First virtual meeting of the Virtual Working Group on Governance and Mechanisms to Support Implementation  
Tuesday, 27 October 2020, from 14:00 – 15:00 CET

VIRTUAL WORKING GROUP ON GOVERNANCE AND MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION  
Summary of the 1st Virtual Meeting: Kick-off Meeting and Organizational Matters

1) Welcoming remarks

Ms. Karissa Kovner and Ms. Teeraporn Wiriwutikorn, the virtual working group co-facilitators, welcomed all participants to the kick-off meeting of the Virtual Working Group on Governance and Mechanisms to Support Implementation (referred to as VWG2). They explained that the purpose of this meeting was to make sure that the proposed schedule of the VWG is clear and that opportunities for both electronic feedback and participation in online discussions are ensured.

2) Opening of the Virtual Working Group on Governance and Mechanisms to Support Implementation

In her opening remarks, the ICCM5 President Ms. Gertrud Sahler thanked the participants for their ongoing interest and engagement during the pandemic. She recognized that these times require more flexibility than might normally be expected at an in-person meeting and asked for everyone’s patience as means of collaboration and communication are refined as we move along the process. She emphasized that the VWG2 should develop recommendations for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020; however, this process will not replace face to face negotiations at IP4 and ICCM5.

3) Overview of the Virtual Working Group Process and Mandates of the VWG2

The representative from the SAICM Secretariat noted that based on the VWG mandate approved by the ICCM5 Bureau, the co-facilitators have developed a detailed schedule and work plan to address the work that needs to be done. Given the large group, she asked the participants to log in at least 30 minutes in advance of each virtual meeting to allow the Secretariat to assist with any technical issues to ensure that the virtual meetings start on time. She invited the participants to use the Q&A to ask any questions and announced that microphones will be muted, and participants will be asked to use the “raise hand” feature.

4) Review of the Dedicated VWG2 Section of the SAICM IP Website

The representative of the SAICM Secretariat then showed the participants how to navigate through the dedicated VWG2 page, including where to find the agenda for each virtual meeting, opportunities for providing electronic input, and the summaries of each meeting, as well as other information that is needed to participate in the VWG.
5) Presentation of the Proposed Schedule of Meetings of VWG2

The co-facilitators walked the participants through the proposed schedule for VWG2. They explained that there will be 8 virtual meetings scheduled, including this kick-off meeting, to address specific sections of the document SAICM/IP.4/2 and the science-policy interface. Two of the virtual meetings will focus on topics that have had limited or no discussion during IP3. The other five virtual meetings are designed to discuss inputs received during the electronic feedback period.

Guidance will be provided by the co-facilitators on the input sought under electronic feedback and will be posted on the VWG2 webpage and sent to registered participants. The first electronic feedback is due on 5 November 2020. Following receipt of the electronic feedback, a virtual meeting will be held to discuss the consolidated inputs received. The inputs will be made available on the VWG2 page. In the event a participant cannot attend the virtual meetings, there will be an opportunity to provide electronic input afterwards.

6) Explanation of the Electronic Input Requested by 5 November 2020 on Sections B, C, and D related to Mechanisms to Support Implementation

The co-facilitators presented the tasks for the first electronic feedback sought from the participants with a deadline of submissions on 5 November 2020. It covers three sections of the compilation text from IP3 (document IP 4/2 in the list of pre-session documents). The sections of the document for the electronic input are on National Implementation (B) on page 8, Sub regional, regional, and international implementation (C) on page 9, and Enhanced sectoral and stakeholder engagement (D) on pages 10 and 11.

The co-facilitators explained that in accordance with the briefing by the IP Co-chairs and the ICCM5 President, no views are requested in areas of existing agreement. In other paragraphs, they might ask to accept a proposal from the co-facilitators instead of providing comments.

7) Presentation of the 2nd Virtual Meeting scheduled for 5 November 2020 on Sections G and H related to Mechanisms to Support Implementation

The next virtual meeting (to be held on 5 November 2020) will be an open discussion on Sections G and H in document IP4/2, using “guiding questions” proposed by the co-facilitators and presented in the proposed schedule.

8) Q&A Session

There were a number of questions posed ranging from logistics to specific questions on timing and the overall plans for the process to actual comments on the text. Questions of general applicability are summarized below. In addition, there were a few questions or overall position statements made that were referred to the Secretariat for posting on the dedicated public website for this virtual group.

Q1: Can the first electronic feedback deadline of 5 November 2020 be extended to gather inputs from stakeholders as the time is short?
A: Given our large mandate and in order to meet the ICCM5 Bureau’s expectations in time for IP4, we hope you understand that we will need to maintain the timelines as set out in the VWG2 schedule.

Q2: What are the criteria for removing or keeping bracketed text once inputs have been received from stakeholders? Sometimes brackets can mean undecided. Could the focus on bracketed text limit the opportunities of the VWG to address issues?
A: All stakeholders will have the opportunity to offer their views on bracketed text in the Sections under consideration, with the goal to move the process forward and the stakeholders closer together, including through the removal of brackets. All inputs received will be reviewed together and collectively discussed, so the criteria will be the general comfort of the group and the usual motto of “Nothing is decided until it is decided at ICCM5” will hold true. There will be a number of opportunities to discuss areas where existing brackets highlight areas that have yet to be decided or there may be gaps identified in the IP3 text, as noted in the mandate to this group. Those opportunities may result in the addition of new text by the VWG. The outcomes of these discussions will be taken into account in advance of the negotiations at IP4 and ICCM5.

Q3: Will the inputs of stakeholders be made available to all participants?
A: Stakeholder inputs will be posted on the website under “Stakeholder’s inputs” after the deadline, once the co-facilitators have completed their preparations for the next meeting.

Q4: Do the Co-facilitators prefer to receive input through track-changes in the document IP4/2 or as a stand-alone document?
A: The Co-facilitators will attempt to provide clear direction on the more efficient way to provide input. Both options are possible, depending on how stakeholders can best express their views. It is also possible to just comment on one or multiple sections.

Q5: Following the discussions during the virtual meetings, if suggestions have been accepted, would they be on behalf of this virtual working group or still the responsibility of each participating stakeholder to make the suggestions at IP4?
A: The ICCM5 President and Bureau have asked for a summary report (up to 10 pages) for each of the VWGs. The report will reflect the work of the group and will be considered a product of the VWG for consideration by IP4.

Q6: Is there any way to assure an inclusive and participative process despite unequal capacity for participation of different stakeholders?
A: This important issue has been addressed by the ICCM5 Bureau. The modalities to convene virtual meetings and electronic feedback was approved by the Bureau in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that all stakeholders can participate in the work of the VWG either through electronic feedback or virtual meetings. In this Working Group, you will note in the proposed schedule that there are specific opportunities for written input provided for those that cannot participate in the virtual meetings.

Q7: Is there a possibility for discussions on topics amongst participants in between meetings to exchange views?
A: Such an interactive platform would be difficult to manage and time consuming as a moderator would be required. However, the Secretariat will explore such opportunities.

Q8: Is there a possibility to provide written input in other languages?
A: The ICCM5 Bureau agreed that the intersessional process, including electronic feedback and virtual meetings will be undertaken in English only. The Secretariat welcomed the support of stakeholders to help with translation in the event that a participant is not comfortable in providing written or spoken comments in English.