parties could send their proposals on and/or objections to the adoption of draft decisions in any of the six UN languages, although Parties would be invited to make them in English, if possible, to facilitate the process of preparing revised draft decisions. The meeting would thus be fully conducted in all six UN languages, following the same practice as during a face-to-face meeting.

In response to a question, the Secretariat added that Interprefy could host 300 delegates with speaking rights in the six UN languages, as well as additionally 1,000 participants without speaking rights. Interprefy was now a platform used by the UN Secretariat and many UN agencies, including most recently during the 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly which the Secretariat had followed. In this context, the Secretariat had witnessed a few instances in which there had been delays with connecting individual countries, but that these had been resolved and that the connection of delegates from those countries had been restored. The Secretariat could attest to the quality of the sound and interface provided by Interprefy for online meetings. The UN Secretariat had entered into a systems contract with Interprefy, and now UN Conference Services will start providing services for the organization of online meetings using this platform across the UN Secretariat.

The Bureau took note of the information provided and requested the Secretariat to provide further information on the use of Interprefy, including additional technical information, experience with its performance and possible challenges faced and how these were addressed. The information is set out in annex I to the present report.

## **3. Possibility of supporting developing countries and countries with economies in transition with connectivity issues**

The Secretariat explained that some Party representatives might face increased challenges to participate in OEWG-12 by electronic means due to the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Delegates might need to participate in the meeting from home. Given these exceptional circumstances, the Secretariat had engaged with other UN entities to find solutions to support representatives of developing-country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to secure a reliable internet access for the meeting. The Secretariat would be in a position to reimburse, on an exceptional basis, costs incurred for up to two representatives per eligible Party to secure a reliable and good quality internet connection from home for the duration of the meeting. The reimbursement of the communications costs would be made upon presentation of receipts for the actual costs incurred, depending on the availability of funding, and in the range of USD 50 to USD 500, following the meeting.

One Bureau member thanked the Secretariat for making this support available. Another indicated that while her region appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to find solutions, this support could not compensate the fact that adequate connectivity infrastructure was not available in her region. Answering a question from the Co-Chair, she confirmed that the lack of a quality network at the national level was wide spread in her region and that the proposed communication allowance could not solve this problem.

The Bureau took note of the information provided.

#### **4. Limiting decisions to procedural decisions**

The Secretariat explained that some Parties had raised concerns that while the currently proposed draft decisions set out in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/15 might be of procedural nature only, Parties could propose the adoption of more substantive decisions during the email correspondence procedure. If the Bureau so wished, it could propose to the OEWG-12 under the agenda item “organization of work” that Parties agree to limit themselves to adopting decisions of a procedural nature. Parties would need to be made aware of such a proposal in advance of the meeting.

In the ensuing discussion, several Bureau members asked for clarification on how to differentiate the procedural from the substantive elements of a decision. The Senior Legal Officer from the Secretariat explained that procedural elements in a decision included for example an invitation to Parties and observers to comment on a document by a given date. Substantive elements of a decision on the other hand included for example, the adoption of or the agreement on a document. The Co-Chair emphasized the importance for all Parties to be clear about the distinction and what OEWG-12 would be expected to achieve.

One Bureau member explained that her region was of the view that progress should be made on all the agenda items before OEWG-12. In response to a question from the Co-Chair, the Senior Legal Officer clarified that the draft decisions before the OEWG-12 pertained to all the agenda items. She explained that the draft decisions were intended to contain necessary elements of a procedural nature and that, if adopted, they would enable the OEWG-12 to invite broader input from Parties and observers on the various products and documents prepared by intersessional working groups and other subsidiary bodies, before their finalization for consideration by the Conference of the Parties. The Co-Chair received confirmation from each Bureau member that the clarifications provided were clear to them.

The Bureau took note of the information provided.

#### **5. Way forward for OEWG-12**

Upon the invitation of one Co-Chair, one Bureau member reiterated her region’s position that the OEWG-12 meeting should be postponed until a face-to-face meeting was possible. The other Co-Chair sought clarification as to whether postponing the OEWG-12 online meeting by one or two months, which would still allow for the outcomes of the meeting to feed into the intersessional work prior to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, would be an acceptable way forward for her region. In response, the Bureau member requested that, at this point in time, the Bureau should agree on a postponement, and then engage in new discussions on the format of OEWG-12, involving all regions. Another Bureau member said that his region was fine with an online meeting, but only if all regions were supporting the proposal.

The Executive Secretary explained that a decision not to proceed with the electronic OEWG-12 starting on 22 June 2020 had to be taken urgently, as the Secretariat was still in the process of securing arrangements for the meeting based on the decision taken by the Bureau during its 9 April meeting. A significant amount of funds had already been committed on the meeting and would not be recoverable. He then drew attention to the fact that arrangements for a meeting at alternative dates needed to be made with sufficient advance notice, as it implied many preparations and the Secretariat could not guarantee the availability of all required services at any given time.

A representative from the Secretariat further clarified that the deadline for submission of documents that were to be translated for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties was 25 January 2021, i.e. the Secretariat needed to receive products from the intersessional working groups and other subsidiary bodies by the end of 2020 at the latest. This implied that if OEWG-12 was to serve the purpose of bringing on board comments from all Parties and observers on the work of those bodies, the meeting would need to be held as soon as possible (e.g. during the month of July), but no later than end of August/first week of September 2020. If the Bureau decided to postpone OEWG-12 until a face to face meeting was possible, for example in 2021, OEWG-12 would not be in a position to provide input to those documents being prepared by the intersessional working groups and other subsidiary bodies for consideration for the 2021 meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Following this explanation, one Bureau member concluded that a face to face OEWG-12 was not an option.

In response to a question from one of the Co-Chairs, the representative from the Secretariat explained that if OEWG-12 did not take place by September 2020, the intersessional working groups and other subsidiary bodies could take the initiative of directly seeking input from Parties and observers on their draft products.

Another Bureau member asked whether it could be acceptable for all regions to hold an electronic OEWG-12 meeting without the online session, using the email correspondence procedure only.

Concluding its deliberations, the Bureau members agreed to further consult with their respective regions based on the information shared during the present Bureau meeting and to meet again online on Wednesday, 10 June 2020, at 5:30 pm (CEST), to take a decision on the convening of OEWG-12.

The Secretariat was requested to prepare the report of the meeting by Monday, 8 June 2020, in order to allow Bureau members to circulate it to their regions in support of their consultations. The report would include, in addition to information about Interprefy, information on the application of the rules of procedure of meetings of the Conference of the Parties to an online OEWG-12, as well as information on how an OEWG-12 electronic meeting only through an email correspondence procedure (i.e. without the online session) would work. The information on Interprefy, the rules of procedure and an online OEWG-12 through an email correspondence procedure is set out in annexes I, II and III respectively of the present report.

The Secretariat reiterated that it would not be in a position to secure arrangements for an OEWG-12 meeting on 22 -25 June 2020 beyond Wednesday, 10 June 2020. The Bureau agreed that should one member not be able to attend the meeting on Wednesday, 10 June 2020, it would either send a replacement or provide its region's position in writing in advance of the meeting.

**6. OEWG-12 pre-meetings, including regional preparatory meetings**

Due to lack of time, the Bureau did not take up this agenda item.

**7. Any other business**

Due to lack of time, the Bureau did not take up this agenda item.

## Annex I

### **Further information on the use of Interprefy, including additional technical information and experience with its performance**

Interprefy is a cloud-based platform for organizing online conferences, workshops, seminars, meetings and webinars through video conferencing with **real time simultaneous interpretation**. The online platform enables events to draw upon the services of language service providers to supply interpretation for any language combination at events of different sizes and at any location. Currently the platform can accommodate up to 300 delegates with right to speak and up to 1000 delegates with viewer rights only, when using simultaneous interpretation in the six UN languages.

Interpreters provide their services remotely via the cloud platform or connected through existing interpreters' booths and sound equipment in meeting rooms. This allows them to work from virtually anywhere with a solid internet connection, reducing equipment costs and the interpreters' logistics costs.

Event attendees, whether at the venue or accessing remotely, can receive interpreted audio via a free smartphone app available for Android and iOS or via web browser. Radio receivers can also be used for attendees at the venue.

#### **Main features offered by Interprefy.**

**Interpreter and Speaker Management.** Events are created and managed in the Event Management Center which offers a suite of tools for moderating and managing speakers and interpreters.

**Interpreter and Speaker Interfaces.** Interpreters and speakers can connect and work from virtually anywhere via a clean and simple web interface with high quality audio and video streams. It also allows organization that have already invested in interpretation and sound equipment to use their existing infrastructure and teams of interpreters to connect to Interprefy, respecting existing practices, norms and regulations of the client organizations.

**Attendee Access.** Event attendees can access interpreted audio via a free Android or iPhone app, web browser or traditional radio receivers meaning that interpreted services are available to attendees whether remote or in situ.

**High Quality Audio and Video.** Interprefy offers HD-quality, lip-synced audio and video streaming to ensure that interpreters never miss a beat. In the case of a dropped internet connection, streaming services feature automatic line monitoring and auto-reconnect.

#### **Highly secure**

The system offers best-in-class security standards and protocols for encryption and transmission – such as TLS 1.2 (the safest method available today), AES-128-GCM, WebRTC (the leading technology for secure, real-time audio and video streaming) and two-factor authentication.

#### **Technical requirements for participants**

The following hardware and software requirements are based on the best knowledge and experience that the BRS Secretariat has for different types of video conference systems in general.

- Computer

PC or laptop with Windows 7, MAC Os ver. 11 or newer versions, and latest version of Google Chrome. Webcam or built-in camera, minimum 4 GB of RAM and a quad-core processor.

- Or Mobile device

Smart Phone or tablet with iOS or Android, using Interprefy mobile App

Headset with microphone is recommended, this will warrantee better sound quality and avoid the unpleasant echo when the participant is speaking. The built-in speakers and microphones of the laptops or mobile devices could be used if a headset is not available. Wireless headsets are not recommended.

- Internet connection

Network bandwidth: 0.5 Mbps for audio connection, 1 Mbps for audio and low-resolution video, 4 Mbps for audio and high-resolution video. 3G or 4G should be enough for a mobile device when using the Interprefy App.

### **Technical requirements for Interpreters**

The technical requirements for interpreters are the same as for participants, except that the use of headset is not optional, and the minimum bandwidth requirement is 2Mbps, upload and download.

### **Event Management Center**

In the Event Management Center, event managers can see an overview of all current events. For each event, the user can see at-a-glance how many sources, interpreters, moderators and audience members are connected to each event. The Event Management Center also gives event managers access to information on past events. The event calendar gives users the option to view upcoming events in a familiar calendar-style view.

New events are added via the Event Management Center by filling out a simple three-step wizard. Here the event manager can set up key details for each new event including scheduling and languages required. When setting up the event, the user can also select managers and moderators for that particular event.

In setting up the event, the user assigns unique access tokens for each of the different types of user (speaker, interpreter, audience and moderator). These will then be used by each respective user to access the part of the platform they need. Event managers can choose to use their own interpreters or select interpreters from Interprefy's language service providers.

### **Interpreter Interface**

The interpreter interface gives interpreters instant access to all of the tools they need to do the task at hand without any added clutter. Logging into the platform is simply a case of using the access code set up by the event manager. No expensive interpreting equipment is required by the interpreter. Everything they need is accessible via the browser.

Once logged in, the interpreter can view and listen to source content via a high-quality audio and video stream. Here the user can select the audio feed direct from the speaker or one of the available translated language channels. The audio and video of the original source are lip-synced to make it easier for the interpreter to follow the conversation.

The interpreter interface also features a text-chat window, allowing the interpreter to chat to other interpreters, speakers and event managers.

### **Speaker Interface**

The speaker interface is similar to the interpreter interface in terms of its simplicity. It also gives the user exactly the tools they need. From here, speakers can control their microphone and select their output language. Live video and audio feeds are also available to speakers. This enables remote speakers to monitor the event and ensure they are ready to speak on cue. Events managers can setup the speakers; microphones to be managed by an operator.

The speaker interface also features access to the event chat feature allowing for real time communication with other event participants.

### **Event Moderation**

Interprefy's Event Management Center allows event managers and moderators the ability to monitor and, if need be, control all aspects of the interpretation process for all users. From here, moderators can access and monitor all of the available audio, video and chat feeds for the event, mute or unmute users and switch audio channels for speakers and interpreters.

## **Audience Experience**

Audience members can listen to translated audio feeds either at the venue, or remotely, via the free Interprefy mobile application which is available for Android and iOS (iPhone), or via a web browser. As with other users, access is enabled by entering the code set by the event manager. For simplicity, the number of options available to audience members is kept to the absolute minimum. From the application or the web browser, the user simply logs into the app using the code provided, selects the language they wish to hear and they are ready to go.

Any member of the audience having the right to speak can request for the floor by raising their “virtual hand” (a button in the user interface), which will add him/her to the speakers’ list that the moderator will monitor and use for giving the floor to participants.

In the event that the meeting will require to vote it can be organized by raising their virtual hands, however the counting has to be done manually.

## **Summary of the features**

### **Interpreter and Speaker Management**

- Overview of all events including dates, times, location, languages, responsible managers and moderators
- Moderator interface shows users and connections in real-time, allowing remote control of all microphones and channels
- 3-step event wizard for creating new events and setting up access
- Add event manager profiles, with their own logins and limited access to events they manage
- Personalize the attendee mobile app with your company logo
- Time zone adjusted event calendar
- Access to archived recordings for quality control and transcription
- Time usage chart for event tracking

### **Interpreter and Speaker Interfaces**

- Web browser access for speakers and interpreters and audience
- Simple relay simultaneous interpreting allows fast switching between languages
- Handover countdown timer, to facilitate the switch between interpreting booth partners
- Screen-sharing allows the speakers to share the presentation during the speech
- Built-in chat allows interpreters to communicate directly with speakers, booth partners and moderators

### **Attendee Access**

- User-friendly mobile interface for audience access to interpreted content
- Free mobile app, with easy selection of language channels within the app (traditional radio headsets for the audience can also be connected)
- Convenient access by typing in a single login token once, at the beginning of event
- Fast switching between all available languages
- Phone calls can be received and other apps can still be used while listening to interpreting
- Mobile app optimized for minimal battery drain
- Display event logo to participants

### **High Quality Audio and Video**

- Full-band audio, with 20kHz bandwidth at 48kHz sample rate; this is among the highest on the market and provides crystal-clear sound for interpreters
- Reliable connections with automatic line monitoring and auto-reconnect in the event of the internet connection being interrupted
- Compatible with traditional audio equipment and software: Dante, Bosch, Sennheiser, etc.
- High-quality HD video of the speaker for the interpreters, at 720p resolution
- Lip sync: sound and image are synchronised
- Easy integration with existing cameras on site and intuitive switching between several video channels

- Large-scale events: thousands of users can be connected simultaneously

#### **Statistics on Interprefy performance at World Health Assembly**

The Secretariat has requested the information from the World Health Organization and will provide the information to the Bureau as soon as it is received.

## **Annex II**

### **Explanatory note on the application of the rules of procedure to an online meeting of the OEWG-12<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Do the rules of procedure apply to an online meeting of OEWG-12?**

The rules of procedure for the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention<sup>3</sup> apply to “any meeting” of the Conference of the Parties convened pursuant to Article 15 of the Convention (rules 1 and 2). Unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties, the rules of procedure apply mutatis mutandis to the proceedings of subsidiary bodies, except that: (a) The chairman of a subsidiary body may exercise the right to vote; and (b) Decisions of a subsidiary body shall be taken by a majority of the Parties present and voting, except that the reconsideration of a proposal or of an amendment to a proposal shall require the majority established by rule 38 (rule 26.6).

The rules do not require that a “meeting” be held face-to-face or physically. Under the Basel Convention, the Conference of the Parties usually uses the terminology “electronic means” to refer to meetings or other intersessional work conducted online. An “online” meeting therefore may include “live” sessions using devices such as telephone or a computer (audio or video), and sessions conducted by electronic correspondence (e.g., email). The Conference of the Parties has in the past provided that a subsidiary body may meet face-to-face or by electronic means, depending on the availability of financial resources, and that it may work by electronic means (e.g., email). This is for instance the case for the Basel Convention Partnership on Plastic Waste working group, the Basel Convention Partnership on Household Waste working group, and the various Basel Convention small intersessional working groups on the development or updating of technical guidelines. Even without an express decision of the Conference of the Parties to that effect, the Basel Convention Implementation and Compliance Committee has been holding online sessions of its meetings since 2013. Due to the current exceptional circumstances associated with the COVID19 pandemic, the small intersessional working group on the strategic framework held a three-day meeting online on 20-22 April 2020. Looking ahead, the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties is planning to meet online on 25-26 June 2020, and so will the Basel Convention Implementation and Compliance Committee (29 June – 3 July 2020).

Therefore, unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties, the rules of procedure apply mutatis mutandis to meetings of subsidiary bodies convened face-to-face or by electronic means, including an online meeting of the OEWG-12.

#### **What is the location of an online OEWG-12 meeting?**

Rule 3, applicable mutatis mutandis, provides that meetings of the OEWG shall take place at the seat of the Secretariat, unless other appropriate arrangements are made by the Secretariat in consultation with the Parties. In the case of an online meeting, the Secretariat has been advised by the UN Secretariat that the meeting takes place in the city in which the meeting would have been scheduled to be held if it was a face-to-face meeting, hence Geneva.

#### **Are there adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of the Co-Chairs and the Bureau during OEWG-12?**

No. The roles of the Co-Chairs of the OEWG are analogous to that of the President of the Conference of the Parties, and the role of the Rapporteur of the OEWG is analogous to that of the Rapporteur of the Conference of the Parties. The role of the OEWG Bureau is not specified in the rules of procedure (since there are no credentials submitted by Party representatives, rule 20), but according to past practice, this role is limited to matters related to the organization of work of the meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> This explanatory note by the Secretariat, which will be updated as needed, is provided for information purposes and only within the specific context of the organization of an online meeting of OEWG-12. It is without prejudice to the prerogative of the Parties to interpret the Convention and the rules or procedure

<sup>3</sup> The rules of procedure are available at:

<http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/ConferenceoftheParties/RulesofProcedure/tabid/2281/Default.aspx>

**Will the OEWG-12 meeting be public?**

Yes, unless the OEWG-12 decides otherwise (rule 29.2). An online meeting of the OEWG-12 will be open to the participation of Party representatives and of observers in the similar way as if it is convened face-to-face, and the same requirements for designating representatives apply.

**How will the presence of participants (quorum) be assessed during OEWG-12?**

The rules of procedure provide for requirements of presence for the meeting to proceed. In the event of an open-ended body, one quarter of the Parties shall constitute a quorum (rule 26.5). In the case of an online meeting, “presence” for the purpose of determining quorum is not physical presence but remote presence, via an electronic device.

**What language requirements apply to the OEWG-12?**

The rules of procedure provide as follows:

- Rule 52: The official languages of the meetings shall be Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
- Rule 53.1: Statements made in an official language of the meeting shall be interpreted into the other official languages. Rule 53.2.: A representative may speak in a language other than an official language of the meeting, if he provides for interpretation into one such official language.
- Rule 54: Official documents of the meetings shall be drawn up in one of the official languages and translated into the other official languages.

At the time of the establishment of the OEWG, the Conference of the Parties decided that the meetings of the OEWG would be conducted in all six official United Nations languages (decision BC-VI/36). At its thirteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided that the OEWG-11 would be of four days’ duration, with two days of plenary sessions with simultaneous interpretation provided, plus one additional day of plenary sessions with interpretation provided subject to the availability of resources, to be applied flexibly by the Executive Secretary. (decision BC-13/17). No changes to these arrangements were made by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting.

The official (working) documents for OEWG-12 are available in the six languages of the United Nations, and so will the report of the meeting, in accordance with rule 54. The Secretariat has identified a meeting platform which could provide simultaneous interpretation into the six UN languages for the OEWG-12 online session, and to arrange for the possibility to translate revised draft decisions that would be circulated to Parties for adoption during the email correspondence procedure, in accordance with rule 53.

**Will there be a sound record of the meeting?**

Rule 55 provides that sound records of a meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and whenever possible of its subsidiary bodies, shall be kept by the Secretariat in accordance with the practice of the United Nations. A sound record of the OEWG-12 online session is planned.

## Annex III

### Organizing an online OEWG-12 meeting by email correspondence procedure

- The twelfth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group could be held by electronic means with plenary sessions of the meeting taking place on the basis of an email correspondence procedure, without an online session. The length of a OEWG-12 meeting with an agenda covering all the items of the work programme of the OEWG for 2020-2021, as decided by decision BC-14/20 and reflected in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/1, could last for up to three weeks. In the absence of an online session, there would be no live interaction between the Co-Chairs and Parties as well as among Parties, and the agenda items would not be introduced by the Secretariat.
- In advance of the meeting, the Bureau would agree on a proposed organization of work for the meeting that provides sufficient information for Parties to understand the expected outcomes of the meeting and how the meeting would unfold. Given the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic which explain the exceptional convening of OEWG-12 by electronic means, Bureau members would as relevant consult the proposal with Parties in their respective region, pursuant to their own internal and regionally-specific arrangements. This proposal would be set out in the scenario note for the meeting.
- The information below is a preliminary option building on the approach agreed by the Bureau during its 9 April 2020 meeting, namely under a scenario where only the necessary procedural steps to enable the OEWG-12 to invite broader input from Parties and observers on the various products and documents prepared by intersessional working groups and other subsidiary bodies, before their finalization for consideration by the Conference of the Parties, would be decided by the meeting. Accordingly, the expectation would still be that OEWG-12 would not work on revising any reports, manuals, technical guidelines, guidance or recommendations in substance. Instead, decisions would enable that as much progress as possible in an inclusive manner can take place in advance of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- An online meeting entirely run through an email correspondence procedure would mean that all interventions by the Co-Chairs and all interventions by Parties and observers participating in the meeting would take place through communications with the Secretariat. In order to ensure clarity in the proceedings, one email address would be used for Parties and observers to submit statements to the Secretariat ([statements-oweg12@brsmeas.org](mailto:statements-oweg12@brsmeas.org)), a different email address would be used by Parties during the decision-making process ([decisions-oweg12@brsmeas.org](mailto:decisions-oweg12@brsmeas.org)). In addition, in order to ensure transparency in the process, all emails sent by the Secretariat, all statements received from Parties and observers, any proposals or objections by Parties during the decision-making process and all revised draft decisions would be made available on a password-protected meeting intranet site accessible to all participants.
- The meeting would be opened by the Co-Chairs, by email (item 1 of the provisional agenda), with an invitation for the meeting to consider procedural matters, namely the adoption of the agenda (item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda) and the organization of work (item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda). The email would invite Parties to consider adopting the proposed agenda for the meeting and agreeing to the proposed organization of work, noting that the provisional agenda is tailored to the work programme of the OEWG for 2020-2021 as decided by the Conference of the Parties and that the proposed organization of work reflects views from all regions. Any Party wishing to make a proposal pertaining to the agenda and organization of work, or to object to their adoption, will be invited to send a response by email to the Secretariat within 48 hours of the time when the email was circulated by the Secretariat. Any proposal or objection should clearly identify any proposed changes and would be encouraged to be submitted in English.
- At the expiry of the 48-hour deadline, the agenda and organization of work would be adopted, unless a proposal was made or an objection was raised. In that case a revised agenda and/or organization of work, prepared in consultation with the Co-Chairs and made available in the six languages of the United Nations and showing changes in track change mode, would be circulated to all meeting participants by email, with an invitation to Party representatives to adopt them. These steps would be repeated until agreement is reached, bearing in mind that it would not be expected that this would take longer than one week.
- In this first email, there could also be an invitation by the Co-Chairs for representatives speaking on behalf of groups of countries as well as individual Parties and observers, to submit general statements in any of six languages of the United Nations by email to the Secretariat.

- Following the adoption of the agenda and organization of work, the OEWG-12 will turn its attention to the consideration of items 3 and 4. In an email, the Co-Chairs would invite the meeting to consider those items. The email would:
    - Invite email statements by observers and Parties pertaining to agenda items 3 and 4,
    - Invite Parties to consider adopting all the draft decisions for consideration under agenda items 3 and 4 (UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/15).
  - The steps described above for the adoption of the agenda and organization of work through the email correspondence procedure would be followed until agreement is reached on the draft decisions. At the end of each 48-hour period, an email would be sent to all participants indicating which decisions were adopted and which revised decisions were for consideration during a new 48-hour period. If it was not possible to reach agreement regarding a particular decision, further consideration of the issue would be deferred to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The consideration of draft decisions under agenda items 3 and 4 could last up to two weeks.
  - Subsequently to the consideration of the draft decisions under agenda items 3 and 4, the Co-Chairs would invite by email the meeting to consider item 5 of the provisional agenda, namely to consider and agree on the process for the adoption of the report of the meeting, following the same email correspondence procedure. In that email, the Co-Chairs could also set the ultimate deadline for Parties and observers to send statements on agenda items 3 and 4, and could communicate their intention regarding the time and date of the closing of the meeting (item 6).
  - Following the consideration of item 5, the Co-Chairs would close the meeting in an email (item 6).
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