

Meeting of the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics  
Wednesday 29 January 2020, 15:30 to 16:30(GMT+3)  
Executive Office Boardroom of UNEP  
United Nations Office at Nairobi

## **Background Document for Agenda Item 3: Discussion on venues and dates for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> meetings of the expert group**

### **1. Introduction**

This note serves as a background document for consideration under Agenda Item 3 – “Discussion on venues and dates for the 4th and 5th meetings of the expert group”. It includes background information for the consideration and possible decision on the dates and venues of the two upcoming meetings of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, tentatively scheduled for the first week of May and the first half of November 2020.

### **2. Background**

The ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics was established at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly in response to [UNEP/EA.3/Res.7](#) Marine Litter and Microplastics. At the fourth session of UNEA the mandate of the expert group was extended, pursuant to operative paragraph 7 of resolution [UNEP/EA.4/Res.6](#) Marine plastic litter and microplastics.

The first meeting of the expert group was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 29 to 31 May 2018 and the second meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 3 to 7 December 2018. The third meeting of the expert group was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 18 to 22 November 2019.

At its third meeting, and as outlined in the adopted outcome document, experts considered that the expert group should meet twice in 2020 to prepare its input to UNEA-5, with the fourth meeting preferably to take place in May 2020 and the fifth meeting preferably to take place in November 2020. It was also agreed that future meetings will take place in Nairobi, unless formal offers to host a future meeting from member States are received by the Secretariat by 31 December 2019. The expert group entrusted its Bureau to decide, in close consultation with member States, on the dates and venues of its future meetings, by 31 January 2020 at the latest. In accordance with this mandate, the Chair of the expert group presented the outcomes of the third meeting of the expert group to the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi on 23 January, and invited member States to provide any feedback on the preparations for the upcoming meetings, including with regard to dates and venues.

During the third meeting, Rwanda (by letter to the Executive Director dated 19 November 2019 and by oral statement during the meeting), offered to host one of the upcoming meetings of the expert group, and Peru (by oral statement during the meeting and confirmed by a *Note Verbale* to the Executive Director dated 30 December 2019) offered to host the fourth meeting of the expert group. Both offers were supported by representatives from their respective regional groups (the

African Group and the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean) through statements made on the final day of the meeting of the expert group.

No other offers for hosting the upcoming meetings of the expert group were received by the Secretariat by the deadline of 31 December 2019.

At its meeting on 15 January 2020, the Bureau considered the matter (summary available [here](#)), whereby the Secretariat was requested to develop more detailed information on the three alternatives (Nairobi, Lima and Kigali) for the two remaining meetings (see section 4 below), including budgetary and practical considerations, with a view to facilitating a decision on this matter by the Bureau at its meeting scheduled for 29 January. The Secretariat was also asked to communicate with the Governments of Peru and Rwanda in advance of that meeting to find out more details about what their offers would include. Members of the Bureau were also asked to seek feedback from their regional groups on proposed dates and venues.

In response to enquiries from the Secretariat, both the Government of Peru and the Government of the Rwanda have provided additional information on the content of their offers to host the next meetings of the expert group, which has been integrated in section 4 below.

The Government of Peru has specified that the offer for hosting the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the expert group would take place in Lima from 4 to 8 May 2020 at the Lima Convention Center (“7<sup>th</sup> January Convention Center) and that the venue and the interpretation booths and equipment will be provided free of charge. The facility has hosted several international events, such as the 2015 Annual meetings of the World Bank Group and IMF; the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, including its Presidential Summit, in 2016; the 130<sup>o</sup> International Olympic Committee session, in 2017; the VIII Presidential Americas Summit, in 2018; and several events in the context of the Pan American Games organized in Lima in 2019.

The Government of Rwanda clarified that the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the expert group would be hosted at the Kigali Convention Center and that the costs of the venue, as well as lunch and coffee breaks would be offered free of charge. The Convention Center has successfully hosted other UN meetings, including the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, 8 to 14 October 2016.

### **3. General considerations**

The following general considerations, based on existing information, may be useful as a basis for further reflection of the matter with a view to identifying a balanced decision:

- All meetings of the expert group are financed through extrabudgetary resources, with limited or no impact on UNEP’s core funding or Programme of Work.
- The countries providing extrabudgetary resources to the AHEG process are open to holding the expert meetings in different regions, even if the costs might be higher, based on the on the assumption that it may increase overall engagement with and participation in the process.
- So far, one meeting has been held in Africa, one in Europe, and one in Asia. From that perspective, it may be appropriate that one of the remaining meetings is held in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- It is not uncommon for intergovernmental meetings on a specific issue to take place in different regions (e.g. the meetings leading to the adoption of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, have taken place in different regions worldwide).
- While financial support for travel to participants from eligible member States and stakeholders vary (the total number may be ranging from 85 to 150 eligible participants), the costs are generally estimated to be relatively similar regardless where the meetings are held.

- The two countries that made an offer to host the meetings outside Nairobi have offered the venue free of charge. This would represent a cost saving compared to organizing the meeting in Nairobi, as the UN Office at Nairobi would charge for the use of conference facilities in the UN complex, roughly estimated to about 75.000 USD (including costs for IT, equipment, medical and security).
- The levels of Daily Subsistence Allowance are similar for Nairobi (260 USD/day) and Lima (289 USD/day), but significantly lower for Kigali (185 USD/day). The difference in DSA can be expected to have a sizeable impact on overall costs, depending on how many participants will attend the upcoming meetings.
- Travel and per diem costs as well as overall workload for Secretariat staff are expected to be higher for any meeting held outside Nairobi, but additional costs are not considered to be significant. Any additional burden upon the Secretariat will however be alleviated by relying on additional support from staff based with Regional Offices and Regional Seas Conventions in the region (Latin America and the Caribbean), who possess valuable expertise in intergovernmental processes, with no or limited impacts on UNEP's core budget.

#### 4. Options analysis

Based on existing information, the advantages and disadvantages options regarding the venue for the two remaining meetings of the expert group (AHEG 4 and AHEG 5) may be summarized as follows:

##### **Option A (default option): AHEG 4 and 5 are both organized in Nairobi, Kenya**

###### Potential advantages:

- May create a higher level of ownership and knowledge about the process among Nairobi-based delegates (CPR)
- May minimize the risk of potential disruption between AHEG 5 and OECPR/UNEA in terms of preparing a draft UNEA decision
- Some member States believe that holding both meetings in Nairobi would strengthen the role of UNEP Headquarters in Kenya
- May limit cost and workload for the Secretariat as compared to meetings held outside Nairobi.

###### Potential disadvantages:

- No regional balance, visibility and ownership of the process, as all meetings are at UNEP Headquarters
- May limit the influence of marine litter experts from capital
- Conference venue for both meetings will be more expensive as they are not provided free of charge
- May limit the scope for cost savings, as costs for travel and DSA and conference services are either higher or not significantly different than for the alternative venues

##### **Option B: AHEG 4 is organized in Lima, Peru, and AHEG 5 in Nairobi, Kenya**

###### Potential advantages:

- May create some higher level of ownership and knowledge about the process among Nairobi-based delegates (CPR)
- May also create some leverage for regional balance, visibility and ownership of the process, as it is held both in a region (AHEG 4) and at UNEP Headquarters (AHEG 5)
- May lower the risk of potential disruption between AHEG 5 and OECPR/UNEA in terms of preparing a draft UNEA decision

- Some member States believe that holding AHEG 5 in Nairobi would strengthen the role of UNEP Headquarters in Kenya
- May limit cost and workload for the Secretariat as compared to meetings held outside Nairobi.

Potential disadvantages:

- The conference venue for AHEG 5 will be more expensive as it is not provided free of charge
- May limit the scope for cost savings, as costs for travel and DSA and conference services are in both cases higher than for the alternative venue
- Unfair treatment of the two offers on the table

**Option C: ad hoc expert group 4 is organized in Lima, Peru, and ad hoc expert group 5 in Kigali, Rwanda**

Potential advantages:

- May create significant leverage for regional balance, visibility and ownership of the process, as both meetings are in dedicated host countries
- May increase the influence of marine litter experts from capital
- Conference venues for both meetings will be lower as they are provided free of charge
- The Government of Rwanda will offer negotiated accommodation prices for all meeting participants and offer transportation from and back to hotels

Potential disadvantages:

- May significantly limited the ownership and knowledge about the process among Nairobi-based delegates (CPR)
- May increase the risk of potential disruption between AHEG 5 and OECPR/UNEA in terms of preparing a draft UNEA decision
- Some member States believe that this would significantly undermine role of UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi
- Will increase cost and workload for the Secretariat as compared to meetings held in Nairobi.

**Option D: ad hoc expert group 4 is organized in Kigali, Rwanda and ad hoc expert group 5 in Nairobi, Kenya**

Potential advantages:

- May create some higher level of ownership and knowledge about the process among Nairobi-based delegates (CPR)
- May lower the risk of potential disruption between AHEG 5 and OECPR/UNEA in terms of preparing a draft UNEA decision
- Some member States believe that holding AHEG 5 in Nairobi would strengthen the role of UNEP Headquarters in Kenya
- May limit cost and workload for the Secretariat as compared to meetings held outside Nairobi.
- The Government of Rwanda will offer negotiated accommodation prices for all meeting participants and offer transportation from and back to hotels.

Potential disadvantages:

- Unbalanced regional visibility and ownership of the process, as the AHEG meetings will be organized in all geographical regions but one (Latin America and the Caribbean)
- The conference venue for AHEG 5 will be more expensive as it is not provided free of charge
- May limit the scope for cost savings, as costs for travel and DSA and conference services are in both cases higher than for the alternative venue
- Unfair treatment of the two offers on the table.