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Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment  
Bureau meeting  
Monday, 12 January 2026  
15:00- 17:00 EAT  
Online

## **SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS INC BUREAU MEETING 12 JANUARY 2026**

Note by the Secretariat

1. The meeting was attended by the following members:  
African States: Mr. Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal);  
Asia-Pacific States: Mr. Hiroshi Ono (Japan); Mr. Mohammed Albarrak (Saudi Arabia);  
Eastern European States: Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia); Ms. Irma Gurguliani (Georgia);  
Latin American and Caribbean States: Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez (Peru);  
Small Island Developing States: Ms. Asha Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda);  
Western European and Other States: Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz (Sweden); Ms. Larke Williams (United States of America).
2. The meeting was presided over by Vice-Chair Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz, as agreed by the Bureau during its meeting held on 30 October 2025.
3. As also agreed by the Bureau during its meeting held on 30 October, the meeting was attended by Mr. Julio Cordano (Chile) in an observer capacity as the nominee of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) for the vacant position for the region.
4. The Secretariat was represented by the Executive Secretary of the INC, Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp.
5. The Vice-Chair Presiding opened the meeting at 15:01 EAT, outlining the purpose of the meeting as focusing on the next steps toward INC-5.3, including by reflecting on the draft scenario note posted to the INC website and preparing for the upcoming webinars for Members and observers. She also emphasized the importance of hearing progress from the regional groups on moving toward the possibility of elections by acclamation.
6. The Executive Secretary wished the Bureau members a happy new year and emphasized that it was essential to sustain and nurture the renewed sense of momentum seen at the end of 2025. She noted the agenda and annotated agenda for INC-5.3 have been made available on the INC-5.3 webpage in all six official UN languages on 26 December 2025 and published six weeks ahead of the session. She then noted that the draft scenario note for INC-5.3 was circulated to Members and posted to the INC-5.3 website ahead of the Members' webinar to be held on 15

January 2026. She expressed appreciation to the Bureau members for their support throughout 2025 and looked forward to the next steps for 2026.

7. Before outlining the proposed agenda, the Vice-Chair Presiding thanked the Secretariat for its hard work, including over the holiday season, and acknowledged that, despite a significant reduction in staff, the Secretariat had undertaken all preparations for INC-5.3 and prepared all documents as requested by the Bureau. She thanked the Secretariat for its continued efforts in assisting in preparations for elections. She then outlined the proposed agenda, which was adopted with the addition of one point by a Bureau member from the Asia-Pacific States Group (APG) who requested to convey a message from a regional group member under 'Other matters'.
8. Under agenda item 2 on 'Adoption of report', the Bureau considered for adoption the draft report of the 17 December 2025 meeting of the Bureau, as shared with the Bureau and posted on the INC website after taking into account comments received in writing. The report was adopted without further comment.
9. Under the agenda item 3 sub-item on 'Scenario note for INC-5.3', the Vice-Chair Presiding noted that the draft scenario note, originally circulated as an advance draft to the Bureau on 10 December, had taken into account the views of the regional groups, as conveyed through the Bureau, before being posted on the INC website on 8 January 2026. She provided a summary of the revisions requested by the Bureau at its meeting on 17 December in advance of posting online and reminded the Bureau that the draft scenario note could be further adjusted following the Members' webinar if necessary. Following feedback from the Members' webinar on 15 January, the scenario note will be translated into all six official UN languages. There were no further comments from the Bureau on the draft scenario note as posted on the INC website. The Vice-Chair Presiding expressed hope that this same level of support for the draft scenario note would be reflected at the Members' webinar on 15 January.
10. The Vice-Chair Presiding then referred to a communication sent to the Bureau in advance of the meeting outlining two key topics for discussion that require resolution in advance of INC-5.3: the sequencing of elections at INC-5.3 in relation to the order of elections of the Chair and elections of any Vice-Chairs; and the point at which a standing Bureau member must resign if a Chair that is not currently a Vice-Chair is elected from a regional group that already has full representation on the Bureau.
11. On the first topic, the Vice-Chair Presiding acknowledged that different views have been expressed regarding the order of elections, noting the strong preference from at least one regional group to hold elections for Vice-Chairs first, followed by elections for Chair. She also noted a strong preference from another regional group to hold elections for Chair first, with other Bureau members conveying flexibility on this topic from their constituencies. She emphasized that all current candidates for Chair should remain eligible for the role regardless of the order of the election and that, if a candidate is from a regional group with full representation on the Bureau, they cannot be formally elected until an existing Bureau member from that regional group resigns. Noting the need to identify a clear pathway forward, she then proposed to hold elections for the Chair before elections for other vacant Bureau positions, based on past legal advice and UN practice, while requesting feedback from the Bureau.
12. The Bureau emphasized its support and gratitude for the Secretariat, and in particular the level of clarity in documents produced; the inclusion of feedback from regional groups; and the timeliness of documents and other efforts of the Secretariat toward preparing for elections at INC-5.3.

13. Bureau members continued to express differing regional views on the order of elections, namely whether the Chair or other vacant Bureau positions would be elected first, and also whether the Chair could be nominated from among all Members of the Committee or only from among the elected Vice-Chairs. One Bureau member reiterated the preference of their regional group that the election of the Chair should precede the election of the Vice-Chairs, while another expressed the view that the election of the Vice-Chairs should take place prior to the election of the Chair. Other Bureau members indicated flexibility around the ordering of elections, noting the need to proceed in a manner that ensures smooth elections at INC-5.3 in a predictable and transparent manner. Bureau members further emphasized the importance that elections be held in a manner that would not result in a situation where any regional group has, at any given time, more Bureau members than allocated in Rule 9(2) of the draft rules of procedure provisionally applied to the work of the INC.
14. In response to the question regarding the point at which a Vice-Chair would be required to resign should a Chair be elected from a regional group that already has full representation on the Bureau, the Bureau members representing the APG stated that, should its regional candidate for Chair be elected, one of the two current Vice-Chairs for the regional group would resign from their role. The Vice-Chair Presiding requested that, in the interest of clarity and transparency, they indicate before INC-5.3 which Vice-Chair would resign if the candidate from the region is elected as Chair.
15. On request of the Vice-Chair Presiding, the Principal Legal Advisor outlined the process for elections, including the point at which a Vice-Chair must resign in the event a Chair is elected from a regional group already fully represented on the Bureau:
  - i. On commencement of the elections process, the Presiding Officer will read out the rules and procedures applicable to the conduct of the specific election to be carried out, gaveling this step before proceeding to the next;
  - ii. The election is then held, including by distributing ballots; collecting the completed ballots; and tallying the ballots. Tellers from regional groups not participating in that election will be identified to tally the ballots. The Tellers would also certify the result following the tally of votes;
  - iii. The result is read out to the Committee by the Presiding Officer; and
  - iv. The result is gavelled, after which the successful candidate is considered elected through decision of the Committee.
16. If an additional round of elections is necessary, such as in the event of a tie or no candidate receiving the required majority<sup>1</sup> of votes, this would be announced under the third step of the process. If the successful candidate is from a regional group already fully represented on the Bureau, and is not already a Bureau member, an existing Bureau member from that region would be required to resign at the third step before the results are finalized in the fourth step in order to maintain equitable geographical representation under Rule 9(2).
17. The Vice-Chair Presiding emphasized that all of the current candidates for Chair are highly capable and well-qualified for the role. It was requested that this information also be conveyed during the Members' webinar on 15 January.
18. One Bureau member recalled that the Bureau had discussed at its meeting on 16 October 2025 that prospective candidates for Chair should be nominated by 31 October 2025 and emphasised the importance of ensuring certainty and avoiding surprises in the process.
19. That Bureau member added that it was the regional group's interpretation of Rule 9 that the Chair must be elected from among the Bureau. The Vice-Chair Presiding noted that this

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<sup>1</sup> The majority required is a majority of Members present and voting.

recommended timeline for nominations as discussed in the Bureau was to ensure transparency and predictability for the Members of the Committee and to assist in facilitating the ability of Members to make an informed decision on the next Chair of the INC. She acknowledged that, under the draft rules of procedure, there is no timeline for additional candidates to be put forward for any position, except that the candidacy must be announced before the election commenced for that position. She reiterated that the current candidates for Chair are all highly qualified for the role.

20. One Bureau member requested that specific reference to plenary seating space for Members and observers at INC-5.3 also be included in the scenario note before its finalization, in addition to this information being already included in the Information Note to Participants on the INC website.<sup>2</sup>
21. Under the agenda item 3 sub-item on ‘Preparations for webinars in advance of INC-5.3’, the Vice-Chair Presiding outlined the objective of the webinars as opportunities to provide clarification to Members of the Committee and observers on the logistical arrangements and key documents developed for INC-5.3. She also noted that she would raise the matters of sequencing of elections and timing of resignation of a Vice-Chair from the Bureau for a fully represented regional group in the event a Chair is elected from that regional group and is not already on the Bureau. It was also requested that the possibility for additional candidates be raised at the Members’ webinar.
22. The Executive Secretary noted that the Members’ webinar, to be held 15 January, would begin with an introduction by the Vice-Chair Presiding on the draft scenario note for INC-5.3, to be followed by a presentation by the Secretariat on its ‘note on the election of officers’ as referenced in the draft scenario note. Following closure of the registration deadline of 9 January 2026, a total of 440 delegates from 157 Members of the Committee have registered to attend, with 78 Members designated as a speaker for the webinar. She reminded Bureau members that an email notification with important technical guidance on webinar participation, including registration and speaking roles, was circulated by the Secretariat on 5 January 2026.
23. The Executive Secretary then outlined the purpose of the observers’ webinar, to be held 22 January, as an opportunity to share information and provide an update on the logistical preparations of INC-5.3. She confirmed that the webinar would provide an opportunity for observers to ask questions on processes related to INC-5.3.
24. Under agenda item 3 sub-item on ‘Update on logistical arrangements’, the Executive Secretary provided an update on logistical arrangements for INC-5.3 including an update on the latest registration numbers. She recalled that delegations planning to attend INC-5.3 are requested to submit a single note verbale listing the full composition of their national delegation. As in previous sessions, the presentation of credentials is not required. On travel support, she noted that no further applications could be accepted at this stage. Regarding updates on the venue for INC-5.3, she reiterated that, owing to logistical and financial arrangements, no delegation rooms, bilateral meeting rooms or rooms allocated for observers and members of the media would be available, with only plenary, regional groups’ consultation and overflow rooms to be provided. On documents for INC-5.3, she reminded the Bureau that the agenda and annotated agenda for INC-5.3 had been published in all six official UN languages on the INC-5.3 website, and that the draft scenario note by the Vice-Chair Presiding was made available on the website.
25. Under agenda item 3 sub-item on ‘Regional updates on preparations for elections’ the Vice-Chair Presiding noted the strong preference conveyed by Bureau members for the possibility of electing a new Chair by acclamation at INC-5.3. She encouraged candidates for Chair to continue engaging in consultations amongst themselves towards this shared objective,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/session-5.3/information-note>

reiterating her availability to facilitate such efforts. She noted the importance of preparing for the possibility of election by secret ballot in the event acclamation is not possible and strongly emphasized that Members must leave Geneva with a new Chair of the INC elected.

26. Some Bureau members informed the Bureau that their constituencies have already held in-person or virtual meetings with candidates for Chair, or are planning to hold such meetings in advance of INC-5.3 in order to provide a forum for the candidates for Chair to address the regional groups.
27. The Vice-Chair Presiding recalled her offer from the 17 December 2025 Bureau meeting to convene and facilitate a virtual meeting between all candidates for Chair if requested and found useful by all candidates, with the objective of supporting discussions toward electing a single candidate by acclamation. She emphasized that such a meeting would only be convened if requested by all candidates for Chair. She further proposed that, in the interest of transparency, she be joined at any such meeting by Ms. Asha Challenger, Bureau member for small island developing States, to assist as necessary. Two candidates for Chair communicated their willingness to attend such a meeting.
28. Under the agenda item 4 on 'Other matters', a Bureau member from the APG shared an update on behalf of the government of Japan, informing that Japan will convene an informal small group meeting in Tokyo on 1-3 March 2026, with the objective of facilitating focused discussions on core elements where divergent views remain in order to identify possible landing zones in advance of a future negotiation session. The informal meeting was presented as a continuation of the informal small group meeting held during INC-5.2 and convened by the former Chair of the Committee and co-facilitated by representatives of Japan and Chile. The Bureau member indicated that further information would be circulated to the Bureau after the meeting.
29. A Bureau member welcomed the proposal by Japan but raised concerns regarding the lack of transparency and equity of participation in the small group meetings held during INC-5.2. It was proposed that transparency be increased by ensuring the Bureau is involved in the organization or preparation of such meetings if those meetings are characterized as formal meetings, but that the Bureau may not need to be involved if they are informal meetings. The Vice-Chair Presiding acknowledged comments made by the Bureau member, noting further consideration of this matter would be within the purview of the new Chair of the Committee.
30. Before closing the agenda item, the Vice-Chair Presiding proposed that the next meeting be held on 20 January 2026. She requested Bureau members to consider a streamlined agenda for the next Bureau meeting, with the intent to discuss reflections from the Members' webinar and to the order of elections at INC-5.3 with a view to ensuring a common understanding among the Bureau.
31. In her closing remarks, the Vice-Chair Presiding thanked the Bureau members for their contributions and ongoing support in advancing preparations for INC-5.3 and the broader process.
32. Before closing the meeting, the Executive Secretary also provided closing remarks echoing the Vice-Chair Presiding's appreciation of Bureau members' ongoing commitment to the process. She expressed further appreciation to the Vice-Chair Presiding for her dedication to the process and ongoing guidance.
33. The meeting closed at 16:46 EAT.