

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

Wednesday, 4 March 2020, 2:30– 3:30 p.m. (CET)

Participants:

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

Rapporteur: Ms. Hlobisile Sikhosana (Eswatini)

Apologies:

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

1. Provisional agenda for OEWG-12

The Secretariat introduced a draft provisional agenda for OEWG-12 (UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/1), highlighting that the agenda and the matters to be dealt with under each agenda item were defined by the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for the biennium 2020–2021 as adopted by decision BC-14/20. The agenda had been cleared by the co-chairs, finalized and posted on the webpage of the meeting: <http://www.basel.int/oewg12>.

The Secretariat clarified that the agenda item 3 (b) (iv) on plastic waste covered only activities undertaken on further consideration of plastic waste specified in paragraph 34 (a) and (b) of section VIII of decision BC-14/13. Other activities related to plastic wastes for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group were covered under the following agenda items: 3 (b) (i) c. on technical guidelines for the identification and environmentally sound management of plastic wastes and for their disposal; 3 (b) (ii) on national reporting; 3 (c) (ii) on providing further legal clarity; 3 (d) (i) on Basel Convention Partnership Programme; and 3 (d) (ii) on cooperation with the World Customs Organization on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System.

The Bureau members took note of the information provided.

2. Tentative schedule of the meeting

(a) Plenary sessions

The Secretariat introduced a draft tentative schedule for OEWG-12 (UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/INF/2), explaining that the budget approved by the Conference of the Parties provided for two days of simultaneous interpretation into the six UN languages from the general trust fund, and an additional one funded by the technical cooperation trust fund and thus subject to the availability of financial resources. Thanks to a generous financial contribution from Norway, a third day of interpretation was provided for. Plenary sessions with simultaneous interpretation would thus take place on Monday, 22 June, Tuesday, 23 June and Thursday, 25 June. On Wednesday, 24 June, meetings of contact and other groups would be held in English only. The Secretariat explained a tentative planning how agenda items would be taken up in plenary.

The Bureau agreed on the tentative schedule of the meeting, as set out in the document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/INF/2.

(b) Contact groups

The Secretariat reported that most likely contact groups on technical and on legal matters would be needed, and possibly a third group on strategic matters. Furthermore, there could be a need for a group to discuss further the item 3 (b) (iv) on plastic waste. This group would only cover plastics issues as they fell under agenda item 3 (b) (iv), while other plastics issues would be covered by the other three contact groups: for example, the technical guidelines for the identification and environmentally sound management of plastic wastes and for their disposal would be dealt with by the technical contact group.

In the ensuing discussion, the Bureau members felt that a friends-of-the-co-chairs group might be an adequate setting for the discussions on plastic waste: on one hand, the mandate of the group was quite limited, but on the other hand it was still important to recognize the contribution of the Basel Convention to the global discussions of the challenges posed by on plastic waste. The Secretariat mentioned that an adequate amount of time would be allocated to each group, taking into account the priority of the work and its related timelines.

(c) Side events and other events

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau of the deadline for registration of side events of 22 May 2020. Side events would be scheduled for lunchtimes and evenings during the meeting. A few requests had already been received. Information on side events was available on the meeting website: <http://www.basel.int/tabid/8285/Default.aspx>.

In addition, a reception hosted by Switzerland, as well as a plastic innovation forum were tentatively scheduled for Monday evening and Wednesday during the day, respectively. Further information would be provided, as soon as these events were confirmed.

The Bureau members took note of the information provided.

(d) Pre-meetings on Sunday

The Secretariat confirmed that as per usual practice, pre-meetings on Sunday, 21 June 2020, would include a Bureau meeting (2-3 pm) and regional meetings (3-6 pm). Additionally, the Bureau would meet each morning, except on Monday, 22 June 2020, from 8-9 am and the regional groups daily from 9-10 am.

In response to a question, the Secretariat clarified that no provision was being made for formal interpretation at the regional meetings, as this was not foreseen in the budget for the OEWG-12 adopted by the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat would however enquire if informal arrangements for interpretation could be made by the groups themselves.

The Bureau members took note of the information provided.

3. Logistics and other preparations for OEWG-12

As of 4 March 2020, the Secretariat had received 159 registrations for OEWG-12, including from 89 Parties and 17 observer organizations. Requests for financial assistance had been made for 78 participants. With the current funding received or pledged by Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland, which amounted to approximately USD 400,000, it seemed likely that all these requests could be accommodated. For additional late requests, the Secretariat would need to look into the availability of funding.

The Secretariat had scheduled two briefing webinars about OEWG-12 on 27 May 2020 and 4 June 2020. The webinars would provide information about the organization and substantive matters to be discussed at OEWG-12. Debriefing webinars about the outcomes of the meeting would be held after the meeting.

Meeting documents would be posted in all six UN languages at the latest two months prior to the meeting, i.e., on 22 April 2020. The posting of advance English versions would however start soon.

The Bureau members took note of the information provided.

4. Other matters

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that due to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, there was a risk that OEWG-12 might not take place as planned. The Secretariat was closely monitoring the situation in order to take an informed decision on the best way forward. Several options were being considered, including buying refundable tickets for funded participants, holding the meeting in a reduced form or postponing/cancelling it. The Secretariat would be in touch with the Bureau on this matter, taking into account the further development of the situation. A short discussion followed on the possible implications of the virus on the organization of the meeting and the participation of delegates.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau members that a proposal to amend Article 6 paragraph 2 of the Basel Convention had been received by the Russian Federation. The proposal was being translated into all UN languages and would be circulated to Parties thereafter. The matter was not on the agenda of OEWG-12 and would be considered for the first time by the Conference of the Parties during its fifteenth meeting.

The Bureau members took note of the information provided.