

Summary of the Resumed First Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on a Science-Policy Panel for Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution: 30 January – 3 February 2023

Addressing the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—requires sound and ambitious science and policy. For climate change and biodiversity, there are dedicated platforms to bring together scientists and policymakers to discuss the state of knowledge, identify gaps, and explore options to accelerate action. These science-policy panels have also increased global attention to the climate and biodiversity crises. At present, no equivalent panel exists for chemicals, waste, or pollution.

Pollution causes one in six deaths worldwide in addition to damaging the environment. Yet, chemical and waste issues tend to receive less policy and public attention. There are some science-policy bodies with specific mandates linked to multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals, waste, and pollution. To complement this work, and help raise public and political attention, in 2022 the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) decided that a science-policy panel should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste, and the prevention of pollution. The ad hoc Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) is tasked with developing this new science-policy panel that will help scientists and policymakers inform one another on these pressing issues.

At the resumed first meeting (OEWG 1.2), delegates focused on the scope and functions of the panel. Capacity building attracted particular attention, which delegates ultimately agreed would be a new function of the panel. Discussions will continue, informed by two proposals that put forward different visions for the capacity-building function.

OEWG 1.2 also agreed on a list of the elements that will have to be negotiated and adopted in order to establish the panel. These include rules of procedure, processes for adopting assessments, and institutional arrangements, among many others. Delegates further agreed to a timeline, when each will be discussed, and how intersessional work will proceed.

OEWG 1.2 convened from 30 January – 3 February 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants included more than 200 delegates from 120 member states, more than 60 representatives from civil society organizations, and representatives from five intergovernmental organizations.

A Brief History of the Science-Policy Panel for Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution

Chemicals, waste, and pollution are permanent features of our daily lives. They also pose direct threats to the environment and human health. With this in mind, the fourth meeting of UNEA, held in March 2018, adopted a resolution that calls on all stakeholders to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels. It also requested the Secretariat to prepare a report assessing options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste.

At the resumed session of UNEA 5, held in February-March 2022, Member States adopted UNEA Resolution 5/8, which calls for establishing a new science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution.

As envisaged, this panel could support countries' efforts to implement multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international instruments, promote the sound management of chemicals and waste, and address pollution by providing policy-relevant scientific advice on issues. The panel could also further

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support relevant multilateral agreements, other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders in their work.

To establish this panel, UNEA decided to convene an OEWG to prepare proposals for the panel and complete its work before the end of 2024. An intergovernmental meeting will be held to consider the proposals generated by the OEWG process.

OEWG 1-1: The first part of the first session of OEWG 1 convened on 6 October 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya, and virtually. Member states gave general statements and focused on organizational matters to kickstart the OEWG's work. Member states agreed that three meetings held over 2023 and 2024 would suffice to complete work in 2024. They agreed to focus on the panel's scope and functions at OEWG 1.2.

OEWG 1.2 Report

OEWG 1.2 opened on Monday, 30 January 2023. Pinsak Suraswadi, Director General of the Pollution Control Department, on behalf of Varawu Silpa-Archa, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, underscored that chemicals, waste, and pollution lack an intergovernmental science-policy body like the ones for climate change and biodiversity, stressing that such a body is necessary to address the triple planetary crisis.

Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Director, Economy Division, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of Executive Director Inger Andersen, noted that many multilateral environmental agreements already address scientific questions under their respective mandates and have set up relevant bodies. She underscored that policy relevance will be key, stressing the need to draw lessons from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the International Resource Panel.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), emphasized that exposure to chemicals and air pollution leads to avoidable public health tragedies. He stressed that the panel could offer a strategic approach and provide opportunities to work together and innovate, focusing on prevention.

Election of Officers

Election of the Chair: On Monday, OEWG 1.2 elected Gudi Alkemade, the Netherlands, as Chair of the OEWG by a secret vote. Chair Alkemade thanked delegates for their support and underlined her intent to help reach consensus through a transparent, inclusive process.

Election of Officers other than the Chair: On Monday, plenary was advised that four self-nominations from the Eastern European region were received, from Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. The region requested to delay a decision on this nomination until OEWG 2. The OEWG agreed to that approach.

Adoption of the Agenda and other Organizational Matters

Agenda: On Monday, the OEWG adopted the agenda and organization of work for the resumed meeting ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/1](#), and [Add.1](#) and [2](#)).

On Friday, Chair Alkemade introduced the provisional agenda for OEWG 2 as a conference room paper. Following a suggestion by SWITZERLAND, slightly amended by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, an additional agenda item on "Options for the Timetable and Organization of Future Work of the OEWG" was added. The provisional agenda was endorsed with this amendment.

Organizational Matters: Chair Alkemade agreed that initiating discussions by focusing on scope would make sense, adding that the

best way forward would be clarified once the deliberations began. With no objections, delegates approved the organization of work, noting the scenario note ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1\(I\)/2](#)) from OEWG 1.1.

Timetable and Organization of Work for the OEWG

Budget: On Monday, the Secretariat reiterated the need for sufficient resources to make the OEWG process successful, highlighting that USD 2.3 million of the necessary USD 8.25 million has been raised.

Informal consultations between the Secretariat and interested parties were held on Tuesday to provide an opportunity to clarify some estimates in the budget. The EU called for further clarity, which was provided in an informal consultation held on Tuesday.

Timetable and Organization of Work: Discussions on this item sought to establish a timeline for the work to be completed at OEWG 2 and 3, respectively, and to determine the types of input and intersessional work that would be helpful to assist future deliberations. Discussions began on [Monday](#) in plenary. Subsequent discussions took place in a contact group, co-chaired by Li Jinhui (China) and Ana Berejiani (Georgia), which met [Wednesday](#), [Thursday](#), and Friday.

In the contact group, discussions focused on potential dates and venues for future OEWG meetings and key issues to be discussed at each meeting.

On dates and venue, Switzerland confirmed its offer to host OEWG 3 in July 2024. A few countries expressed interest in hosting OEWG 2. One delegate cautioned that the pending election of a Bureau Vice-Chair within the Eastern European Group may necessitate an in-person meeting. Numerous participants supported holding OEWG 2 in late 2023 to maintain momentum.

On organization of work, participants requested an outline of a "zero draft," which would list all of the elements that may have to be prepared by the OEWG to establish the panel. Discussions centered on: which elements should be discussed at OEWG 2 or 3, or should be developed by the panel itself, and the type of intersessional activities and documents to be prepared before OEWG 2 and 3.

On the preparation of documents, several delegates sought clarification on which items would require proposals from the OEWG as prerequisites to establishing the new panel. One delegate called for focusing on items listed in Resolution 5/8. Horizon scanning and a prioritization mechanism for requests were mentioned as procedures that the panel could develop itself.

Several delegates called for initiating discussion on most of the OEWG's work at OEWG 2. On intersessional work, delegates suggested specifying the status of documents to be prepared. One delegate preferred using "working document," "draft text," and "final text," and laying out the progress to be achieved at future OEWG meetings. Delegates also suggested, where appropriate, whether documents should contain: options from the Secretariat; illustrations from IPCC and IPBES processes, or other bodies; and links to reference documents.

On the rules of procedure, participants were on the same page regarding requesting a working document that, would expand on document [UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/INF/7](#). The document already contains an overview of existing rules and procedures of selected science-policy bodies. Delegates noted that the new working document should be presented in a structured manner, rather than as a compilation of other bodies' rules and procedures.

Disagreements arose regarding the draft rules of procedure for discussion at OEWG 2 and finalization either at OEWG 2 or OEWG 3. Some supported a decision at OEWG 2, underscoring that this would be feasible. Others preferred to have discussions, rather than

a decision, at OEWG 2 that would provide the necessary guidance to the Secretariat to develop a draft text on rules of procedure. A delegate tabled a compromise proposal to compile comments and submissions, including drafting points on rules of procedure, from countries rather than tasking the Secretariat with producing a draft, which gained traction in the contact group.

Regarding operating principles, delegates agreed that a working document including examples/options will be discussed at OEWG 2, and a draft text will be developed for consideration at OEWG 3. Several delegates called for a process of national submissions as an intersessional activity on the kinds of questions the panel should be able to handle.

On institutional design and governance, delegates agreed to use items from Resolution 5/8. One regional group suggested intersessional webinars and informal consultations. Another group called for written submissions.

On the indicative budget and voluntary financing of the work of the panel, some suggested discussing these at OEWG 3, while others preferred addressing voluntary financing at OEWG 2. They eventually decided to initiate discussions on an indicative budget for the panel at OEWG 2, leaving voluntary financing arrangements for OEWG 3.

Delegates discussed how and when to address additional elements for the panel that were suggested in the outline of the zero draft, but had not been included in Resolution 5/8. One delegate noted twelve “must have” elements in Resolution 5/8, saying others might be developed by the panel itself.

In plenary, the OEWG adopted the outcome of the contact group.

Final Outcome: The OEWG adopted the organization of work (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/CRP.3). It states that OEWG 2 will be held in person between October 2023 and January 2024, and OEWG 3 from 17-21 June 2024 in Geneva, and that the Secretariat will prepare documents and intersessional activities, and present an updated budget and overview of expenditures to OEWG 2. The organization of work provides a tabular appendix with indicative elements. For each element, the table specifies where they appear in Resolution 5/8, and outlines the type of documents to be prepared by the Secretariat. The “non-exhaustive list of items for future work,” includes horizon scanning procedures, a policy for safeguarding commercially sensitive information, a communications strategy, an indicative budget for the panel, and a gender policy and implementation plan.

Preparations of Proposals for the Establishment of a Science-Policy Panel

Objective/Scope: Delegates focused on the scope of the panel, including how broadly it should consider the issue of pollution. This issue was first discussed on [Monday](#) in plenary. The contact group on scope and functions, co-chaired by Marine Collignon (France) and David Kapindula (Zambia) focused on the objective on [Tuesday](#), [Wednesday](#), and [Thursday](#).

A lunchtime deep dive on scope took place on [Monday](#). Panelists discussed the need for, and challenges in, preventing pollution, including a lack of public and policy attention, a need to engage scientists in developing countries, and industry challenges such as digitalization.

Plenary discussions on the objective and scope were based on document [UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/4](#). Many delegates suggested closely aligning the scope with Resolution 5/8, calling for an integrative approach, broad scope, and flexibility for the panel to be able to address future developments and emerging issues. They also noted the need to avoid duplication of work with other relevant bodies. Some emphasized the necessity of a conceptual framework.

In the contact group, the objective and scope were largely discussed together. Several participants observed that the objective would also define and articulate the panel’s scope.

The Co-Chairs provided an initial proposal, which delegates welcomed as a good basis for discussion: to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence on the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, with a view to minimize and prevent their adverse impact on human well-being, including human health and the environment. Delegates tabled further elements and, after considerable discussion, agreed to remove the reference to human well-being, with several noting that reference to well-being could broaden the scope of the panel’s work.

The Co-Chairs suggested using IPBES’s objective as an example, highlighting that it states a general objective, and then lists the functions. Delegates expressed their preference for a short, yet broad objective. Although consensus could not be reached, delegates converged on bringing together the texts on objective and functions. The suggested text stated that the objective is “to strengthen the science-policy interface to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste, and to prevent pollution for the protection of human health and the environment,” subsequently listing the relevant functions.

Delegates expressed divergent views on the need for additional elements, and how to balance science and other forms of knowledge. On additional elements, they decided to create a “parking lot” of elements that could be considered at a later stage. These elements include: the delivery of policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive; the contribution of Indigenous and traditional knowledge; a human rights approach; and the promotion of innovation, transparency, inclusivity, and complementarity.

On scope, there was a debate on whether the panel would focus on pollution from chemicals and waste or pollution more broadly. One delegate reiterated their proposal for addressing releases in the air, water, soil, and oceans. Others suggested “all forms of pollution.” There was no final agreement.

On Friday, in plenary, delegates adopted the final outcome of the work of the contact group.

Final Outcome: In the final outcome (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/CRP.2/Rev.1), the objective remains bracketed, denoting negotiations will continue. The bracketed text notes that “the objective of the panel is to strengthen the science-policy interface to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution for the protection of human health and the environment.” The functions are then listed as part of the objective.

Functions: Discussions on the functions of the future panel were based on pre-session documents on considerations for a way forward ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/5](#)) and a mapping exercise of existing science-policy interfaces ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/INF/4](#)). Delegates first addressed this issue in plenary on [Tuesday](#), where discussions focused on four functions identified in UNEA Resolution 5/8:

- horizon scanning;
- conducting assessments;
- providing up-to-date and relevant information; and
- facilitating information sharing.

Delegates shared initial views on each of the panel’s functions, highlighting, among other things, the importance of:

- identifying emerging threats that could adversely affect the sound management of chemicals and waste;
- including socio-economic factors in the panel’s assessments;
- sharing information with different audiences; and
- reducing the asymmetries between North and South through capacity building.

Whether to add an additional function on capacity building was discussed extensively in plenary and in the contact group on scope and functions on [Tuesday](#) and [Thursday](#).

A “deep dive” on functions was held on [Tuesday](#), during which panelists exchanged opinions on the most challenging issues, including identifying which activities could fall within the capacity-building function, and addressing existing and legacy issues through horizon scanning.

In meetings of the contact group, discussions on the panel’s functions focused on horizon scanning and capacity building. On horizon scanning, many observed that it is unique among science-policy bodies, with some delegates suggesting defining the term in the context of the panel.

On the potential capacity-building function, there were divergent views on whether it is a stand-alone function or a cross-cutting aspect of the other functions. Developed countries highlighted the importance of ensuring that including capacity-building activities do not duplicate efforts under other bodies and instead supported scientists’ participation in the panel’s work. Developing countries highlighted the range of potential capacity-building needs to support effective participation, including on data collection and laboratory capacity. Informal consultations were held on [Wednesday](#) to consider proposals on capacity building brought forward by two regional groups.

The contact group requested information on how the IPBES and IPCC address capacity building. Bob Watson, former IPCC and IPBES Chair, shared on IPBES practices on capacity building as a stand-alone function. He mentioned it is limited in scope, mainly supporting the other three functions: assessing knowledge; supporting policy; and ensuring communication and outreach. He noted there is no mention of technology transfer, but that IPBES identifies “larger capacity needs beyond IPBES,” aiming to demonstrate how other entities, such as the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, could support these larger needs. Watson also mentioned IPBES’ fellowship programme.

Ermira Fida, Deputy Executive Secretary, IPCC, reported that the IPCC is mandated for only one function, undertaking assessment of research on climate change. She said the IPCC does not do its own research and has no capacity-building role or mandate. She added that following the IPCC’s receipt of the Nobel Prize, the Panel decided to use those funds to establish a scholarship programme for new scientists in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, with regular replenishment.

In the plenary on Friday, Co-Chair Kapindula reported on progress in the contact group’s discussions, stressing that the group “reiterated the understanding that a fifth function on capacity building should be included.” Further discussion will be needed on the content of the capacity-building function, which will be based on two suggestions by the EU, and the African Region and the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), respectively.

The EU suggested bracketing the capacity-building function until discussions on its content are finalized. Brazil, for GRULAC, IRAN, NIGERIA, and GHANA opposed, stressing that the contact group had reached an agreement on including capacity building as a fifth function. Delegates agreed to add a footnote explaining the common understanding that capacity building will be the fifth function of the panel, but that the description of this function will be further considered.

The US queried the status of the “parking lot,” where ideas tabled during the contact group that generated different views had been placed. Chair Alkemade clarified that these ideas would be captured in the meeting’s report.

Final Outcome: The OEWG agreed on the outcome of the contact group (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/CRP.2/Rev.1), listing undertaking “horizon scanning,” conducting assessments, providing up-to-date and relevant information, facilitating information-sharing, and capacity building as the panel’s functions, with a footnote to explain that further discussions are required to finalize the capacity-building function. Text proposals by the African Region/GRULAC and the EU are included to serve as a basis for further discussions on the panel’s capacity-building function at OEWG 2.

Closure of the Session

On Friday afternoon, the OEWG adopted its report (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/L.1) as presented by Rapporteur Cyrus Mageria (Kenya).

In closing statements, Pakistan, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, stressed the need for further mobilization of resources, reiterated the need to respect the OEWG’s mandate defined by Resolution 5/8, and welcomed the in-person format of future sessions.

Madagascar, for the AFRICAN REGION, requested increasing financial contributions, highlighting the importance of sufficient funds for carrying out work on all of the OEWG’s mandate, including developing the capacity-building function, and warned that lack of funds would impact the process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on behalf of ARMENIA, CROATIA, CZECHIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, MOLDOVA, SERBIA, and SLOVENIA, noted the Eastern European States region had exhausted means to reach consensus with regard to the election of the regional Vice-Chairs for the Bureau. She requested a pragmatic solution that will allow the region’s meaningful participation during the intersessional period.

Costa Rica, for GRULAC, highlighted transparency, equitable regional representation, and gender balance for effective participation in all decision-making processes. She called for a broad objective for the panel and underscored capacity building as an important function. She further emphasized the importance of intersessional work, requesting resources for regional coordination.

The EU characterized pollution as an existential threat to human health and the environment, underscoring that it causes nine million premature deaths annually and is responsible for one in six deaths. He stressed the need for constructive work, reiterating the group’s commitment for the timely completion of negotiations, including through financial contributions, urging broader support.

The WOMEN’S MAJOR GROUP said that 60 years after the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, the production of chemicals continues to increase, leaving lasting effects across generations and particularly affecting women. She called for a gender-responsive panel, which scans knowledge gaps, learns from past chemical disasters, and follows a human rights approach.

The INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS ELIMINATION NETWORK called for access to scientific data, including information from Indigenous and local knowledge sources, a strong conflict of interest policy to prevent corporate capture, and a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative intersessional period.

The MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH stressed that the panel should: focus on integrating chemicals, waste, and pollution in all ecosystems; address environmental human rights; be gender-responsive; and establish a multidisciplinary youth expert group for meaningful exchanges.

Chair Alkemade emphasized the importance of “jointly painting the picture of the body we will be creating,” and developing a shared vision. She urged continued discussions during the intersessional period to enhance mutual understanding and gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:32 pm.

A Brief Analysis of OEWG 1.2

Sixty years is a long time. In 1962 when Rachel Carson's seminal book, *Silent Spring*, was first published, it triggered a shift in global environmental consciousness by presenting indisputable evidence of the negative effects of chemical pesticides. More than half a century later, our collective choices have led us to face a triple planetary crisis, as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution threaten our planet and human health, collectively posing a threat of existential magnitude.

There is still limited awareness about the nature of this threat. Just as Carson observed in the 1960s, we are still in "an era of specialists" who see their own problems and are "unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which [their problems] fit." Fragmentation has long been recognized as one of the main obstacles to holistic policies toward a sustainable future. The gap between science and policy is an important dimension of this problem. To bridge the gap, science-policy interfaces have successfully been created to address the first two dimensions of the triple planetary crisis—climate change and biodiversity loss.

There is now recognition that the time has come to create a new science-policy interface to address the third dimension, pollution. Representatives of governments and other stakeholders, perhaps even the "architects of our future" to use Carson's words, gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, to begin the process of creating a science-policy body on chemicals, waste, and pollution that many feel is already long overdue. This brief analysis reflects on the beginnings of this complicated effort, given the uniqueness and multi-dimensional nature of chemicals and waste.

Building a Bridge

How does one convey urgent warnings about the state of our planetary boundaries and inform policymaking for action? The idea of bridging science and policy in institutionalized science-policy interfaces provides a promising way forward, given the examples of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Both institutions have emerged as key actors in international environmental governance, compiling knowledge that is policy relevant without being prescriptive about action. Against this backdrop, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) decided, at its resumed fifth session (UNEA-5.2), to set up an independent science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

UNEA-5.2 heralded several wins in the fight against pollution, including the decision to develop an international legally binding instrument on ending plastic pollution. While that decision stole much of the spotlight, the decision to establish the science-policy panel has been highlighted by many as crucial for shaping the future. Mandated by UNEA Resolution 5/8, the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) is to prepare proposals for the new science-policy panel by the end of 2024. Issues for consideration include: institutional design and governance of the panel; name and scope; principal functions; and rules of procedure and the operating principles governing the work of the panel.

Setting the Foundations

Much of this meeting focused on building initial shared understandings of what the panel should do: what work it should undertake and how. It was a matter of "walking before running," as some described it. For those wishing to run immediately, perhaps by mandating a conceptual framework, they could have to wait. The conceptual framework was barely mentioned. Instead, the scope and

objective of the envisaged panel and its functions occupied much of the week's deliberations.

While consensus could not be reached on the panel's objective, some common understanding emerged to draw from the language of the UNEA resolution, and to specify that the panel will undertake its work for the protection of human health and the environment. Building this first understanding may seem like a small step, although, as one delegate noted, there were perhaps 30 people working on the UNEA resolution in Nairobi, because plastics took much of the attention of chemicals and wastes negotiators. There were many people that had to buy-in to this general objective.

As in Nairobi, this initial agreement belies many tricky questions. What does pollution mean? For some, it means chemical and waste pollution. But others stressed a need for a broader focus on pollution, suggesting that other bodies could handle a "mere" chemicals and waste panel. One example raised was the talks for a science-policy interface as part of the negotiations for the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. The US tried to specify pollution in the air, water, soil, and oceans, but so far, there is more debate than traction on this cornerstone question. The answer to this question will affect the scientists and policymakers consulted, the scope of assessments produced, and perhaps the profile of the panel itself.

The discussion on the panel's functions was far more straightforward. The UNEA resolution sets out four functions: horizon scanning, scientific assessments, information provision and dissemination, and information sharing. While horizon scanning is a novel feature for this panel, as it doesn't feature in IPBES or IPCC, it received little attention during this meeting. Some even suggested the panel could develop these procedures once it is established.

Instead, discussions focused—and yielded agreement—on adding a fifth function on capacity building. As a delegate noted, "capacity building is a broad field, more work is needed on the exact content." For some, the focus should be strictly on supporting scientists from developing countries to participate in the work of the panel. For others, the function should also support local scientists in their work to identify research needs, undertake research, and publish their findings, which could require laboratory capacity and specialized instruments.

Constructing the architecture of the new science-policy body is no simple task and can look daunting during the initial stages. As many delegates noted during the week's proceedings, inspiration can be drawn both from IPCC and IPBES, as well as other bodies such as the United Nations Environment Programme's International Resource Panel. "There is a lot to build from," a delegate noted, "but we need to choose among different options on a starting point to use as a template for our discussions."

Delegates will also be confronted with an important decision on the different facets of the new panel, such as institutional arrangements, that will need to be developed during the OEWG negotiations and those that can be left for the first meeting of the panel following its establishment. In that respect, a participant recalled that exactly 10 years ago, the first IPBES Plenary session following the platform's establishment was largely devoted to institutional arrangements rather than getting to the work at hand.

What Lies Ahead

The construction plans are now drafted, in the form of an outcome document on the organization of ongoing and future work. The outcome document includes an agreed outline of draft elements needed for the new panel—key for understanding where this process is going and how it will get there. Laid out in tabular form, the outline sets out when discussion on each element will be initiated—

whether at OEWG 2 or OEWG 3—and the necessary intersessional work to prepare for these negotiations.

The intersessional periods will be critical for getting this work done, especially since only two more OEWG sessions remain before the envisioned intergovernmental meeting, which will formally establish the panel. Expectations are that the bulk of the work should be completed at OEWG 2. In light of the heavy UN meeting schedule in the last quarter of 2023, one delegate noted that OEWG 2 may not take place for another ten or eleven months, adding that “these extra months of preparation may prove very beneficial.” Chair Alkemade further emphasized that “webinars and other consultations, including on governance, will help put everyone on the same page and will offer the opportunity for a constructive dialogue,” which could catalyze the quality of the working documents to be developed for OEWG 2.

Many of these documents will need to draw on the experiences of IPBES and IPCC, perhaps to maximize efficiency with so little time left. But several scientists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the OEWG highlighted the distinctive characteristics of the chemicals sector and the unique role of the chemicals industry that holds considerable data, which is often proprietary and confidential. Industry funding, they noted, has sparked entire fields of research and convenes annual meetings of professionals and scientists. There was agreement that industry should be involved, and that strong conflict of interest policies would help ensure the credibility and legitimacy of the panel.

On the policy side, the new panel will enter a crowded field of science-policy bodies, facing similar challenges to IPBES upon its inception in that respect. There are also ongoing negotiations for a new strategic approach to the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, and for a new plastics treaty. Both will have considerable scientific needs to inform policy options. As one participant observed, many of the delegates were technical experts. She suggested that perhaps their governance-minded colleagues may be valuable at the future meetings of the OEWG to help find a meaningful space for the new panel, adding that they would also be in a better position to efficiently iron out governance-details.

As Rachel Carson noted, in nature, nothing exists alone. With only two remaining meetings, the architects of the panel will have to draw on what is around them: the examples of the IPCC and IPBES, the experiences of a range of science and policy experts, and the will to, as one veteran put it, “get this done.”

Upcoming Meetings

Basel Convention OEWG 13: The 13th meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Certain Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal will review technical guidelines, including for plastic wastes, and other legal and technical issues related to the Convention. **date:** 21-23 February 2023 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** [basel.int](https://www.basel.int)

Resumed Fourth Meeting of the SAICM Intersessional Process: Delegates will continue the discussions on the future arrangements of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) beyond 2020, ahead of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5). **dates:** 27 February - 3 March 2023 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** www.saicm.org

Basel COP 16, Rotterdam COP 11 and Stockholm COP 11: The next TripleCOP will address the listing of chemicals under the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions as well as technical guidelines for the sound management of wastes, including plastics,

under the Basel Convention. Technical and financial support, among other issues, will also be addressed. **dates:** 1-12 May 2023 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** brsmas.org/2023COPs/Overview/tabid/9316/language/en-US/Default.aspx

Plastics Pollution INC 2: The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, will continue negotiations with a view to complete the treaty by 2024. A high-level event is likely to take place on 27 May 2023.

dates: 29 May -2 June 2023 (TBC) **location:** Paris, France **www:** unep.org/events/conference/second-session-intergovernmental-negotiating-committee-develop-international

Montreal Protocol OEWG 45: The 45th meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Montreal Protocol will consider reports from the assessment panels and engage in preparatory work for the 35th Meeting of the Parties (MOP 35). **dates:** 3-7 July 2023 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **www:** ozone.unep.org/meetings/45th-meeting-open-ended-working-group-parties

International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) 5: The ICCM will undertake reviews and evaluation of the implementation of SAICM, a multi-stakeholder policy platform to promote chemicals safety. **dates:** 25-29 September 2023 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** saicm.org/About/ICCM/tabid/5521/Default.aspx

CRC 19: The Rotterdam Convention’s Chemical Review Committee (CRC) will review notifications of final regulatory action and proposals for severely hazardous pesticide formulations for potential inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention. **dates:** 2-6 October 2023 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** pic.int/

POPRC 19: The Stockholm Convention’s Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC) is due to consider the draft risk profile for chlorpyrifos and the draft risk management evaluation for medium-chain chlorinated paraffins and long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids, their salts and related compounds. **dates:** 9-13 October 2023 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** pops.int

Montreal Protocol MOP 35: MOP 35 will discuss issues related to the implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. **dates:** 23-27 October 2023 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** ozone.unep.org/meetings/thirty-fifth-meeting-parties

Plastic Pollution INC 3: The INC to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, will continue negotiations with a view to completing the treaty by 2024. **date:** 11-15 December 2023 (TBC) **location:** Nairobi, Kenya (TBC) **www:** unep.org/about-un-environment/inc-plastic-pollution

OEWG 2: The second meeting of the OEWG to establish the science-policy panel for chemicals, waste, and pollution will convene in the last quarter of 2023, if possible. **dates:** TBA **location:** TBA **www:** unep.org/oewg-spp-chemicals-waste-pollution

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
OEWG	Open-ended Working Group
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme