Modalities for convening virtual meetings and online consultations

This document has been updated taking on board the comments received from the SAICM Bureau at their second teleconference held on 17 June 2020 and additional written comments from IPEN and PAN International, USA, Brazil and the Latin America and Caribbean region. This document refers to the following two documents:

a) Co-Chairs’ scenario note for the path forward to develop recommendations for submission to ICCM5 (SAICM/ICCM.5/Bureau.TC.3/2); and

b) Draft mandates for the proposed Virtual Working Groups to advance deliberations towards IP4 and ICCM5 (SAICM/ICCM.5/Bureau.TC.3/3).

I. Purpose

With restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the postponement of the fourth meeting of the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (IP4) and the fifth session of the International conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5), the co-chairs of the intersessional process have proposed to establish a number of Virtual Working Groups (VWGs) to support the work of the intersessional process to advance its deliberations.

The purpose of the proposed VWGs is to develop proposals for tangible outcomes including notes identifying gaps, compromise text proposals, and new or alternate text, as appropriate. The outcomes of the VWGs will be presented in meeting documents and discussed at IP4.

This document lays out the modalities to convene virtual meetings and online consultations to support the work of the intersessional process. In particular, the document presents the process and timelines for selection of the co-facilitators of the VWGs, the invitation to the VWGs and the format for running the VWGs. This document also presents proposed online technical briefings and regional consultations.

This document should be read in conjunction with the co-chair’s scenario note as presented in SAICM.ICCM5.Bureau.TC.3/2). The co-chairs have set out a proposed timeline in the Annex to the scenario note.
II. Key considerations for convening virtual meetings and online consultations

- Considering the current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to convene virtual meetings and online consultations to advance the intersessional process work towards its mandated outcome for consideration at ICCM5;
- Suggestions for modalities and formats build on a range of experience, for example: the ICCM5 Bureau has met virtually twice in May and June 2020 and the Technical Working Group on Targets and Indicators met virtually four times in delivering on its mandate for IP4;
- UNEP has also convened a number of virtual meetings, including meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme. In addition, expert groups such as the Stockholm Convention POPs Review Committee have worked virtually by email since 2005;
- The virtual meetings are NOT foreseen to be a platform for negotiations. Decisions on substantive issues will be taken at formally convened face-to-face meetings;
- In addition, to maintaining momentum, the VWGs will support the process and position stakeholders to hold more informed discussions at IP4 and ICCM5;
- There is a need to ensure inclusivity and provide equal opportunity for the participation of all stakeholders to facilitate broad ownership of the process and any recommendations derived through the virtual meetings and online consultations;
- Some stakeholders may not have the capacity to participate due to technological issues, such as internet connection difficulties. The SAICM Secretariat will explore options to connect them and in addition, allow for written inputs with sufficient response time to ensure full and effective participation1; Further, some sectors such as health and labour might face some difficulties in participating due to their priorities in addressing the Covid-19 crisis; All efforts will be made to address these challenges by providing alternate means to provide written input;
- VWGs will work in a transparent manner making information available on the SAICM website in a timely manner;
- The VWGs will be open to all SAICM stakeholders as the participation options will include work primarily via email2 as well as through webinars or teleconferencing. Webinars may be used to brief stakeholders on progress, taking into consideration the different time zones;
- The SAICM Secretariat will seek balanced regional, sector and gender participation during the registration process;
- The Secretariat will avoid organizing parallel sessions;
- The ICCM5 President and Bureau and IP co-chairs will provide further guidance on the establishment of these VWGs and their respective mandates.

III. Modalities for convening the Online Technical Briefings, Virtual Working Groups and regional meetings

(a) Online Technical Briefings

The Secretariat will coordinate the planning for the Technical Briefings under the guidance of the ICCM5 President and Bureau and IP co-chairs. A list of Technical Briefings proposed by the Secretariat has been included in the co-chair’s scenario note presented in SAICM/ICCM.5/Bureau.TC.3/2. Other Technical Briefings relevant to the Beyond 2020 process may be convened as the process moves forward. The initial Technical Briefings will be scheduled from September 2020. The Secretariat will prepare a schedule for the briefings and make it available to stakeholders and will be posted on the SAICM website.

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1 Based on the Bureau’s agreement on the modalities for convening virtual meetings and online consultations.
2 Ibid.
The agenda for the Technical Briefings will be developed by the respective leader(s) of the topic and the SAICM Secretariat. They will be recorded and posted on a dedicated page on the SAICM website, together with any presentations made during the briefings.

Further Technical Briefings may be held in 2021, under the guidance of the ICCM5 President, Bureau and IP co-chairs.

Format
- Open participation;
- For each technical briefing, 2 - 3 sessions on the same or consecutive days, covering different time zones;
- It is suggested that each session be a maximum of 2 hours without a break;
- The Technical Briefing team will include the topic leader(s) supported by a SAICM Secretariat member plus one IT technical support member;
- The platform to be used is Microsoft Teams, using Microsoft Team Live Event;
- The online documentation tool to be used is the SAICM website and, if needed, technology with shared point interphase options e.g. OneDrive.

(b) Virtual Working Groups (VWG)

Process for selection of the VWG co-facilitators
- The ICCM5 President and Bureau and the IP co-chairs may wish to consider proposing two co-facilitators for the VWGs, taking into account regional, sector and gender balance;
- The VWG co-facilitators will be invited to report on progress to the Bureau as appropriate.

Process for nominating members for the VWGs
- The VWGs will be open to all SAICM stakeholders;
- The Secretariat will invite SAICM stakeholders to register for participation in any of the VWGs and develop a balanced participant list for each VWG in accordance with the above criteria for use by the relevant VWG co-facilitators;
- The participants list will include representatives who participate either by providing written comments or by taking part in any virtual meetings. Just registering to the VWGs does not grant access to the participants list, however input from all stakeholders will be considered by the VWG;
- The VWGs will begin in September 2020 once the co-facilitators are selected and the draft VWG mandates are agreed to.

Format

Option 1:
- The work of the VWGs will be performed via both an online platform like Webex, Microsoft Teams or GoToMeeting, with optional conference call lines to join into the virtual platform (real-time participation as a resource available) and email in an open and transparent manner with sufficient preparatory time of 3 - 4 weeks to allow for broad stakeholder participation and input;

Option 2:
- The work of the VWGs will be performed primarily via email in an open and transparent manner with sufficient response time of 3 - 4 weeks to allow for broad stakeholder input;
- VWG co-facilitators will communicate with the registered participants via email and invite comments, post reports, status updates and other interim documents on the SAICM website for open online consultations;
- Webinars may be used to brief stakeholders on progress with consideration for different time zones;
- Virtual meetings maybe convened as needed;
- VWG co-facilitators may wish to create smaller task groups to focus on specific areas that would then report back to the broader VWG;
- Each VWG might have a different format/timeline if proposed and decided by their respective co-facilitators.

The agenda for running the VWGs will be designed by the co-facilitators once selected and guided by the mandates set out by the ICCM5 President, Bureau and IP co-chairs.

Each of the VWGs will begin work based on the most recent work output. For most groups this will be work completed at the third meeting of the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (IP3), including the compilation of recommendations and outputs discussed in the IP3 meeting report. The Targets, Milestones and Indicators working group may consider basing their work on their submission for IP4. Other documents prepared for IP4 may be useful to the various VWGs in their work.

The SAICM Secretariat, in consultation with the VWG co-facilitators, will post the outcome document(s) of each VWG on a dedicated page on the SAICM website.

(c) Possibility of virtual regional meetings

In addition to face-to-face regional meetings in 2021, virtual regional meetings can be organized in the run up to ICCM5 when requested by the regions. The Secretariat is available to support the regions in setting up the online platform.

Format
- Regional SAICM multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral participation;
- It is suggested that each session be a maximum of 3 hours per session including a break;
- The virtual regional meeting management team will include the SAICM Regional Bureau members supported by a SAICM Secretariat member plus one IT technical support member;
- The platform to be used is Microsoft Teams or Microsoft Team Live Event if a Plenary session is needed and Microsoft Teams for break-out groups;
- The online documentation tool to be used is the SAICM website and, if needed, technology with shared point interphase options e.g. OneDrive.