

Co-Chairs' scenario note for the path forward to develop recommendations for submission to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

The present document contains the scenario note for the path forward to develop recommendations prepared by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process for submission to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. The annexes to the document include the proposed timeline, the mandates for the four virtual working groups to advance deliberations in preparation for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process and the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, and the modalities for convening online meetings and consultations.

I. Introduction

1. As set out in resolution IV/4 of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, the task of the intersessional process is to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including consideration of the need to develop measurable objectives in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. The fourth meeting of the intersessional process, which had been scheduled to be held from 23 to 27 March 2020 in Bucharest, was postponed, owing to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and is now scheduled to be held in Bucharest from 15 to 19 March 2021. Given the ongoing uncertainty, the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, originally scheduled to be held from 5 to 9 October 2020 in Bonn, Germany, has also been postponed. Germany has been able to secure the same venue in Bonn from 5 to 9 July 2021. The fourth meeting of the intersessional process is likely to be postponed again but has yet to be rescheduled.
3. In the light of those changes, the present scenario note, developed by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process, Mr. David Morin (Canada) and Ms. Judith Torres (Uruguay), sets out a proposed plan and general expectations for maintaining momentum to complete the tasks of the intersessional process.
4. The proposed path forward is intended to facilitate continued progress in the development of the recommendations for consideration by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its fifth session. It suggests that we move forward in the understanding that regional meetings and the fourth meeting of the intersessional process will be rescheduled.
5. We recognize that working online is not ideal and can present challenges for many stakeholders. Despite that, we feel it is important to maintain momentum to the greatest extent possible and make use of the additional time we now have to make further progress. We believe that the proposed approach balances the need to be equitable, inclusive and transparent, while taking into consideration the challenges of working online.

II. Goals and expectations for the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

6. In consultation with the members of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and based on feedback from the regions, the following areas were identified as priority outcomes of the session:
 - (a) A text to replace the existing overarching policy strategy, which should include, in particular, the following:
 - (i) Vision, scope, objectives and targets;
 - (ii) Mechanisms needed for implementation, such as the functions, timing and nature of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, the secretariat and the Bureau; and other aspects, such as multisectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement;
 - (b) Approach to financing and capacity-building;
 - (c) Adoption of a high-level declaration;
 - (d) Transitional arrangements as needed and other resolutions.

7. If some work is incomplete, a path forward for the finalization of any remaining issues or implementation mechanisms (finalizing indicators, for example) after the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management may also be required.
8. With that in mind, the primary goal of the intersessional process before the fifth session remains to finalize the recommendations for a new, overarching policy strategy. The following in particular have been identified as priorities:
- (a) As clean a text as possible that addresses vision, scope and objectives;
 - (b) Criteria for selecting new issues of concern and an approach for addressing current policy issues;
 - (c) Targets;
 - (d) Improving multi-stakeholder and multisectoral participation, guidance, coherence and coordination;
 - (e) Implementation mechanisms, including the approach to the science-policy interface; financial considerations and capacity-building; review and taking stock of progress; and consideration of a process for detailed road maps for sector and stakeholder implementation.
9. While all efforts will be made to finalize all issues in time for the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, certain matters could be finalized after the session if necessary. Those could include the following:
- (a) Methods and tools for taking stock of progress (for example, a questionnaire);
 - (b) Additional indicators and milestones beyond the principal ones of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and the indicators of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury;
 - (c) Provisions for further updating the instrument;
 - (d) Revisions to the Rules of Procedure (if needed);
 - (e) Detailed sectoral and stakeholder road maps to address objectives and targets.

III. Proposed path forward

10. We propose that, during the intersessional process, work should continue on certain key issues through a variety of virtual means. A proposed timeline for that work is annexed to the present note.
11. To balance the need for equitable representation, transparency and inclusiveness, the proposal includes a variety of modes of work and builds on the progress made at previous intersessional meetings, the third session of the Open-ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (the Strategic Approach), the technical working group on targets and other online consultations.

Modalities of work

A. Online technical briefings

12. Information for stakeholders will be presented online through webinars. A timeline for the online technical briefings, which will be facilitated by the secretariat, will be posted on the Strategic Approach website. They will include the following:
- (a) Welcome and overview of next steps for the intersessional process (led by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process);
 - (b) Outcomes of the technical working group on targets, indicators and milestones (led by the Co-Chairs of the technical working group);
 - (c) Outcomes of the governance meeting (led by the Governments of Germany, Norway and Switzerland and by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR));
 - (d) Options for strengthening at the international level the science-policy interface for the sound management of chemicals and waste (led by the United Nations Environment Programme);

- (e) Information session on the new International Labour Organization (ILO) legal comparative study on ILO instruments on chemicals (led by ILO);
- (f) Information session on the High Ambition Alliance on Chemicals and Waste (led by the governments of Sweden and Uruguay);
- (g) Information session on the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (led by UNITAR);
- (h) Additional briefings as necessary.

B. Virtual working groups

13. The issues and related recommendations covered by the intersessional process are at different stages of development. Certain issues have undergone extensive review and deliberation at previous meetings of the intersessional process or at the third session of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach (vision, scope and objectives, for example). For those issues, further progress would best be made through in-person negotiation. Feedback from stakeholders has suggested that topics and issues that are more technical in nature would be better suited to virtual work, while non-technical issues would be better suited to face-to-face meetings or proposals made by written submission.

14. The virtual working groups are not intended to replace formal face-to-face discussions during the fourth meeting of the intersessional process or the negotiations that will take place at the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, but are intended to further build understanding and prepare delegates for those important negotiations.

15. With that in mind and based on stakeholder feedback, the virtual working groups will be established to work on a few specific, concrete and technical issues that need further development and are well-suited for virtual work.

1. Topics

16. Virtual working groups will be formed on the following issues:

- (a) Targets, indicators and milestones;
- (b) Governance and mechanisms to support implementation;
- (c) Issues of concern;
- (d) Financial considerations.

17. Mandates for the virtual working groups have been developed and posted on the Strategic Approach website. Guidance on the modalities for the virtual working groups has also been prepared.

2. Participation

18. The virtual working groups will be open to all Strategic Approach stakeholders, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of striking an optimal regional, sectoral, stakeholder and gender balance;

19. Given the additional challenges that certain regions and sectors will be facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual working groups should provide flexible working arrangements to allow for equitable representation, effective participation by all and the highest possible levels of efficiency.

3. Task and methods

20. The task of the virtual working groups will be to develop proposals on key issues, building on and continuing the work of the working groups which were set up during the third meeting of the intersessional process and incorporating relevant written input. They will also make proposals on gaps, should any be identified;

21. Each virtual working group will require two co-facilitators as advocates for the topic being covered by the group, who will guide the discussion and lead the outcomes, with support from the secretariat;

22. The work of the virtual working groups will be performed in an open and transparent manner to allow for broad stakeholder input. Virtual working group members will be encouraged to consult

with the sector, region or stakeholder groups that they represent and to allow for written input from their broader constituency. Furthermore, with the support of the secretariat, group co-facilitators will post reports, status updates and other interim documents on the Strategic Approach website for electronic feedback. Webinars will be used to brief stakeholders on progress, taking into account their time zones;

23. The modalities for convening the virtual working groups are set out in document SAICM/ICCM.5/Bureau.TC.3/4, which are available to all stakeholders and posted on the Strategic Approach website.

24. The outcomes of the virtual working groups will be discussed at the fourth meeting of the intersessional process, to be held in Bucharest in March 2021 (exact dates to be confirmed).

25. In addition to the virtual working groups, it is recognized that there may also be stakeholder-driven groups on certain topics. The written outcomes of any initiatives by such groups could be submitted as information documents to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process.

4. Preparing for the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

26. The ultimate goal of the extended intersessional period is to make significant progress to arrive at the fourth meeting of the intersessional process well prepared to finalize the recommendations to forward to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, with a view to adopting a decision.

27. We reiterate that we would urge participants to work together and aim to make significant progress, so that we approach the fourth meeting of the intersessional process with well-considered proposals.

28. We therefore strongly encourage participants to focus on developing targets, milestones and indicators in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to consider the need for a cross-cutting and holistic enabling framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, and what gaps such an enabling framework might address.

29. Furthermore, we would encourage participants to consider thoroughly the status of current discussions and propose any additional work that may be necessary to finalize the work of the intersessional process at the fourth and final intersessional meeting in Bucharest in March 2021.

30. In conclusion, we are living in unprecedented times and we appreciate your ongoing commitment to this important process. Our ultimate goal is to protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of chemicals and waste. We must use the additional time we have been given to work together and continue the momentum we have built to finalize our recommendations to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

31. We very much look forward to working together with you and achieving a successful outcome at the fifth session.

David Morin (Canada)
Judith Torres (Uruguay)
Co-Chairs of the intersessional process

Annex I

Timeline

Month	Event/action
May 2020	Ninth meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, 13 May 2020 (online)
June 2020	Tenth meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, 17 June 2020 (online)
July 2020	Bureau consultation on the draft Co-Chairs' scenario note
September 2020	Eleventh meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, 9 September 2020 (online)
22 October 2020 (Noon–2 p.m. and 4–6 p.m.)	First technical briefing: welcome and overview with the President of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process Distribution of the Co-Chairs' scenario note and annexes to all stakeholders
19 October 2020–22 January 2021	Planned briefings and online meetings and consultations, as appropriate: Virtual working groups (virtual working groups report back in December 2020) Online consultations with all regions and interested stakeholders, inviting written submissions on the preliminary outcomes of the virtual working groups
December 2020	Meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management with virtual working group co-facilitators Consolidation of virtual working group proposals and outcomes
January 2021	Meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management with virtual working group co-facilitators Preparation for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process, including a review of its agenda and documents (including virtual working group outcomes)
Mid-February 2021	Posting of official documents for discussion at the fourth meeting of the intersessional process
15–19 March 2021	Fourth meeting of the intersessional process, Bucharest Finalization of the recommendations for submission to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management
April–June 2021	Official regional meetings ¹ and sectoral consultations Technical briefings
5–9 July 2021	Fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, Bonn, Germany

¹ Informal regional dialogues (online if necessary) can be held at any point in the process, as appropriate and at the discretion of each region.

Annex II

Mandates for the proposed virtual working groups to advance deliberations in preparation for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process and the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

I. Introduction

1. The Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, at its eleventh meeting, held by teleconference on 9 September 2020, agreed on a process to establish virtual working groups using Internet-based technology and written consultation to advance its work on the following topics:

- (a) Targets, indicators and milestones;
- (b) Governance and mechanisms to support implementation;
- (c) Issues of concern;
- (d) Financial considerations.

A. Objectives of virtual working groups

2. Based on the documents of the fourth meeting of the intersessional process, the objectives are to consult on and develop proposals that enhance understanding of the issues under discussion with regard to the four topics listed above.

3. Virtual working group proposals may (i) address identified gaps; (ii) present possible compromise text; or (iii) propose new or alternative text, as appropriate, that could be considered at the fourth meeting of the intersessional process.

B. Principles

4. The work of the virtual working groups will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) The work of each virtual working group is informal, and its outcome documents do not therefore replace any official working documents for consideration at the rescheduled fourth meeting of the intersessional process;
- (b) Each virtual working group will be organized to enable efficient work, while being open to representation from all sectors and stakeholders from all regions;
- (c) Each virtual working group will operate in a consultative and transparent manner in order to comprehensively consider the full range of views and interests of all stakeholders.

C. Format, roles and mode of operation

5. The work of the virtual working groups will be conducted in accordance with the modalities for convening virtual meetings (via Webex) and online consultations (to seek electronic feedback) as set out in annex III below.

6. The virtual working groups will:

- (a) Meet several times in pre-arranged timeslots which will be announced on the website of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (Strategic Approach);
- (b) Be run via a facilitated discussion, managed by two co-facilitators and supported by the secretariat;
- (c) Be consultative, with members of the virtual working groups requesting input from their regions and constituencies;
- (d) Publish a summary of proposals under discussion on the Strategic Approach website, with an invitation for further written input from all Strategic Approach stakeholders;
- (e) Iteratively incorporate considerations derived from stakeholder input and consultations.

II. Role of the co-facilitators of the virtual working groups

7. Co-facilitators will be identified for each of the virtual working groups from among Government stakeholders. The role of the virtual working group co-facilitators during the designated timeslots will be to facilitate deliberations and the consideration and consolidation of written inputs. The virtual working group co-facilitators will need to indicate the parameters of the expectations for their discussion topics from the outset and should be familiar with the topics of the other virtual working groups. The virtual working group co-facilitators will report back regularly to the President and Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and to the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process on progress made.

III. Virtual working groups

A. Virtual working group on targets, indicators and milestones

1. Proposed virtual working group co-facilitators

8. The proposed co-facilitators are Silvija Kalnins (Latvia) and Wahira Palipane (Sri Lanka).

2. Proposed mandate

9. Make proposals to enable work on the topic to advance in the lead-up to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process, building on the outcome of the Technical Working Group, as set out in documents SAICM/IP.4/3 and SAICM/IP.4/INF/15. Specific tasks include the following:

(a) Finalization of the proposal for targets currently set out in SAICM/IP.4/3, with a view to enabling multi-stakeholder and multisectoral commitment and action, where appropriate;

(b) Development of a set of recommendations for a process to establish indicators and milestones for finalized targets.

3. Background documents

SAICM/IP.4/2: Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

SAICM/IP.4/3: Proposed targets prepared by the Technical Working Group on targets, indicators and milestones for SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

SAICM/IP.4/INF/15: Supplementary information on proposed targets prepared by the Technical Working Group on targets, indicators and milestones for the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

B. Virtual working group on governance and mechanisms to support implementation

1. Proposed virtual working group co-facilitators

10. The proposed co-facilitators are Teeraporn Wiriwutikorn (Thailand) and Karissa Kovner (United States).

2. Proposed mandate

11. Make proposals to enable work on the topics to advance in the lead-up to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process. Specific tasks include the following:

(a) National, subregional, regional, international, sectoral and stakeholder cooperation and coordination.

Review the entire text of the compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (SAICM/IP.4/2), bearing in mind the need for enhanced sectoral and stakeholder engagement, including in particular section VI, subsection D on enhanced sectoral and stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder input on contributions to achieve

enhanced sectoral and stakeholder engagement for beyond 2020 (SAICM/IP.4/INF/5) may be a helpful reference;

- (b) Science-policy interface:
- Building on document SAICM/IP.4/4, develop a proposal that:
- Articulates the rationale or need for a science-policy interface for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020;
 - Describes the potential functions of such an interface;
 - Recommends the approach to best achieve the science-policy interface functions, either within or outside the “beyond 2020 framework”;
 - If within the “beyond 2020 framework”, establish the science-policy interface; or, if necessary, create a process to establish it for consideration by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its sixth session;
- (c) Mechanisms for taking stock of progress:
- Review section VI, subsection G of the compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (SAICM/IP.4/2), on mechanisms for taking stock of progress with the aim of collecting views and making proposals;
- Note: Minimal discussion time has been devoted to this topic during the intersessional process.*
- (d) Mechanisms for updating the “beyond 2020 framework”:
- Review section VI, subsection H of the compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (SAICM/IP.4/2), on mechanisms for updating the framework with the aim of collecting views and making proposals;
- Note: Minimal discussion time has been devoted to this topic during the intersessional process.*
- (e) Subsidiary and ad hoc bodies, including the open-ended working group for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.
- Note: Much of the required progress may be made by receiving written input from stakeholder groups, followed by meetings of the virtual working group.*

3. Background documents

SAICM/IP.3/5: Other mechanisms to support implementation, prepared by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process.

SAICM/IP.3/INF/4: Enhancing the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 – submission from the German Environment Agency.

SAICM/IP.4/2: Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

SAICM/IP.4/4: Assessment of options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste.

SAICM/IP.4/INF/4: Promoting multi-stakeholder and multisectoral participation – Summary of known obstacles and possible incentives.

SAICM/IP.4/INF/5: Stakeholder input on contributions to achieve enhanced sectoral and stakeholder engagement for beyond 2020.

C. Virtual working group on issues of concern

1. Proposed virtual working group co-facilitators

12. The proposed co-facilitators are Sam Adu-Kumi (Ghana) and Sverre Thomas Jahre (Norway).

2. Proposed mandate

13. Make proposals to enable work on the issues of concern to advance in the lead-up to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process, building on annex B to the compilation of recommendations (SAICM/IP.4/2). Specific tasks include the following:

(a) Review annex B to document SAICM/IP.4/2 and identify possibilities for compromise and alternative text in areas of divergence and identify any gaps;

(b) Develop proposals for draft procedures for the identification, nomination, selection, review and prioritization of the issues of concern, determining the need for further work and the time needed for considering issues of concern, drawing on experience from existing forums;

(c) Develop proposals on how to deal with emerging policy issues and other issues of concern.

Note: This has possible links to the science-policy interface and to subsidiary and ad hoc bodies.

3. Background document

SAICM/IP.4/2: Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

D. Virtual working group on financial considerations

1. Proposed virtual working group co-facilitators

14. The proposed co-facilitators are Jonah Davis Ormond (Antigua and Barbuda) and Reggie Hernaus (the Netherlands).

2. Proposed mandate

15. Make proposals to enable work on the topics to advance in the lead-up to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process. Specific tasks include the following:

(a) Integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and waste:

(i) Given that stakeholders have continued to express support for mainstreaming as an important element in addressing financing concerns, further discuss how best to achieve mainstreaming. In addition, gather views on the establishment of a clearing-house mechanism to track development aid and other possible sources of assistance for the sound management of chemicals and waste;

(ii) For private sector involvement, industry may wish to consider specific milestones to demonstrate this component;

(iii) The dedicated external financing referred to under the integrated approach incorporates regional, bilateral and multilateral financial assistance, including the United Nations Environment Programme Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, a dedicated mechanism to support institutional strengthening at the national level for the implementation of the sound management of chemicals and waste;

(iv) Examine the benefits and challenges of the Global Environment Facility to date and how it should respond to the “beyond 2020” programme of work. Dedicated resources have expanded through the Global Environment Facility focal area on chemicals and wastes, which now has a wider scope. At the same time, the Facility as a funding source is focused on global environmental benefits and does not cover the breadth of scope and multisectoral nature of the sound management of chemicals and waste;

- (v) Develop recommendations on addressing dedicated financing for the sound management of chemicals and waste in the light of the multisectoral scope of the matter;
- (b) Capacity-building:
 - (i) Review the input from stakeholders set out in SAICM/IP.4/5 (Stakeholder input on the proposed draft ‘capacity-building principles’ developed at the third meeting of the intersessional process by the co-chairs of the thematic group on financial consideration);
 - (ii) Make proposals for the financing aspect of capacity-building principles;
 - (iii) Develop recommendations for financing concrete mechanisms and actions for capacity-building across sectors;
- (c) Strategic partnerships:
 - Develop proposals for a set of recommendations on financing strategic partnerships within and across sectors and stakeholder groups;
- (d) Consider proposals for financing the secretariat:
 - Develop proposals for the modalities for financing the secretariat (core budget and contributions by all stakeholders);
- (e) Cost recovery mechanisms and other economic policy instruments:
 - Develop proposals, collect comments and give feedback to the secretariat on a review of cost recovery mechanisms and other economic policy instruments for financing the sound management of chemicals and waste (SAICM/IP.4/7) so that it may be further developed for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process and the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management;
- (f) Draft resource mobilization strategy:
 - Develop proposals, collect comments and give feedback to the secretariat on the proposed resource mobilization strategy (SAICM/IP.4/6) so that it may be further developed for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process and the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

Note: Much of this progress may be made by receiving written input from stakeholder groups, followed by meetings of the virtual working group.

3. Background documents

SAICM/IP.4/2: Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, for consideration by the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

SAICM/IP.4/5: Stakeholder input on the proposed draft ‘capacity-building principles’ developed at the third meeting of the intersessional process by the co-chairs of the thematic group on financial considerations.

SAICM/IP.4/6: Draft proposal for a resource mobilization strategy.

SAICM/IP.4/7: Review of cost recovery mechanisms and other economic policy instruments for financing of the sound management of chemicals and waste.

Annex III

Modalities for convening online meetings and consultations

I. Purpose

1. The present annex sets out the modalities for convening virtual meetings and online consultations to support the work of the intersessional process. In particular, the document presents the process for participating in virtual working groups and the format for running virtual working groups. The annex also sets out information relating to proposed online technical briefings and regional consultations.

II. Key considerations when convening online meetings and consultations

2. In the light of the current restrictions arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, there is a need to convene online meetings and consultations to advance the work of the intersessional process towards its mandated outcome for consideration at the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

3. Suggestions for modalities and formats build on a range of experiences. The Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management has met online twice, in May 2020 and June 2020, and the Technical Working Group on Targets and Indicators has met online four times in delivering on its mandate for the fourth meeting of the Intersessional Process.

4. The United Nations Environment Programme has also convened a number of online meetings, including meetings of its Committee of Permanent Representatives. In addition, expert groups, such as the Stockholm Convention Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee, have worked online by email since 2005.

5. It should be emphasized that online meetings are not expected to serve as a platform for negotiation. Decisions on substantive issues will be taken at formally convened face-to-face meetings.

6. In addition to maintaining the momentum of the intersessional process, the virtual working groups will support the process and position stakeholders to hold more informed discussions at the fourth meeting of the intersessional process and at the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

7. 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 from virtual meetings and online consultations.

8. Certain stakeholders may not have the capacity to participate, owing to technological issues, such as Internet connection difficulties. The secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (the Strategic Approach) will explore options to connect them and, in addition, will allow for written input, with sufficient response time to ensure full and effective participation. Furthermore, certain sectors, such as health and labour, may face difficulties in participating, owing to their priorities in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Every possible effort will be made to address those challenges by implementing alternate means to provide written input.

9. Virtual working groups will work in a transparent manner, making information available on the Strategic Approach website in a timely manner.

10. The virtual working groups will be open to all Strategic Approach stakeholders, as the options for participation will include working by email and through webinars and teleconferencing. Webinars may be used to brief stakeholders on progress, taking into consideration the different time zones in which they are located.

11. The secretariat will avoid organizing parallel sessions.

III. Modalities for convening online technical briefings, virtual working groups and regional meetings

A. Online technical briefings

12. The secretariat will coordinate the planning for the technical briefings under the guidance of the President and Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process. A list of technical briefings proposed by the secretariat has been included in the Co-Chairs' scenario note presented above. Other technical briefings relevant to the "beyond 2020" process may be convened as the process moves forward. The first technical briefing on the welcome and overview, with the President of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process, will be held on 22 October 2020. The co-facilitators of the virtual working group and the secretariat will prepare a schedule for the briefings and make it available to stakeholders by posting it on the Strategic Approach website.

13. The agenda for the technical briefings will be developed by the respective leader(s) for the relevant topic and the Strategic Approach secretariat. The briefings will be recorded and posted on a dedicated page on the Strategic Approach website, together with any presentations made during the briefings.

14. Further technical briefings may be held in 2021, under the guidance of the President and Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and of the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process.

Format

15. Participation will be open.

16. For each technical briefing, two or three sessions will be held on the same day or on consecutive days, covering different time zones.

17. It is suggested that the duration of each session should be a maximum of two hours, with no break.

18. The technical briefing team will include the topic leader(s), supported by a representative of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach and one technical support person.

19. The platform to be used is Microsoft Teams, through a Teams live event.

20. The online documentation tool to be used is the Strategic Approach website and, if needed, an external online document repository, such as Microsoft OneDrive.

B. Virtual working groups

1. Process for participating in virtual working groups

21. The virtual working groups will be open to all Strategic Approach stakeholders.

22. The Secretariat will invite Strategic Approach stakeholders to register for participation in any of the virtual working groups and will develop a list of participants for each group, in accordance with the above criteria, for use by the relevant group co-facilitators.

23. The list of participants will include representatives who participate either by providing written comments or by taking part in online meetings.

24. The virtual working groups will begin in October 2020, once the co-facilitators have been selected and the draft virtual working group mandates agreed upon.

2. Format

25. The work of the virtual working groups will be decided upon by the co-facilitators of each group.

26. The work of the virtual working groups will take place in an open and transparent manner, both by email, with sufficient preparatory time of three to four weeks to allow for broad stakeholder participation and input, and on an online platform such as Webex, Microsoft Teams or GoToMeeting, with optional conference call lines to join the online platform.

27. The format of the virtual working groups will be reviewed at regular intervals and adapted as necessary.
28. Virtual working group co-facilitators will communicate with the registered participants by email, and will invite comments and post reports, status updates and other interim documents on the Strategic Approach website for online consultation.
29. Webinars may be used to brief stakeholders on progress, with consideration given to the different time zones in which participants may live, and online meetings may be convened as needed.
30. Virtual working group co-facilitators may wish to create smaller task groups to focus on specific areas, which would then report back to the broader virtual working group.
31. The agenda for each virtual working group will be designed by the co-facilitators once they have been selected and will be guided by the mandates set out by the President of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process.
32. Each of the virtual working groups will begin work based on the most recent work output. For most groups, that will be the work completed at the third meeting of the intersessional process, considering the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including the compilation of recommendations and outputs discussed in the report of the third meeting of the intersessional process. The virtual working group on targets, milestones and indicators may consider basing its work on its submission to the fourth meeting of the intersessional process. Other documents prepared for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process may be useful to the various virtual working groups in their work.
33. The Strategic Approach secretariat, in consultation with the virtual working group co-facilitators, will post the outcome documents of each virtual working group on a dedicated page on the Strategic Approach website.

C. Online regional meetings

34. In addition to in-person regional meetings in 2021, online regional meetings may be organized in the lead-up to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management if requested by the regions. The secretariat is available to support the regions in setting up the required online platform.

Format

35. Regional Strategic Approach multi-stakeholder and multisectoral participation is required.
 36. Each session should last no longer than three hours, including a break.
 37. The virtual regional meeting management team will include the Strategic Approach regional Bureau members, supported by a representative of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach and one technical support person.
 38. The platform to be used is Microsoft Teams or a Microsoft Teams live event if a plenary session is needed, and Microsoft Teams for breakout groups.
 39. The online documentation tool to be used is the Strategic Approach website and, if needed, an external online document repository, such as Microsoft OneDrive.
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