

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

Thursday, 17 June 2021, 3 pm to 5 pm (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)

I. Welcome by the co-chairs

1. The co-chair opened the meeting, providing a recap on recent developments. She recalled that an options paper for the scheduling of the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 had been made available to Bureau members during their meeting on Friday 16 April 2021, with an invitation to consult with their respective regions. The first option was to convene a 3-day face-to-face segment held back-to-back with and following the face-to-face segment of UNEA 5 (UNEA 5.2) in Nairobi, potentially in the first week of March 2022. The second option was to convene a 3-day face-to-face segment held back-to-back with and preceding the face-to-face segment of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS COPs) in Geneva, potentially in the second week of June 2022.

2. The co-chair advised that during the period of consultation on the options paper in April and May 2021, developments occurred which impacted the options available for scheduling OEWG-12. Due to a change in the availability of the usual venue for convening meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (BRS COPs), it was now suggested that the face-to-face segment of those meetings be held from 6 to 17 June 2022, with preparatory meetings on 5 June 2022, with, as a consequence, that the abovementioned second option would no longer be viable. In light of this development, the co-chairs had proposed a “new” second option to the Bureau in a revised options paper circulated on 28 May 2021 (attached as the annex to this report). The second option would be to hold the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 as a standalone meeting in April or May 2021 in Nairobi.¹ Both options would be dependent on adoption of the interim budget for 2022 by the online segment of the BRS COPs (26–30 July 2021) and positive developments in relation to the COVID-10 pandemic.

II. Reports back from Bureau members on options paper

3. The co-chair invited feedback on the two options from the Bureau members on the basis of the consultations with their respective regions.

4. One Bureau member expressed appreciation for the revised options paper and advised that the second option, for a standalone meeting specifically to be held in May 2022, was the favoured option for her region. The Bureau member requested clarity as to whether further options could be explored. The co-chair suggested that the meeting return to this question later in the discussion.

5. A second Bureau member confirmed his region’s preference for a standalone meeting, preferably to take place in April 2022.

6. Another Bureau member advised that she had received very few comments from her region. She confirmed her region’s wish for a face-to-face meeting but did not have a preference between the two options.

7. A further Bureau member expressed a preference for option 2 but suggested that given the uncertainties due to the pandemic, the decision-making be deferred until after the online segments of the BRS COPs. She confirmed her region’s wish to retain both dates under option 2 until a final decision could be taken.

8. A final Bureau member indicated her region’s preference for option 1, although indicated that option 2 was considered as a fall-back position. The most important consideration was to allow time

¹ Tentative bookings have been made at the UN Gigiri complex in Nairobi for the weeks commencing 4 April and 9 May 2022.

between OEWG-12 and the BRS COPs. She also expressed concern that the momentum must not falter between now and the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 and requested the Secretariat to share ongoing updates on the activities of the intersessional groups.

9. The co-chair reminded the Bureau that if neither of the 2 options was a possibility due to delays in the roll-out of the global vaccination programme, there would be the possibility of closing OEWG-12 immediately preceding the face-to-face segment of the BRS COPs in June 2022.

III. Decision-making, in principle, for the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12

10. In the ensuing discussion, a number of the Bureau members asked clarifying questions including the number of Parties that would constitute a quorum and what would happen in the event that not all Party representatives could travel to Nairobi for the meeting because of delays in the global vaccination programme and/or the necessity to quarantine upon arrival.

11. The Secretariat clarified that the quorum for an OEWG would be a simple majority (i.e. 95 Parties). The Secretariat further elaborated on potential options if not all Parties could be present in person at the meeting. The Bureau could propose a hybrid meeting, which would feature in-person participation for those present in or able to travel to Nairobi, and virtual participation for those not able to travel to Nairobi. One Bureau member suggested that if the hybrid model were pursued, the Secretariat could investigate the possibility of having representatives from the same region meet together in a location permitted under prevailing COVID rules to allow for their effective participation in the meeting.

12. The co-chair wrapped up the discussions with a Bureau decision, in principle, for the face-to-face segment to be held as a standalone meeting in Nairobi in April or May 2022 (option 2), subject to the final agreement of one of the regions, to be transmitted following the meeting, and the adoption of the interim budget for 2022 by the online segment of the BRS COPs (26–30 July 2021), together with positive developments in relation to the COVID-10 pandemic. She therefore requested that the Secretariat explore options for a hybrid meeting, including options to facilitate regional coordination for those unable to travel to Nairobi, and their associated budget implications. The Bureau members signalled their agreement with this way forward.

IV. Next steps

13. In closing the meeting, the co-chair summarized the outcome of the Bureau's discussions, suggesting that the Bureau be reconvened during the Autumn months in October or November 2021 to confirm its decision for scheduling of the face-to-face segment, in light of the outcome of the online segment of the BRS COPs (26–30 July 2021) and developments in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, the Secretariat could share the information it had gathered in relation to both hybrid meetings and regional coordination for those unable to attend the meetings. She further requested that the Secretariat consider modalities for keeping Parties updated on intersessional processes, including the hosting of webinars and the sharing of information documents following the online segments of the BRS COPs.

Options for the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12

Revised 27 May 2021

Background

At its online meeting on 16 April 2021, the members of the Bureau of the twelfth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG-12) agreed to consult within their regions on two options for the convening of a face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 as follows:

1. A 3-day face-to-face segment held back-to-back with and following the face-to-face segment of UNEA 5² (UNEA 5.2) in Nairobi, in early March 2022;
2. A 3-day face-to-face segment held back-to-back with and preceding the face-to-face segments of the BRS COPs³ in Geneva, potentially in the second week of June 2022.

There has since been a new development with respect to the timing and venue of the face-to-face segments of the BRS COPs. The Secretariat was advised of the possibility of convening the face-to-face segments of the BRS COPs at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) from 6 to 17 June 2022. The opportunity to hold the BRS COPs at CICG represents considerable cost savings as compared with the earlier option to hold the BRS COPs at the Palexpo venue in Geneva later in June. Accordingly, the Bureaux of the BRS COPs agreed to proceed with the new proposed dates and hosting arrangement with CICG, bearing in mind that the final decision will be made by the BRS COPs during their online segment (26–30 July 2021).

This decision by the BRS COPs Bureaux has unavoidable implications for the scheduling of the face-to-face OEWG-12 segment. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to schedule OEWG-12 back-to-back with the BRS COPs as the CICG venue is not available directly preceding the new BRS COPs dates. It is also not cost-effective to proceed with the Palexpo venue option solely for the OEWG-12 meeting. This means that the abovementioned option 2 is no longer a possibility.

As such, the OEWG-12 Co-chairs requested the Secretariat to investigate the possibility of a new option 2 as a standalone meeting to proceed later in 2022, and prior to the BRS COPs. The Co-chairs also requested the Secretariat to consider alternative approaches to prepare for the BRS COPs in the event that it is not possible to hold a face-to-face OEWG-12 segment due to the persistence of the pandemic.

Consideration of options for the face-to-face segment

Anticipating that the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 will be convened in 2022, there are two options available for the Bureau's consideration:

1. A 3-day face-to-face segment held back-to-back with and following the face-to-face segment of UNEA 5⁴ (UNEA 5.2 and the UNEA Special Session) in Nairobi, from 7 March 2022 (**same as previous option 1, in principle**);
2. A 3-day face-to-face segment as a standalone meeting in April or May 2021 (**new option 2**). Under this option, the standalone meeting would be convened in Nairobi as the regular Geneva-based venue (CICG) is currently fully booked for the first half of 2022. In addition, the UN procurement office in Geneva advise that it may be too late to secure an alternative, cost-effective venue in Geneva. Please note, if the Bureau decides to select option 1 above, it is possible to retain this option 2 as a fall-back option.

² Indicative dates for UNEA 5.2 are 28 February to 2 March 2022.

³ Indicative dates for the BRS COPs face-to-face segments are 6 to 17 June 2022.

⁴ Indicative dates for UNEA 5.2 are 28 February to 2 March 2022.

Further detail of both options is available in the annex to the present document.

In the event that neither option could be exercised due to the persistence of the pandemic, a fall-back solution would be to convene the OEWG-12 face-to-face segment for up to one day in duration, back-to-back with the BRS COPs (i.e. on or around 5 June 2022). The purpose of the segment would be to close OEWG-12 prior to the advent of the COPs. No substantive discussion of agenda items would be possible at this face-to-face segment. Alternative approaches to prepare for the BRS COPs, such as webinars, could then be explored.