

Science-Policy Panel for Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution OEWG-3.2 Highlights: Wednesday, 18 June 2025

Participants assembled in contact groups and in a late evening plenary aiming to agree on outstanding issues and finalize proposals for the establishment of the panel. Unable to complete its work, the plenary will resume Thursday morning.

Contact Group 1

Co-facilitated by Toks Akinseye (UK) and Miguel Ruiz Botero (Colombia), the group met from morning until evening, splitting into informal consultations throughout their deliberations.

In response to the Co-Facilitators' proposal to work in parallel in two informal groups on outstanding issues, several delegates voiced capacity concerns for smaller delegations and noted it is unfortunate that the most difficult issues will be discussed under such circumstances. Upon assurance of the Co-Facilitators, that proposals from the informal groups will be subject to scrutiny and agreement in the Contact Group, two informal consultations, one on matters related to decision making, and one on other rules of procedure, started their deliberations.

Decision-making: The informal group reported divergent views regarding rules for decision-making in matters of substance. They noted that while there was general agreement that voting should not be possible on scientific matters, a proposal to insert language drawn from the IPCC, where divergent views are noted in the meeting report, did not garner full support. They added that another suggestion, to clarify that voting would only be possible "to make the panel operational and functional," was also not agreeable to all participants. The Contact Group parked the paragraphs for later consideration.

Rules of procedure: Co-Facilitator Ruiz Botero guided the Group through paragraphs of the rules of procedure found acceptable in the informal group. The Contact Group agreed to the definition of the bureau and several paragraphs relating to its membership and operation, including on the composition of the bureau with two members from each of the five United Nations regional groups. One Member State requested adding "geographical" to other qualifiers aiming at ensuring balance in the bureau, which was agreed by the group.

A lengthy debate ensued over the designation of alternate bureau members. A proposal by one delegate to allow participation of alternate bureau members in all bureau meetings, to ensure continuity of work, was opposed by another delegate who cited budgetary implications. The paragraph was kept bracketed.

On the roles of the panel's chair, delegates agreed to all paragraphs except for one relating to the chair applying the decision-making procedure. After several unsuccessful attempts to find compromise language, the paragraph was kept in brackets containing reference to the foundational document as well as reference to relevant rules of procedure.

Membership and participation of observers: A lengthy debate ensued over reference to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with no agreement achieved on several proposals,

including to delete the term "local communities" or express divergent views in a footnote.

Just before conclusion of the Contact Group session, a Member State requested indicating the Groups' disagreement on decision-making procedures through inserting brackets around rules for decision making on matters of substance and on matters of procedure respectively.

Another delegate requested inserting brackets around membership of "UN non-member observer states," citing terminology concerns. In response, a Member State requested adding "people under occupation" alongside Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and groups in vulnerable situations in a list of potential observers. Co-Facilitator Ruiz Botero and several other participants noted that agreement on the matter of membership, except for participation of regional economic integration organizations, had been reached on the first day of the Group's proceedings.

A lengthy debate ensued over bracketing the entire paragraph on membership to the panel, with one participant suggesting the use of "all States" instead of "States Members of the United Nations and UN non-member observer states." A delegate urged others to refrain from adding "politically motivated brackets" and focus on the establishment of the panel instead of on the recognition of states.

After a short pause for informal discussions, the delegate requesting brackets around membership of "UN non-member observer states" noted "we don't want to be having discussions that can lead to politicized sensibilities that can be handled through technical discussions" and agreed to lift the brackets. The text on membership was then cleared, leaving brackets around the participation of regional economic integration organizations.

Contact Group 2

The Contact Group, co-facilitated by Keima Gardiner (Trinidad and Tobago) and Kateřina Šebková (Czechia), met throughout the day and held informal consultations in between their deliberations.

Name of the panel: Co-Facilitator Gardiner requested participants to make suggestions for the panel's name and its acronym to be later transmitted to plenary. The following proposals were offered by various delegations and regional groups:

- Intergovernmental Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution Prevention (IPCWP);
- Intergovernmental Panel on Pollution, Chemicals, and Waste (IPCCW);
- Intergovernmental Panel on the sound management of Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution (IPCSP);
- Intergovernmental Science Policy Panel on Chemical Pollution (ISPPCP); and
- Intergovernmental Science Policy Panel – for the sound management of Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution Prevention (ISPP).

Scope, objectives, and functions of the panel: Participants reviewed revised text on capacity building and discussed brackets remaining on gender balance, gender inclusivity, and gender responsiveness. Several delegates strongly opposed any deletion

of gender since it is pre-existing well-established language and is key for capacity building. Attempting to come up with a solution, an informal group considered various options, including the insertion of footnotes or cross-references to subparagraphs in the operating principles which address gender balance, gender equity and equality. The issue remained unresolved pending guidance from their capitals on opposing reference to gender.

Secretariat: Co-Facilitator Gardiner noted consultations between regional groups and the UNEP Executive Director. In the spirit of compromise, delegations converged on two paragraphs stating that the panel at its first session will secure secretariat services provided by UNEP, and that the secretariat would be hosted in a single location based on proposals by Member States. Remaining brackets on functions of the secretariat related to proposing potential partnerships were also cleared.

Financial arrangements: In the hope of finding common ground on text on possible exemptions to earmarking, the Co-Facilitators proposed alternative language stating that contributions to the Trust Fund cannot be earmarked for specific activities “unless otherwise decided by the panel.” A delegation suggested instead to have the panel decide, at its first session, on financial procedures, “including details on the modalities” in question. Several other attempts for wording were tried, with discussion ensuing on financial procedures and the sequence of events that should take place upon establishing the fund. The financial advisor specified that adoption of the financial procedures would take place at the first plenary of the panel, so a decision before then would be “counterproductive.” The issue remained unresolved.

Strategic Partnerships: Informal consultations during the previous night resulted in a proposal to remove “Strategic” from the title and to text having the panel at its first session request the secretariat to develop a proposal on establishing different types of partnerships. The group then attempted to find consensus by modifying the proposal to ensure this remains open as an ongoing process. Co-Facilitator Šebková and others assured there is broad agreement on the importance of establishing partnerships, but a request to have this clearly stated in the foundational document was unable to find common ground. After further consultations, the group agreed to a modified version of the proposed paragraph, with the panel requesting the secretariat, at its first session, to develop a proposal on establishing different types of partnerships to be considered by the panel.

Contact Group 3

Co-facilitated by Sam Adu-Kumi (Ghana) and Itsuki Kuroda (Japan), the group met to finalize work on their mandate.

Arrangements for the interim period: Discussion centered on whether and how to reflect agreement reached in Contact Group 2 regarding the secretariat in the preambular section of the draft decision on interim arrangements. Given an already-agreed upon operational paragraph requesting the UNEP Executive Director to provide the interim secretariat for the first session of the panel, some felt a preambular paragraph on the secretariat to be unnecessary and called for its deletion. For the same reason, they also objected to an operational paragraph requesting the UNEP Executive Director to invite Member States to submit their offers to host the secretariat by a certain date. Others found merit in the paragraph for transparency reasons. After a lengthy discussion, the group decided to delete both paragraphs.

Other rules of procedure: The group attempted to clear brackets on the rules assigned to it but, in light of discussions and tentative agreements so far, some called for the rules of procedure to be discussed as a whole and not independently by Contact Group 3. The rules remain bracketed.

Plenary

Plenary resumed late in the evening, with the Contact Groups’ Co-Facilitators reporting on the outcomes of their work. For Contact Group 1, Co-Facilitator Ruiz Botero said certain issues remain unresolved, particularly on decision-making, membership

and observers. For Contact Group 2, Co-Facilitator Gardiner noted remaining brackets on, *inter alia*, gender-related text under capacity building and operating principles, and financial arrangements. She also noted ongoing consultations on the name of the panel. For Contact Group 3, Co-Facilitator Adu-Kumi reported that the draft decision on recommendations for consideration by the panel had been cleared from brackets and that rules of procedure allocated to the Groups’ mandate have been put in brackets and forwarded to plenary for consideration.

Co-Facilitator Kuroda reported that the draft decision on arrangements for the interim period had been agreed upon in the Contact Group and thanked delegates for the flexibility shown during the deliberations.

OEWG Chair Gudi Alkemade (the Netherlands) thanked delegates for the “great job done so far,” noting additional time will be needed to complete the work of the OEWG. She proposed continuing negotiations on the foundational document, including the name of the panel, and said closing plenary is scheduled for 9:00 am Thursday morning.

INDONESIA noted that the structure of parallel meetings has posed challenges for delegations with single representatives unable to attend all sessions simultaneously, thereby limiting participation and undermining the principles of fairness and inclusivity. She also requested consistency in the use of “Indigenous Peoples” and “local communities” without a comma, stressing her delegation’s opposition to the use of Indigenous Peoples in the foundational document and rules of procedure without reference to local communities. The US intervened to clarify their country’s views on gender, saying that the use of the term gender obscures the “biological reality of sex” in which “women are biologically female and men are biologically male” and is “demeaning and unfair to women and girls.” They stated that the US will pursue a foundational document “devoid of the use of the term gender, full stop.”

Cautioning against obscuring their differences and collapsing their identities into a single entity, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES urged the inclusion of a comma between Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a matter of precision and respect to their distinct legal status and self-determined governance, adding they are both equally important and calling for ensuring “they are not rendered invisible in the frameworks meant to protect them.”

Work resumed in informal consultations, co-facilitated by Toks Akinseye (UK) and Miguel Ruiz Botero (Colombia) and continued into the night.

In the Corridors

Participants met with renewed determination to start the final day of negotiations and finalize their proposals for the establishment of the panel in time for the Intergovernmental Meeting. Yet, with so many outstanding issues, the light at the end of the tunnel still appeared as a glimmer as contact groups continued to bifurcate into informal discussions to clear text to present to plenary. As the day wore on, the establishment of the panel appeared as a mirage in the distance as new brackets were inserted on UN non-member observer status and text continued to be parked for further discussion.

Deliberations continued to move slowly on the issue of earmarking contributions to the trust fund and on membership of the panel. When proposals around the name of the panel were solicited, participants quipped that this is where the fun begins, with one participant noting that we should not turn this into a “contest.”

When plenary finally convened, Co-Facilitators reported that they needed more time to complete their work. High on delegates’ minds was how they were going to complete remaining work throughout the night with several raising concerns about meaningful participation. Still, hope remained in the room as delegates prepared themselves for a long night of ironing out disputed text.