



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Distr.
FINAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/Bur/10/2
15 December 2020

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Tenth Teleconference
6:00am to 9:00am EST
5, 9, and 12 November 2020

**MINUTES OF THE TENTH TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD**

1. The tenth inter-sessional teleconference of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties since the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and concurrent meetings of the Parties to the Protocols in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 2018, took place on 5, 9 and 12 November 2020 via GotoMeeting.

2. The teleconferences were attended by the following members of the COP Bureau and substitutes. (In the case that a person did not attend the three sessions, attendance is indicated by a, b or c respectively):

Presidency: H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt);

Africa: Mr. Eric Okoree (Ghana) Mr. Melesse Maryo (Ethiopia)(b);

Asia and the Pacific: Mr. Vinod Mathur (India); Ms. Leina El-Awadhi (Kuwait);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Ms Eugenia Montezuma (Costa Rica, representing H.E. Minister Andrea Meza Murillo); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Central and Eastern Europe: Ms. Teona Karchava (Georgia)(a,b); Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan, substitute for Georgia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol); Ms. Elvana Ramaj (Albania)(a);

Western Europe and Others: Ms. Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); Ms. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand); and Ms. Marie Haraldstad (Norway, substitute for New Zealand for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Ex-officio: Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation; Mr. Hesiquio Benítez (Mexico)(a), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice; Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada) and Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda), Co-chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

Observers: Mr. Liu Ning (China) and Ms. Yueyu Zou (China)(b,c), COP 15 host representatives; Ambassador Mohamed Gad (Egypt), Mr. Ayman Amin (Egypt); Ambassador Spencer Thomas (Grenada), Chair of informal budget committee

3. The Secretariat was represented by: Ms. Elizabeth Maruma-Mrema, Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director of Implementation Support

Division; Mr. Alexander Shestakov, Director, Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Mr. Wataru Suzuki, Global Coordinator of the Japan Biodiversity Fund; Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety Protocol Unit; Mr. Ide Ahmed, Finance Officer; Mr. John Scott, Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Markus Lehmann, Senior Programme Officer and Ms. Catalina Santamaria, Senior Programme Officer.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

4. The teleconference was opened on 5 November 2020 at 6:15am Montreal time, by H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, President of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The President began by offering a warm welcome to the Bureau members. She noted the great responsibility they had in delivering a realistic and implementable roadmap for post-2020, especially amid the critical time the world was going through and acknowledged that this was a large task for the Bureau.
5. Brief opening remarks were also made at the resumed sessions on 9 and 12 November.
6. The President invited the Executive Secretary to provide brief opening remarks. The Executive Secretary thanked the Bureau members for their hard work in helping the Secretariat and the Parties propel the issues and keeping momentum of the process. She expressed hope that in this challenging period where the importance of biodiversity has been underlined and emphasized frequently, the Parties through the Bureau, will be able to identify ways to keep the momentum and agenda alive while adhering to the mandate given by COP 14. She noted time was not in favour of the process despite the delays and postponing of the meetings.

ITEM 2. THE AGENDA

7. The President introduced the provisional agenda which was then adopted.

ITEM 3. UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR MEETINGS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES

8. The President introduced the agenda item by noting that it was important everyone was on the same page, feeling confident and comfortable with the process and it was their responsibility to ensure transparency as the process moved forward.
9. The Chair of SBI provided a brief update on the regional briefings held on the preparations for SBSTTA-24 and SBI-3, noting they had been very useful. They offered an opportunity to listen to concerns, answer questions and clarify some points. She informed the Bureau that an important concern raised related to poor internet connectivity, but also strong views were expressed on the need to proceed and start discussions on documents in order to ensure momentum. She noted that with the ambitious work plan preparing for the post-2020 and the essential elements that SBBSTTA and SBI represented, she hoped a way forward could be found. She thanked the Bureau members for their support in organizing the briefings.
10. At the invitation of the President for ideas and proposals, members of the Bureau reiterated the paramount importance of demonstrating commitment to the process and of moving ahead and implementing the decisions from COP 14. They emphasized the need to have a constructive, cost efficient process with good outcomes and that was transparent. Due to the uncertainty posed by the pandemic, members agreed that a step wise approach was optimal.
11. A number of Bureau members noted that the plan of holding a first reading with no negotiations was a good one. Some raised concerns regarding holding additional informal meetings as they believed they would not bring the process forward and may not be an efficient use of resources. However, other members of the Bureau also reiterated the concerns of some regions which prevented some countries from feeling comfortable with holding formal meetings online.
12. After hearing the different views from the floor, the President made a proposal (which was subsequently circulated to Bureau members in writing on 9 November) along the following lines:

- i.) Hold a 2-day informal virtual meeting this year (2020) on the theme of Biodiversity, One Health and the response to COVID-19 to get more experience in the use of the virtual platform and to test the procedures of the meetings held virtually;
- ii.) Informal virtual session of SBSTTA and SBI would be convened in January and February 2021 to consider issues on the agendas of the meetings, to exchange views, to provide momentum to the process and to facilitate the subsequent formal meetings of the two bodies.
- iii.) Taking a step wise approach, after the informal virtual meeting above mentioned, the Bureau would need to convene and assess the situation in light of the experience and results of the informal virtual meetings, with the aim of taking a decision on whether the formal meeting can be held, physically or virtually or in a hybrid format, with a view of holding formal meetings of SBSTA and SBI around March 2021, as conditions allow.
- iv.) The SBSTTA and SBI Chairs together with the Secretariat, would further develop the agenda and organization of work for these meetings, as well as the exact schedule of the meetings for consideration by the respective bureau of COP and SBSTTA.

13. In order to allow the Bureau members to consult with their regions on this proposal, the President indicated they would reconvene on Monday 9 November 2020 in order to continue discussions and finalize a decision.

14. The meeting reconvened on 9 November 2020 at 8:25 a.m. EST to further consider this item. The President began by offering a brief summary of the discussion held in the previous meeting and indicated the objective of this meeting was to hear feedback on the proposal sent to the Bureau regarding the meetings for SBSTTA and SBI.

15. The Chair of SBI, speaking after consulting the Chair of SBSTTA, indicated that they would be happy to work according to the proposed schedule and to work with the Secretariat to further develop the agenda and organization of work for the meetings, as well as the exact dates for the meetings for further consideration for the COP and SBSTTA Bureau at a later meetings. She also noted that they would find ways in which the discussions during the informal meetings can be captured as part of a step wise approach to move forward on the agenda.

16. Members of the Bureau thanked the President for the efforts to find a compromise and a way forward. Members also requested more clarity on the mandate, scope and outcomes of the informal meetings, as well as more logistical information such as duration, modalities, etc.

17. Some members of the Bureau expressed disappointment on behalf of their region regarding the lack of progress, emphasizing their commitment to a process that was inclusive and transparent, and noting that the previous proposal of only holding a first reading had been acceptable to them and they considered it to be a good compromise forward. Highlighting the need to clarify that the informal meetings should have a tangible outcome and represent an effort towards progress in the work, they suggested amending the third paragraph of the President's proposal to state that after the informal meetings, the Bureau would take a decision on whether the formal sessions to be held, in or around March 2021, would be held physically or virtually or in hybrid format.

18. Other members of the Bureau indicated they needed some time to consult with their regions on the latest amendments to the proposal, highlighting that it would be more realistic to hold the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies in May or June 2021. They proposed to replace "March 2021" to "the first half of 2021".

19. The President decided to not make any amendments to her proposal and to reconvene the Bureau meeting on 12 November 2020 in order to allow members to consult with their regions. She invited the Bureau to submit the expressed comments in writing, so they could be discussed at the next meeting.

20. The following suggestions to amend the proposal, or clarifications to suggestions made during the meeting on November 9th, were submitted in writing by members of the Bureau:

To add to point (ii): "The chairs of the respective subsidiary bodies will prepare a meeting report that will be made available to all 2 weeks after the end of the meeting"

(iii.) Taking a step wise approach, after the informal virtual meeting above mentioned, the Bureau will need to convene and assess the situation in light of the experience and results of the informal virtual meeting, with the aim of taking a decision on whether the formal sessions to be held, in or around March 2021, will be held physically or virtually or in hybrid format.”

21. The meeting reconvened on 12 November 2020 at 8:00 a.m. EST to further consider this item.

After welcoming back the participants, the President stressed the importance of making progress in this meeting to avoid holding back other work. She made a point of clarity on her proposal, indicating that it was formulated on the basis of finding a middle ground for all and to move forward with the process without any delays, while building trust and confidence with the Parties who have concerns. She noted the key point was to hold the informal meetings, and assess the overall experience with Parties, and then to take it one step at a time. She requested the Bureau to consider and accept her proposal as one package, not only certain items. She then opened the floor for comments.

22. A number of members of the Bureau expressed general agreement with the President’s proposal while one indicated that some changes to the text would be needed for them to be able to fully support the proposal.

23. A bureau member representing one region stressed the following points:

Effective and inclusive participation of all Parties is essential for achieving a good outcome; and therefore

The Secretariat would be requested to conduct a daily assessment and review of participants’ experiences during the informal virtual meetings in January and February 2021, in consultation with the Parties, and take measures to address any problems encountered. The outcomes of these assessments and adjustments will inform the African position on whether it could agree to hold a formal virtual meeting in March 2021, or whether a physical or hybrid format will need to be utilised.

24. A bureau member representing another region requested that more specific details on item three of the proposal be included as follows:

With Respect to Paragraphs (i) and (ii) GRULAC agrees to have both informal meetings

With respect to Paragraphs (iii) the GRULAC suggests the following clarifications:

1) In March, face to face meeting of Subsidiary Bodies will be held.

2) If that is not possible, SBSTTA and SBI will be open only for a first reading of pre-session documents in March and adjourned until May or June, when a face to face meeting will be held to negotiate in-session documents.

3) If face to face meetings cannot be held in May or June, then a new and inclusive decision will have to be made regarding possibilities to move forward with virtual, physical or hybrid meetings. All decisions on whether formal virtual meetings are held are to be inclusive and all Parties should be consulted via regional consultations.

During this time when physical meetings are not possible, GRULAC requests the SCBD:

1) To provide a virtual space for regional consultations

2) To provide a virtual space for bilateral meetings

3) To conduct a survey regarding technical possibilities of Parties to participate in virtual meetings. The results of this survey will be made publicly available and used to provide solutions for a full and effective participation of all Parties in all the virtual meetings that are agreed.

25. In response to the comments and questions made by the Bureau, the President first noted that they would proceed with the daily assessments during the informal meetings, as this would help them evaluate and decide on how to proceed after. Regarding the two requests to modify item three, the President noted that she preferred to not make any changes to her proposal in order to strike a balance between the two

views on the matter. She highlighted that her proposal is one package with a stepwise approach that covers both concerns: to proceed with informal meetings of SBSTTA and SBI, and after they take place and an assessment of the experience is available, the Bureau would convene to study and decide whether it is possible to hold physical, virtual or hybrid meetings in March, taking into account the global situation as well.

26. The President informed the Bureau she would issue a note from the Presidency communicating the way forward to Parties.

ITEM 4. UPDATE ON THE INFORMAL BUDGET GROUP AND FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

27. At the session on 5 November, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, representative of the COP President, chaired this agenda item. He invited Ambassador Spencer Thomas, Chair of the informal budget group, to provide the Bureau with a brief update on the discussions in the group.

28. Ambassador Thomas reported to the Bureau that the group had met on four occasions with good representation from all regions. He noted that although there was general consensus on the majority of issues and good consensus on the draft decisions, there were two outstanding issues that prevented the group from finalizing their work: the upgrade of the D1 to D2 and the decision on the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies. He emphasized that the group needed to agree on the whole package of issues and could not move forward until these were resolved. He then asked for the Bureau's guidance on these two matters.

29. At the Chair's invitation for comments, members of the Bureau first noted that considering the ExCOP was taking place in a couple of weeks, it was urgent to address the two outstanding issues. For the issue on the D1, a possible solution would be to agree on the staffing table as is and include a clause stating that the upgrade would be addressed at a later stage. As for the issue on the meetings of the Subsidiary bodies, it was noted that in the absence of a final decision, the conservative costing the Secretariat had originally provided and which took into account a 2-day informal session, as well as virtual meetings for the first readings of agenda items for SBSTTA and SBI (costed at 2 hours X 6 days each), could be put forward to the budget group. It was also noted that because this was an interim budget, adjustments could be made at a later stage during COP 15. The Secretariat was requested to circulate \ the original costing for the meetings (item I).

30. At the request of the COP Presidency, the Chair of the informal budget group agreed to convene further discussions with the group to finalize a decision. The Bureau members agreed to consult and encourage their regions on this matter with a view to ensure find consensus.

31. The Chair invited the Executive Secretary to provide a brief update on the status of nominations and credentials for the ExCOP. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the Secretariat had received 78 nominations and 51 credentials from Parties. She requested support from the Bureau in reaching out to their regions to remind them of the need to submit nominations and credentials.

32. The Bureau agreed to reach out to the regions to remind them of the need to submit their nominations and credentials.

33. **When the Bureau reconvened on 9 November 2020**, it decided to proceed with the two outstanding issues as follows:

(a) For the D1 to D2 upgrade, the staffing table would remain the same and a clause would be included stating the upgrade will be addressed at COP 15.

(b) The original cost estimated by the Secretariat that took into account a 2-day informal session, as well as meetings for the first readings of agenda items for SBSTTA and SBI (costed at 2 hours X 6 days each), could be put forward with an acknowledgment that adjustments could be made at a later stage.

34. The COP President requested Ambassador Thomas to convene a meeting of the informal budget group as soon as possible in order to finalize the budget preparations.

35. The Executive Secretary reminded the participants once again on the urgency to receive nominations and credentials, as there were 47 nominations missing in order to reach quorum.

36. **On the meeting of 12 November 2020**, Ambassador Thomas informed the Bureau that the informal budget group had arrived at a consensus and were able to conclude their work, agreeing on the decisions for the Convention and its Protocols on this matter.

37. The President and Executive Secretary thanked Ambassador Thomas for his work and leadership with the informal budget group.

38. The Executive Secretary once again reported to the Bureau that 21 nominations from Parties were missing to reach a quorum for the ExCOP, and 73 credentials had already been received. She asked the Bureau for their continued support on this matter.

39. After no objection from the Bureau, Ms. Helena Brown from Antigua and Barbuda was appointed to represent the Bureau to examine credentials for the ExCOP.

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

40. Under this agenda item, a member of the Bureau emphasized the need to accurately reflect the discussions in the minutes, noting that the minutes of the 9th teleconference of the Bureau only partially took into consideration comments submitted by a Bureau member.

ITEM 8. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

41. The President thanked the participants for the valuable discussions and closed the meeting on 5 November 2020 at 8:20 a.m; on 9 November at 9:10 a.m; and on 12 November at 9:04 a.m.