



Contributions of the Republic of Colombia regarding consultations on the timing and format for organizing UNEA5 in view of COVID-19.

Colombia considers the hybrid option may be a compromise solution in the interest of achieving UNEA5 considering travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It would ensure the completion of the session and thus make important and necessary decisions to further advance environmental protection. In this regard, the hybrid option is the preferred option for Colombia.

- It is considered important to integrate a procedure for cross-communication via email to make comments to the Drafts Resolutions, it is suggested that comments can be sent from January 2021.
- The proposed format for participation in the February session could be seen as an advantage for States whose delegations can attend in person as opposed to those that can only attend virtually, since the latter would face the recurring connectivity problems that arise in virtual meetings, as experience has shown in negotiation meetings that have opted for this modality. Difficulties in connection may prevent speakers from expressing their positions or concerns within the framework of the negotiation process or from listening to all discussions without interruption, since not all developing States have the bandwidth capacity for the proper functioning of the digital platforms where this type of meeting is usually held.
- Therefore, it is important to consider providing sufficient support through financial contributions to those States that request it in order to improve Internet connectivity. This would contribute to strengthen the legitimacy of the decision making process within the UNEA, since the participation would be full and informed.

However, Colombia is open to discuss different options for the realization of the UNEA5 that combines elements of option 1 (hybrid) and 4 (postponed for the second half of 2020) in order to seek an intermediate solution.

This proposal consists of carrying out UNEA5 in two moments, one in February 2021 in hybrid format and another in August 2021:

1. The hybrid segment proposed by the Secretariat could be carried out from February 22 to 26, 2021 (original date agreed for the UNEA5) in which urgent decisions are taken related to the Medium Term Strategy, the Program of Work, the negotiation of prioritized resolutions (maximum 5 under clusters) and the Ministerial Declaration. It is suggested that the possibility of cross-communication via e-mail be considered in order to advance comments on the draft resolutions, for which these should be made available at least 8 weeks in advance.



2. That a second face-to-face segment of the Assembly be held in the second half of 2021 (August/September/October 2021) with the aim of adopting the remaining resolutions that the member states decide not to prioritize at the hybrid session in February 2021. It will also serve as an initial follow-up to the implementation of the UNEP Program of Work and the Medium-Term Strategy, as well as the activities carried out to celebrate the 50th anniversary of UNEP and the 1972 Stockholm Conference. In this scenario, the planning of UNEA 6 will have to be addressed.

- Advantages:

o There would be no rescheduling or delay in taking important decisions in 2021, since urgent decisions would be taken in February and this process would be complemented in August.

o In that sense, the work related to the medium term strategy and program of UNEP, the celebration of the 50 years of UNEP and programmatic resolutions of central relevance and priority is progressing.

- Disadvantages:

o Uncertainty derived from the restrictions by COVID-19 that may still be in place by August, when the face-to-face segment is proposed.

o Connectivity problems for the proposed virtual segment.