

VIRTUAL WORKING GROUP ON ISSUES OF CONCERN
Report of the 3rd Virtual Meeting on Issues of Concern
Date: Monday 02 February 2021

Co-facilitators: Sam Adu-Kumi (Ghana) and Sverre Thomas Jahre (Norway)

1) Welcoming remarks

Welcome remarks were given by co-facilitator Sverre Thomas Jahre. There was a total of 102 participants in the meeting.

- The Co-facilitator mentioned that ICCM5 has been postpone indefinitely and that this decision will have an impact on the immediate future of the process, perhaps particularly then on the discussion on the process for existing emerging policy issues.
- He also explained that the outcome document will be forwarded to the IP co-chairs and then taken forward into the intersessional process. He highlighted that the virtual working group discussions have been discussions and not negotiations and that the outcome document has been drafted as a proposal that represents converging views of the participants of this group. It is the desire that it could serve the basis for future discussions in the intersessional process. He noted that the proposal should be considered a steppingstone towards continued discussions and negotiations at future meetings.

2) Update Discussion on Title, Definition, Submission of information

There was general support expressed for the title and the sections on definition and submission of information.

Title

New title proposals included “issues of focus or “issues to advance sustainability”.

Definition

The group expressed different views on the use of the word “significant”. There was a request to delete the word ‘significant’ by two participants. Other participants opposed this deletion indicating it would help with prioritization.

Two participants asked to include the following points in the rationale:

- The 2030 agenda and SDG 12.4 should be mentioned in the rationale.
- Include alternative wording to incorporate issues that would benefit from focus attention and collaboration, including on SOD. This should also be included in the rationale section.

Submission of information

Some limited text edits were proposed by participants which are intended to be included in the final outcome document.

3) Discussion on C. Nomination, selection and adoption process

There was general support expressed for the development of the nomination, selection and adoption process.

There were a number of participants that raised concerns with the six-month timeline for nominations, indicating that more time was needed to scrutinize the nominations. Some indicated that a more detailed timeline was required to support the process overall.

One government raised the need for 'time limited expert groups' to support the scrutiny of the nomination process. Another government mentioned that under '(i.) nomination of issues', there is an opportunity to engage stakeholders, who are not normally engaged in the beyond 2020 instrument, who might be able to provide more information that would be helpful for the deliberation.

Some participants requested that the secretariat make a formal call for inputs on the nominations, consistent with the process for nominating emerging policy issues in Conference resolution II/4.

There was considerable discussion regarding the multi-stakeholder committees proposed under part iii:

- The need for multi-sectoral representation on the committees was raised as was the need for the committees to be considered ad hoc.
- One government participant noted on behalf of a region that it would be preferable to have one broader scientific body to support the multi-stakeholder committees.
- Another government participant asked whether these committees would be subsidiary bodies.
- One participant questioned the feasibility of the committees and how they would relate to existing committees under the existing emerging policy issues, such as the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. Other stakeholders suggested that the IOMC would be enough to coordinate among relevant stakeholders and activities as it is currently done for the current EPIs.
- Multiple participants expressed that they required further discussion on the very nature of the mandate of the multi-stakeholder committee.
- One stakeholder mentioned that identifying the tasks of a multi-stakeholder committee is too premature at this stage in the process and proposed to bracket 2.a.
- One participant mentioned that multi-stakeholder committee should not implement the workplan but should coordinate the work, monitor and evaluate.

4) Discussion on D. Mechanisms for implementation

There was general support expressed for the text developed for mechanisms for implementation.

I. Workplans

There was some divergence in views on the proposal for the open-ended nature of the multi-stakeholder committees. Some stakeholders raised that based on previous experiences in SAICM negotiations, the process may become cumbersome and it might be difficult to achieve consensus (i.e., as with Lead in Paint).

One participant reiterated the importance of protecting the process where information is prioritized by a scientists committee instead of having an open-ended process done under the Conference.

Some comments were raised regarding the need to ensure funding for the implementation of workplans and while doing so lessons learned from the current EPIs should be taken into consideration in moving forward.

II. Tracking progress

General comments by participants suggested that further discussion is needed on details of stakeholder roles on tracking progress. Some participants noted that tracking progress is already proposed as part of the instrument and that it may be duplicative.

There was some divergence of view of the group regarding the responsible entity for reporting to the Conference. A few participants noted that the secretariat should coordinate monitoring and reporting.

III. Determining the need for further work on an issue

There was a discussion on a proposal made by a group of NGOs on trigger criteria as one of the modalities to review the work on issues of concern. Regarding the proposal of trigger criteria, the co-facilitator mentioned it was annexed in the proposal for further consideration in moving forward. One of the representatives of the Group of NGOs gave a brief description of their proposal. The co-facilitator invited interested stakeholders to discuss the proposal further with the group of NGOs. The group of NGOs representative suggested to set up a webinar to discuss the proposal further if a decision was taken to do so.

5) Proposed process on the existing SAICM emerging policy issues and other issues of concern

The co-facilitator opened the agenda item reiterating that ICCM5 is now postponed. He noted that in light of the delayed process due to the pandemic, the co-facilitators have proposed to the VWG to consider approaches that would pave the way for an omnibus decision on the existing SAICM emerging policy issues and other issues of concern at the postponed ICCM5 (as opposed to ICCM6). He indicated that in the view of the co-facilitators there is now sufficient time available before ICCM5 to gather the necessary information and background for relevant decision-making at ICCM5.

There was general convergence by the group that decision-making at ICCM5 was desirable.

At the same time, many stakeholders highlighted that it was not realistic to prepare the documentation as proposed by the co-facilitators by 31 May 2021. There was also some discussion on what was the appropriate documentation required for decision-making at ICCM5.

Regarding the request for IOMC lead agencies, governments and other relevant stakeholders to report on progress on EPIs, one participant pointed out that normally the ICCM would request reports not the Bureau (as was done by ICCM4). She suggested that perhaps the ICCM5 Bureau members could communicate with their regional groups and invite them to provide information on the work that's ongoing instead of the text proposal set out by the co-facilitators.

One government participant suggested that we have enough documentation – such as the SAICM evaluation and the UNEP report assessment on Issues of Concern – in order to make future decisions. In this context, UNEP gave further information on the Issues of Concern report. The report was presented some time ago within a technical briefings to the different stakeholders. The report contains the status of each of the EPIs information is updated until quarter three/four of 2020 and should be considered the latest information on EPIs.

The co-facilitators agreed to take the discussion into consideration in finalizing their proposal to address part (c) of the VWG mandate.

6) Final steps/ closure

The co-facilitators thanked all participants and informed the group that the outcome document would be prepared based on the discussions in the final VWG meeting.
