

REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING

BUREAU OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Thursday 4 June 2020, by teleconference

Participants

Present: Rosa Vivien Ratnawati (Indonesia, for Asia Pacific, and President), W.T.B Dissanayake (Sri Lanka, for Asia Pacific), Oarabile Serumola (Botswana, for Africa), Anahit Aleksandryan (Armenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Karmen Krajnc (Slovenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Angela Patricia Rivera Galvis (Colombia, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Bethune Morgan (Jamaica, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Marie-Claire Lhenry (France, for the Western European and Others), Alison Dickson (Canada, for the Western European and Others), Roger Baro (Burkina Faso, for Africa), Claudia Dimitriu (Chair of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, Ex officio member), Monika Stankiewicz (Executive Secretary) and members of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Note: For technical reasons Ms. Oarabile Serumola was not able to hear or contribute to the meeting. The Secretariat will share this report and follow-up with her.

1. Opening of the Bureau meeting

- Ms. Rosa Vivien Ratnawati, the President of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention (COP-4), welcomed the members of the Bureau to the meeting and thanked them for joining its second online meeting during COVID times. She then informed Bureau members of the passing of Mr. Marc Chardonnens, former Head of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and President of the COP1 and COP2 of the Minamata Convention.
- Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, added her warm welcome to the members of the Bureau.
- The agenda of the meeting was adopted without change.

2. Updates from the Secretariat

a. Article 21 reporting

- Upon invitation from the President, a member of the Secretariat recalled that the deadline for the first biennial short report was 31 December 2019, and noted that as of 30 March 2020, 86 complete reports had been received, reflecting a reporting rate of 75% for the reporting period. The Secretariat encouraged the remaining 28 Parties to submit their reports. A breakdown of the reporting rate by regions is available on the Convention's website. The Secretariat explained that it was in contact with countries to complete submissions and would start an analysis of the reports submitted in preparation for the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC) meeting next year. It was also brought to the attention of Bureau members that the Secretariat would make the information contained in the reports available to the Conference of the Parties.

- The President appreciated the significant increase of reporting rate and further called upon all Bureau members to reach out to their region and encourage submissions of the remaining and incomplete reports.

b. Work of technical expert groups

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau members of the three intersessional expert groups meetings held in May 2020, as per the annotated agenda. The summary of these meetings and other updated information are available on the Convention's website. The Secretariat expressed its gratitude to the co-chairs of the expert groups: Mr. Darren Byrne (Ireland) and Ms. Gwenetta Fordyce (Guyana) for the Annexes A&B group, Ms. Bianca Dlamini (Eswatini) and Mr. Greg Helms (US) for the releases group, and Mr. Andreas Gössnitzer (Switzerland) and Ms. Oluwatoyin Olabanji (Nigeria) for the waste group. The Secretariat also pointed out that some seats were still vacant and invited Bureau members of respective regions to submit additional nominations as appropriate. The Secretariat also clarified that the groups had agreed to work in an inclusive and transparent manner, allowing the participation of relevant experts in online meetings in addition to observers, the number of which is limited by COP decisions. The Secretariat was tasked to review CVs or other information to make sure that people requesting for participation had relevant expertise.
- The Secretariat informed the Bureau members on the timing of the upcoming meetings of the groups: the waste group would meet again on 18 June 2020; the releases group on 30 June 2020; and Annexes A&B group on 1 July 2020. In terms of scheduling, the Secretariat informed the Bureau that Annexes A&B group had agreed to receive submissions until 31 July 2020, and one document on releases has been open for comments until 11 June 2020.
- A Bureau member informed that a new expert from Croatia had been appointed in the group of technical experts on mercury waste thresholds. The newly appointed expert replaced a former expert from the Czech Republic who had resigned.
- The President took note of the work progress and reiterated its full supports to the preparatory works of COP4 carried out by the technical expert groups.

c. Other issues

- The Secretariat thanked Bureau members for their feedback on the timeline and modalities of the plan of work on the proposed indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Minamata Convention as well as on the timeline of the roadmap for developing draft monitoring guidance. It confirmed that the two documents had been communicated to the Parties and were available on the Convention's website.
- Regarding the work on developing monitoring guidance, the Secretariat informed the Bureau members that Parties and stakeholders were invited to submit comments on the draft annotated outline to the Secretariat by 31 July 2020. Also, the Secretariat announced that a call for interest in contributing to the drafting of the guidance had been issued and that Parties and stakeholders were invited to identify experts and scientists to contribute to the drafting by 15 August 2020. Moreover, the Secretariat added that job openings for three consultants had been issued to develop elements of the draft guidance for mercury monitoring in air, biota and human body, through the United Nation's human resources gateway "Inspira". The Secretariat informed Bureau members that a WebEx

information session on the development of monitoring guidance would be held on 10 June 2020.

- The President qualified effectiveness evaluation as one of the most pressing issues to be concluded at COP4 and invited Bureau members to identify potential main challenges and possible solutions by reaching out to the regions. The President invited the Secretariat to update periodically to Bureau on the ongoing processes and suggested to include the issue in the agenda for the next Bureau meeting for further discussion.

3. Holding meetings online (COVID-19 related)

- The Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention presented the note of the Secretariat on convening online meetings under the Minamata Convention in light of COVID-19. She shared with Bureau members the positive experience of the Secretariat in holding online working level meetings which allowed to bring successfully forward the intersessional work. She also informed Bureau members that all meetings planned for this year would likely be held online. She reassured the Bureau of the efforts by the Secretariat to ensure equal participation to all Parties and to resolve any technical difficulties that may prevent such participation. While referring to the list of planned meetings under the Minamata Convention for 2020-2021, the Executive Secretary further informed Bureau members that no decision-making meetings were planned for the current year but that the Secretariat was following the organization of major intergovernmental meetings by other UN bodies in preparation for the ICC and SIP Governing Body meetings scheduled for the following year. She suggested that the Secretariat could prepare a more detailed analysis of the potential challenges and opportunities of holding online meetings under the Minamata Convention for the consideration of the Bureau.
- The President and Bureau members took note of the note prepared by the Secretariat and welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat to enhance online cooperation. One Bureau member pointed out that the postponement of international meetings would make the following year particularly crowded and invited the Secretariat to consult Bureau members regarding the scheduling of physical meetings well in advance to avoid possible overlaps.
- The President welcomed the idea of the Secretariat to prepare a more in-depth document on online meetings as well as to continue sharing the updated list of upcoming Minamata Convention meetings.

4. Matters related to COP-4

- The Secretariat presented its note on the mandate and function of the COP Bureau.
- Bureau members took note of the note, thanked the Secretariat for the useful document and made some comments on its content regarding the Bureau function of examining credentials, the role of the President vis-a-vis the other Bureau members, and the issue of cooperation with other entities. The Secretariat offered to circulate a revised version of the document addressing the comments raised during the meeting in track changes.
- The President reminded Bureau members of the commitment of her Government to work towards the adoption at COP4 of a political and non-binding declaration calling for further international cooperation, including on issues such as illegal trade of mercury. A number of Bureau members provided feedback on the initiative. Some members welcomed the idea of having a simple document and stressed the importance not to engage in a long

negotiation process since 2021 was expected to be a busy year for delegations that will be called to attend many different intergovernmental meetings. Another Bureau member pointed out that her region supported the idea of a declaration, as long as negotiation was conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner but needed more information on the content and the scope of a possible declaration, ideally through the presentation of a draft. The President invited Bureau members to communicate to her and the Secretariat on any views on a declaration and proposed to discuss this further at the next meeting.

5. Status of Contributions to the Minamata Convention

- The Secretariat presented the three documents that reflected the status of contributions to the General Trust Fund, Special Trust Fund and the Specific Trust Fund as updated monthly on the Minamata website. The Secretariat also indicated that an additional table providing more details on the fundraising status of the Special Trust Fund against different areas of the programme of work of the Convention had been prepared and is updated monthly on the Minamata website.
- Bureau members took note of the status of contributions and some Bureau members expressed concern about current and past contribution rates and asked for clarification from the Secretariat on the measures foreseen in Minamata regulations in case of non-payment of contributions. The President enquired about the rules in terms of paying contributions, taking into account possible flexibility in the framework of solidarity amid the global pandemic of Covid-19 and its repercussions to the budget priorities of member countries. The Executive Secretary explained that payments are due on 1st January of each year and that the financial rules and regulations adopted by COP1 foresee actions to be taken by the Executive Secretary to follow-up on unpaid contributions.
- A Bureau member requested to receive information on outstanding contributions for 2020 and prior years to initiate internal formal procedures to avoid missing payments. The Secretariat informed that information on outstanding contributions was included in the invoices for 2020, which can be re-submitted upon request.
- The Secretariat will follow-up on outstanding contributions, including considering ways to present information on benefits of collaboration under the Minamata Convention in support of national efforts to address mercury pollution.
- The President asked the Bureau members to encourage Parties to pay their contributions for the General Trust Fund as early as possible.

6. Any other business

a. UNEP Strategy for Private Sector Engagement

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the UNEP's first Strategy for Private Sector Engagement, adopted in September 2019, and the related letter received from the UNEP headquarters as submitted to this meeting. The Secretariat pointed out that, while private sector is mentioned in Articles 13 and 14 of the Convention, COP has not had opportunities for extensively discussing private sector engagement. At this stage, the Secretariat suggested to consider the strategy as a guideline for potential reference and use in the work under the Convention and by the Secretariat, including when planning for COP-4, as appropriate.

- The President took note of the document and encouraged Bureau members to take the Strategy into account during the preparations for COP-4.

b. Date of the following Bureau meeting

- Bureau took note the proposal to hold its following meeting through video conference in September 2020. The Secretariat will consult with the President and Bureau members thereof.