

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

Thursday, 15 October 2020, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. (CEST)

Participants:

Co-Chairs: Ms. Stina Andersson (Sweden) (Technical), Ms. Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica) (Legal) Vice-Chair: Mr. Zaigham Abbas (Pakistan) (Technical), Ms. Kristine Vardanashvili (Georgia) (Legal)

Absent:

Rapporteur: Ms. Hlobisile Sikhosana (Eswatini)

1. Welcome by co-chairs

The co-chair opened the meeting, congratulating all Bureau members on a successful online segment of OEWG-12 that took place from 1 to 3 September 2020. She reminded the Bureau that the purpose of today's online meeting was to consider and discuss a way forward on the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 that was tentatively scheduled to take place from 1 to 4 March 2021, back-to-back with the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) in Nairobi.

2. Plan for UNEA-5 and implications for OEWG-12 face-to-face segment

The co-chair requested the Secretariat to provide an update on the outcomes of the UNEA-5 Bureau meeting that had taken place on 8 October 2020. The Secretariat advised that the Bureau had decided to support a proposal tabled by the UNEA President to adopt a "two-step" approach that would allow for the convening of UNEA-5 in February 2021 at the dates previously agreed in a virtual format with a revised and streamlined agenda. A face-to-face substantive session would then be resumed in February 2022.

Given the decision taken with respect to UNEA-5 and the prevailing COVID-19 conditions, the Secretariat further advised that it would not be possible to resume the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 in March 2021 as previously planned, whether in Nairobi or Geneva.

3. Options for the way forward

In light of the latest developments, the co-chair outlined the potential options moving forward. As had been raised in the 23 June 2020 Bureau meeting, there was the possibility of scheduling the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 back-to-back with regional preparatory meetings for the 2021 COPs. In this regard, the Secretariat had identified preliminary tentative dates and the location for the Africa regional meeting for the week of 31 May to 4 June 2021, in Nairobi,¹ which would offer an opportunity to tentatively schedule the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 during the week of 7 June 2021. The Secretariat underscored that this option was contingent on a positive outcome in the COVID-19 situation and subject to the availability of adequate funding. For such an option, OEWG-12 would have available to it the COP-15 documents (scheduled to take place from 19 to 30 July 2021). It would be possible for the OEWG-12 face-to-face segment to work on the various products and submit revised versions to the COP (in tracked changes and in English only).

¹ Consultations have yet to take place with the members of the bureaux of the conferences of the Parties from the Africa region on the proposed tentative dates and venue.

One Bureau member, expressing concern over the resourcing implications for the Secretariat, and overall budget requirements, asked whether the only option for the face-to-face segment was to hold it back-to-back with the Africa regional preparatory meeting. The co-chair clarified that there were other options that could be considered, for example, to hold the second segment of OEWG-12 online once again, potentially in a different format, for a different duration and with differing objectives.

The Bureau acknowledged that there may be various options to consider for the second segment of OEWG-12 and that such consideration should take place after the joint meeting of the bureaux of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, which was scheduled to take place on 27 and 28 January 2021. At that time, it would be clearer as to whether the regional preparatory meetings would proceed as envisaged and thus whether the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 could proceed back-to-back with the Africa regional preparatory meeting. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare several options for the second segment of OEWG-12 for its consideration in late January/early February 2021.

In closing the meeting, the co-chair summarized the outcome of the Bureau's discussions, confirming that the face-to-face segment of OEWG-12 scheduled for 1 to 4 March 2021 was postponed, with the decision on the scheduling of the meeting deferred until after the Joint Bureaux meeting in January 2021.
