



REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (INC)

Participants Mr. Mohammed Khashashneh (Jordan, for Asia Pacific), Mr. Xia Yingxian (China, for Asia Pacific) Mr. David Kapindula (Zambia, for Africa), Mr. Oumar Cisse (Mali, for Africa), Mr. Alojz Grabner (Slovenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Mr. Vladimir Lenev (Russian Federation, for Central and Eastern Europe) Ms. Nina Cromnier (Sweden, for the Western European and Others Group), Ms. Sezaneh Seymour (United States of America, for the Western European and Others Group), Mr. Fernando Lugris (Uruguay, for Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Interim secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

A. Opening of the Bureau meeting

1. The meeting of the Bureau opened at 9.30 a.m. with welcoming remarks from the Mr. Nuritdin Ivamov, Director, Department for International Cooperation, Ministry of the Environment of the Russian Federation. He noted the hard work in the negotiations to agree the text for the Convention, and highlighted the active engagement of his country from the beginning of the process. In welcoming the Bureau members to Moscow, he hoped that the work would continue well, as there was still much to be done. The Russian Federation had signed the Convention in September 2014 and is preparing for ratification, however the process required significant talks with a range of stakeholders, and significant economic and social interactions would be needed for the implementation. The Russian Federation is working within a whole of government structure towards institutionalising the Minamata convention, and also participates actively in international forums aiming at minimising or eliminating mercury use and emissions. The challenges faced by many communities, particularly those relying on artisanal and small-scale gold mining, as well as primary mercury mining, are significant, and it is his hoped that the Minamata Convention will improve the environment for the whole world.

2. The Chair indicated that it was a pleasure to meet in Moscow. He noted the active role of the Russian Federation throughout the negotiations, in particular through the participation of Mr. Lenev as a key member of the INC Bureau. He welcomed the progress being made by the Russian Federation, while noting the need for ongoing work. He indicated that he would appreciate being informed of the progress towards implementation and ratification of the Convention.

3. Mr. Lenev also welcomed the INC Bureau members to Moscow. He recognized the importance of the Bureau meeting, and wished all successful discussions.

4. The Chair then further highlighted the importance of the Bureau meeting, particularly given the efforts needed in preparation for the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC7), being the final session before the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP1). He indicated there was a need for strategic, policy and logistical planning on how to move forward to make the required progress to be fully ready for a successful COP1.

B Adoption of the provisional agenda

5. The provisional agenda was adopted unchanged.

C Purpose of the meeting

6. The chair introduced the purpose of the Bureau meeting, indicating that he saw it as an opportunity to develop a very good understanding of progress to date, particularly in relation to implementation and ratification of the Minamata Convention, as the meeting allowed all Bureau members to present an update on activities and progress in their respective region. A major objective of the Bureau meeting is to continue planning for the INC7, consider the issues to be handled, as well as to have some strategic and policy discussions and develop logistical plans.

D Update on progress towards ratification and early implementation, along with discussions of possible activities which could be undertaken to further support ratification and early implementation

7. A tour de table of the Bureau members commenced with Mr. Lenev, who indicated that while he had little definitive data, there were indications that a number of countries in the CEE and Central Asian region, such as Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, were making good progress towards ratification. The two workshops supporting ratification and implementation organized by the interim secretariat in early 2015, in Minsk (Belarus) and Bratislava (Slovakia) had been very successful and had provided excellent opportunities to discuss activities and challenges. Some discussion of a potential regional project had occurred, however it was not clear what the current status is. The participation of the Central Asian countries was welcomed, and they made very positive contributions to the discussion. Their continued participation in future meetings would be appreciated, particularly as this would also assist them, given the language challenges they face within the Asia Pacific region. Mr. Grabner indicated that from the EU part of the Central and Eastern Europe region, a number of countries are ready to ratify, however have to wait for the ratification by the EU

8. Ms. Cromnier pointed out that within the EU, a proposal would be ready to be presented in the second half of 2015, after which it would come forward to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. There were expectations that ratification could occur late in 2016. Ms. Seymour indicated that a number of countries within the JUSSCANNZ regions were making progress towards ratification.

9. Mr. Kapindula indicated that there was a very positive attitude within the African region, with a number of projects underway. The workshops on the Minamata Convention held during 2014 and early 2015 were very positive, and resulted in good progress. He highlighted the need for a regional meeting to prepare for INC7. Mr. Cisse indicated that Mali had adopted the Convention at a ministerial level, and hoped to ratify it at the national level shortly. He noted the importance of involving regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and SADC in work conducted within the region, and further highlighted that a number of GEF projects for enabling activities which have been approved have not yet commenced.

10. Mr. Xia indicated that a number of countries within the Asia Pacific region are making very good progress. In Japan, the ratification of the Minamata Convention has been endorsed by parliament, there remains further administrative procedures to be cleared for concluding the ratification process. Other countries are sending their ratification documents to parliament; however their processes may take a few more months. In China, the Convention has been sent to congress for ratification. It is hoped that many more countries will ratify during 2015. With regard to the ad hoc expert group on financing established at INC to conduct intersessional work, the region hopes to send forward the names as soon as possible. It was noted that the designated countries for the Asia Pacific region had already been provided to the interim secretariat. Mr. Khashashneh indicated that Jordan was very close to ratification, with the submission made to cabinet. There have been several regional workshops, and a number of other countries are also pushing towards ratification. He hoped that, despite the challenges faced within the subregion, there will be a significant number of ratifications.

11. The Chair indicated that there are a number of countries within the GRULAC region who have finished the internal processes and are waiting to deposit their instruments of ratification. The subregional and regional workshops which have been held have been extremely useful, but there is a need to organize further awareness raising processes to continue good progress.

12. The representative of the interim secretariat indicated that they had been informed that Panama, Chad and Mongolia had all completed internal processes, but had not yet deposited their instruments of ratification. There were a number of projects being undertaken with the financial support of China to support ratification in countries in Asia Pacific and in Africa, with more planned for Central Asia. The interim secretariat has received a number of letters from non-signatory countries indicating they are taking meaningful steps towards becoming a Party and are therefore eligible for financial support through the GEF for enabling activities. There are plans for a high-level event in the margins of the General Assembly on 24 September 2015, to be co-hosted by the governments of the United States, Uruguay, Japan and Switzerland, which will provide an opportunity for countries in a position to do so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession. There are still expectations that 50 Parties by mid-2016 is possible.

13. The Chair indicated that the progress was encouraging; however there was a need to keep the enthusiasm and keep moving forward. Working with regional and other organizations is key to building and maintaining political awareness. In that context, the importance of ceremonial and high level events which can serve to publicise the convention should be recognized.

E Consideration of activities (past and future) within chemicals and waste, with a reflection on their possible impacts on the future work under the Minamata Convention

14. The Chair indicated that a number of key international events and activities had been underway since INC6, and he welcomed the opportunity for a discussion of how these may impact the future work of the Minamata Convention. He recognized the need for the future work of the Convention to be centred in key international discussions, such as those with climate change.

15. Mr. Khashashneh indicated that, in his view, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions should be seen as sister conventions, and there should be a special consideration for Minamata. There are clear links between the conventions, such as guidelines on mercury waste and GEF issues, and efforts should be made to look for integrated implementation.

16. Ms. Seymour commented that it is key to keep up-to-date with all relevant international forums, including but not only the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, as decisions taken in a number of forums may be complementary to the Minamata Convention. She also indicated that there is a great deal of work to be done in the Minamata Convention context and the focus must be on advancing the immediate needs of the Convention. To ensure sufficient information is available to all countries, she proposed that the interim secretariat develop a document compiling all relevant international activities, events and decisions and present it as an information document for INC7. The document should include relevant BRS developments and decisions, as well as information from other relevant conventions and IOMC organizations. The Chair welcomed this proposal, and the interim secretariat indicated that the preparation of such a document was feasible.

17. Mr. Xia noted the need for a wide line of cooperation, including close work with the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. The need to identify new areas of partnership, possibly with restructuring, was ongoing. Providing summary information from meetings as well as consolidated information would be useful, and there should be possibility for future cooperation. It was also essential to consider outsourcing expertise for specific issues. The Chair noted two major mechanisms for outreach and information sharing, including the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, and the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant. One Bureau member noted the potential opportunity to collaborate with the

ICMGP to make available scientific data and technical demonstrations on the margins of the INC or future COPs.”

18. Ms. Cromnier stated that it was important to keep a holistic perspective on the international work, and consider the development of the chemicals and waste cluster as a whole. Consideration should be given to where we can make the biggest contribution. She noted that not all activities will be equally beneficial for all parts of the cluster, however the benefits of the cluster as a whole should be considered. The Chair noted the need to keep abreast of all discussions, and to keep a clear view of progress in overall development agenda discussions. He reminded the Bureau that many of these issues are considered by the same group of people, and it was key to avoid unnecessary repetitions and overloading of people handling a large number of issues.

19. The Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions provided (by Skype) a briefing on the outcomes of the BRS Conferences of the Parties held in May 2015. He presented relevant decisions taken at the Conferences, noting that cooperation was a theme in a number of these decisions. He indicated that there had been good cooperation with the Chemicals Branch of UNEP DTIE, particularly through the work of a joint BRS/Chemicals Branch taskforce over the past year, and looked to strengthen this cooperation to specifically address a number of the decisions which had been taken at the BRS Conferences of the Parties. He looked forward to further strengthening cooperation, with further work on the sound management of chemicals and opportunities for synergies and joint implementation of certain activities.

20. In relation to the technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of wastes consisting of elemental mercury and wastes containing or contaminated with mercury adopted at the Basel COP, the Executive Secretary looked forward to a side event at INC7. The implementation of the guidelines was recognized as a challenge, and the role of the regional centres was key. There had been extensive discussions on the role of the regional centres and on how to increase their relevance, recognising there was a complex network of regional centres, some of which with specialist roles. He would appreciate further views on this, particularly through a specialist task force which could be set up with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the BRS secretariat. He also indicated that the BRS secretariat was happy to provide input, support and feedback for INC7.

21. At the GEF Council held in June 2015, the Executive Secretary has presented a summary of the outcomes of the COPs, and looked at the potential for further cooperation with the GEF; including the possibility of crosscutting work particularly, for example, with the international waters area. There were plans to organize a joint retreat for BRS/Minamata to discuss issues with the GEF.

22. Following the report from the Executive Secretary, concerns were raised by the Bureau members that any cooperative structure should be efficient and effective, and there should not be a large institutional structure established. There was a need for the regional centres to focus on the work for which they were created, and their activities should be evaluated before adding new tasks. The need for both national and international cooperation was highlighted, however, it was noted that national cooperation required institutional strengthening, which would benefit from progress with the Special Programme¹. Concerns were raised by Mr. Cisse that we should not rush into synergies prior to entry into force of the Minamata Convention, and that care needed to be taken. Some Bureau members also raised concerns about the effectiveness of adding a Conference of the Parties for the Minamata Convention to the current COPs of the BRS, particularly as the meeting duration was already long.

23. The Chair indicated that the focus of the Bureau, and of the INC process, was to deal with mercury issues, and that the focus should be on what Minamata needs. He welcomed the opportunity to use the BRS regional centres where they are available. In considering the

¹ Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

GEF, he noted that there were some common areas, however other areas were specific to each Convention, and this should be taken into account.

24. The interim secretariat then provided an update on the operationalization of the Special Programme. At this stage, following a number of pledges, there are approximately 12 million USD available, noting that the EU has made a contribution of around 11 million Euros, and Sweden has contributed around 180,000 USD. A number of other governments have also indicated upcoming support. A Programme Officer to manage the programme hosted with the Chemicals and Wastes Branch of UNEP has been recruited, and is expected to be on board in August 2015. The Executive Board is in the process of being established, with two representatives per region. It is hoped that the membership of the Executive Board will be announced within two weeks, and the first meeting will be held before the end of August. The meeting will need to agree on the rules of procedures for the Executive Board and clarify the process to apply for support from the Special Program. The establishment of the trust fund is underway, and it is hoped that resources will be available for dissemination by early 2016.

25. In relation to activities with the GEF, the interim secretariat indicated that joint retreats with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention, the BRS and the GEF secretariats had already occurred, with more planned. Each retreat has had both joint and separate sections. In relation to the BRS/Chemicals Branch task force mentioned by the BRS Executive Secretary, this method of informally organizing discussion among the Secretariats had proved effective to clarify existing cooperative efforts and seek new opportunities.

F Update on activities undertaken since the Bureau teleconference

26. The interim secretariat provided an update of activities, informing the Bureau that a new head for the heavy metals team (which includes the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (GMP) and also the work on lead and cadmium) had been appointed, Mr. Eisaku Toda. There had been constructive work within the GMP, with a meeting of the partnership area co-leads held in June. Discussions on how to streamline the GMP work, and make it more effective and responsive had been positive. There was interest in reorganizing some of the partnership areas to better reflect current priorities. The next meeting of the GMP Advisory Group is planned to be held back to back with INC7.

27. On the Minamata Convention, twelve countries have deposited their instrument of ratification, acceptance, or accession with the depositary. Surveys undertaken in association with the regional and subregional workshops have highlighted good progress towards ratification. Currently, with the support of the Government of China, work is underway at the national level in a number of countries in Asia and Africa, with additional funding currently being programmed for Central Asia. As a further result of this support, awareness raising material has been developed which is available on the website. These include fact sheets which endeavour to provide more understandable documents without interpreting the text of the Convention.

28. Financial support for the interim secretariat and related Convention activities have been received from Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Finland, the Netherlands and the USA. The European Commission has also provided a substantial contribution primarily supporting the work on guidance required under Article 8 of the Convention. Funding from Germany will be used to support activities both under the Convention such as the intersessional meeting of the expert group on financing and also related work, including an update to the trade study conducted previously. The financial situation of the Convention is currently healthy with sufficient funds to undertake the required activities.

29. Preparatory work for INC7 is underway, with discussions with Jordan on logistic issues and also on the host country agreement. An initial list of documents for INC7 has been prepared for discussions. On the intersessional work on finance, consultations with the co-chairs have commenced to prepare for the meeting. In all of these activities, the interim secretariat has been cooperating with the secretariat of the BRS as appropriate.

G Preparations and expectations for INC7

(i) Progress of the BAT/BEP Expert Group

30. The co-chair of the group of technical experts, Mr. John Roberts, provided an update on the work of the group to date by Skype. He passed on apologies from his co-chair, Mr. Adel Shafei Osman, who is on mission for his government. Mr. Roberts indicated that the third meeting of the group was held in Pretoria, South Africa, in March 2015. Great progress was made and the co-chair extended his thanks to all the experts, particularly the chapter leads, and also the observers who have put a great deal of their time into inter-sessional work. He indicated that the draft guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP)² on mercury emissions was published on the Minamata Convention website on 18 June 2015, with an introductory chapter, and four chapters for the source categories set out in Annex D of the treaty³. He noted that the two source categories relating to coal in Annex D are dealt with in a single chapter in the draft guidance. Additionally, the chapter on waste incineration contains more contextual information than the other three chapters, in consideration of the likelihood that operators may have less expertise and understanding of technical issues.

31. He noted that the text is a co-chairs' draft, as there was not time for a full meeting of the experts to clear the document, but that the text has very broad support from the experts. It should be considered a work in progress. The text mainly covers the technical issues, while introductory text with background and context still to be finalized. He indicated that care needed to be taken in ensuring a balance between the text of the Convention, and producing a useful document. The focus of the guidance was on controlling mercury emissions from relevant sources, although it touches on cross-media effects and notes the importance of managing releases. Text on the steps to be taken in deciding BAT has been included after careful negotiation within the group of experts. Additionally, he indicated that there are some case studies, which it is suggested will not be part of the formal guidance adopted by the COP.

32. He informed the Bureau that the comment phase on this guidance closes at the end of July, a timetable which is necessary to ensure consideration of all comments by the fourth meeting of the group scheduled to be held in Stockholm in early September 2015 and the preparation of the guidance document in languages for INC7. A full report, including information on how comments were dealt with, will be provided to INC7. He requested the Bureau to encourage submission of comments from their region, to ensure a broad range of comments from across the spectrum of stakeholders, particularly from countries with more limited technical capacity which may focus on whether the guidance provides useful information.

33. The co-chair reminded the Bureau that the mandate of the group also included the preparation of three other guidance documents. The first is guidance on support for Parties in implementing the measures set out in paragraph 5 of article 8, in particular in determining goals and in setting emissions limit values. The scope of this guidance appears wider than technical issues, and the co-chair suggested that the interim secretariat could be asked to prepare the draft guidance for consideration by the INC, taking into consideration advice from the expert group.

34. Other guidance required by Article 8 of the Convention includes guidance on criteria that Parties may develop pursuant to paragraph 2(b), and guidance on the methodology for preparing inventories of emissions. These documents are being revised by the interim secretariat for consideration at the fourth meeting.

35. The co-chair concluded that there is still a lot of work, and the interim secretariat is required to do a significant amount of synthesis and drafting over the next period followed by

² draft guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP) for controlling and where feasible reducing mercury emissions to the atmosphere, as set out in Article 8 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

³<http://mercuryconvention.org/Negotiations/BATBEPExpertGroup/CommentsonBATBEPguidance/tabid/4545/Default.aspx>

the Stockholm meeting in early September. He emphasised the request to the Bureau to encourage comments from countries within their region. He indicated that, at the next Bureau meeting, he would highlight points raised during the comment phase, and was keen to work with the Bureau to consider the process for the documents to be considered at INC7.

36. The Chair thanked the co-chair for his detailed briefing. The Bureau agreed that the guidance required in paragraph 8b of Article 8 on emissions had elements which were broader than a purely technical scope, and that the interim secretariat could prepare this guidance, in consultation with the group of technical experts. Ms. Seymour suggested that it may be useful to have the individual chapters of the BAT/BEP guidance presented to the INC by the chapter leads, as this would reinforce the global nature of the work which had been undertaken in developing the guidance. The interim secretariat took note of this, and agreed to raise it further with the co-chairs of the expert group. The Chair reiterated the need for useful comments to be submitted to the interim secretariat, and encouraged the Bureau members to reach out to their regions.

(ii) Planning for the meeting of the ad hoc working group of experts on financing

37. The interim secretariat provided a report on the planning for the meeting of the ad hoc working group of experts on financing. Nominations have been received as follows: Africa (Egypt, Gabon and Nigeria); Asia Pacific (China, India, Japan, Jordan and Malaysia); Central and Eastern Europe (Latvia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); GRULAC (Argentina, Brazil and Cuba); and WEOG (the European Commission, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America). As agreed by the INC6, Greg Filyk (Canada) and Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica) will serve as co-chairs, while the meeting will be supported by the presence of the Chair of the INC and, as observers, the GEF secretariat. A number of technical advisors from relevant institutions may be invited by the co-chairs to attend as observers.

38. The interim secretariat indicated that logistic arrangements were underway, following an offer from Brazil to host the meeting. The meeting is scheduled from 26 to 29 October 2015, and the intention is to have a retreat-style setting. Financial support has been obtained.

39. The interim secretariat is preparing the necessary background documents for the meeting, in line with the request from INC6, with a document on possible hosting institutions for the specific international programme in preparation, and a comment phase on the mandate of the group currently underway. The interim secretariat further clarified that the request for input on the mandate was included in the report of the contact group at INC6, and was agreed by the committee as part of agreeing to the outcomes of the group. The interim secretariat indicated that the discussion of the financial issues at the regional meeting has provided valuable input which is also being compiled for consideration by the expert group.

40. The Chair noted the report of progress on this, highlighted the need for further inputs, and encouraged countries to make submissions in this regard.

(iii) Cooperation with the GEF secretariat, including the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)

41. The representative of the secretariat of the GEF provided, by Skype report on activities undertaken since INC6. He indicated that the request from INC6 to expand eligibility for enabling activities to include non-signatories who provided evidence of substantial progress towards becoming a Party to the Minamata Convention had been approved by the GEF council through an intersessional process in February 2015. The format of the letter to indicate progress had been agreed, and a number of letters have been submitted, although no projects are yet operationalized. Minamata Initial Assessments (MIAs) are underway with a number of signatory countries, and requests for projects on National Action Plans for Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) have been received from Mozambique and Cote d'Ivoire. In the June work programme, a full size project on PVC manufacture in China was approved, which would deal with around 320 tons

of mercury per year. A project on what would be needed for effectiveness evaluation was also submitted, and a monitoring project is underway. He further indicated that the GEF secretariat would continue to work with the interim secretariat in the preparation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the COP and the Council of the GEF. He also indicated the need for countries to be more aware of the eligibility criteria, and the need for further work on mercury use in the ASGM sector. He looked forward to providing a full report at INC7. He also indicated that a movie highlighting the GEF work on mercury was in preparation, and was expected to be released for COP1.

42. Ms. Seymour thanked the GEF for the report, and indicated that the GEF's work is appreciated. She however shared concerns expressed by some in her region that any work of the STAP on mercury, which it is undertaking with the Global Mercury Partnership, in cooperation with others, that is intended to contribute to the Minamata Convention and its effectiveness evaluation need to be considered and endorsed by the Convention's governing body.

43. The GEF secretariat clarified that part of the focus of the GEF was consideration of the development of a strategy for GEF7 that was sensible, with suitable targets for mercury reduction. As a contribution to this, the GEF secretariat had asked the STAP to compile information, considering additionally import export flows and to look within sectors. A UNEP monitoring project was considering in more details the information from certain environmental media, and also what methods are available. This was part of the evolution from the small mercury programme in GEF5, through the clear mercury programme in GEF6 and planning for the programme in GEF7.

44. The Chair indicated that he was aware of a number of possible projects considering marine monitoring in both GRULAC and in the Pacific. He noted the need for cooperation consistency, and coordination in implementation to avoid any duplication and any differing approaches in such projects. He indicated that there could be benefits in bringing together proponents to discuss projects in more detail.

45. Mr. Cisse indicated the need for different projects to have the same tool to ensure comparable data. The interim secretariat indicated that the UNEP toolkit on inventories was already being used by many countries within their initial assessment.

46. In further discussions, the Bureau discussed concerns about the extra work being undertaken by STAP, while noting that it is necessary to ensure structures are in place to allow effectiveness evaluation. The need for an early discussion was highlighted. It was noted that useful projects which meet country needs should not be blocked, but that priority may be given to projects which also meet the need to gather comparable data.

47. Ms. Seymour highlighted bilateral cooperation on mercury being undertaken by the US and Japan. She noted monitoring is a key area of interest, and there is an effort to explore collaboration with other countries in this regard through the GEF. The Chair indicated that it would be useful for coastal monitoring data to be delivered in a cooperative way, and there may be use in having a few projects merge to ensure consistency.

48. In discussing the guidance for the GEF, the emergence of two conflicting views was highlighted, with some considering that the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention should develop joint guidance with the BRS secretariat that includes a list of synergetic projects, while others considered that the interim secretariat should work directly with the GEF secretariat on the development of Minamata-specific guidance. It was noted that a criticism of the GEF mechanism raised by some in the past is the impression that priorities for projects are sometimes heavily influenced by outside entities instead of the recipient countries.

49. The interim secretariat indicated that it had a very good relationship with the GEF secretariat. There was likely to be a joint retreat in conjunction with the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4), however there would still be

individual discussions between the convention secretariats and the GEF, as well as joint discussions. The interim secretariat further highlighted that the regional and subregional workshops had provided good opportunities to work with countries, the GEF secretariat and implementing agencies. The UNEP GEF team was putting forward several projects at a regional level, and other implementing agencies were also putting projects forward. There was good cooperation between implementing agencies, particularly through the meetings in the margins of regional workshops. The UNEP GEF team would shortly be strengthened by a new staff member, and the overall aim of all implementing agencies was to ensure all interested and eligible countries would be able to develop a MIA.

50. The Chair noted the progress to date, and highlighted the need to ensure awareness of the GEF focal points of the work of the chemicals cluster, as it is an area of which many have limited awareness.

(iv) Expected working documents for INC7

51. The interim secretariat provided an update of proposed documents for INC7, which had been developed based on the mandates given by INC6, and also on the requests from the Final Act which had not yet been put forward. The structure of the proposed provisional agenda for INC7 was presented. This followed the structure of the agenda for INC6, which grouped issues based on priorities as identified in the Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention. The Bureau agreed that this was a good approach.

52. The process for developing the MoU with the GEF was discussed, and the interim secretariat clarified that the document would be prepared in consultation with the secretariat of the GEF, and would be based on lessons learned and best practices from existing MoUs. The interim secretariat also indicated that they would consult with the BRS secretariat to address any concerns with the ongoing functioning of the MoU.

53. INC6 had left the decision of whether to put the rules of procedure for the Conference of the Parties forward for discussion at INC7 in the hands of the Bureau. The Bureau agreed that these rules should be considered further, and requested the interim secretariat to prepare a paper accordingly. One Bureau member asked whether draft rules of procedure for the implementation and compliance committee should be presented. The interim secretariat indicated that the Convention text required the implementation and compliance committee to develop and adopt its rules of procedure at its first meeting, after which they would be approved by the Conference of the Parties. The members of the implementation and compliance Committee are to be elected at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, so INC7 may wish to consider potential members on a preliminary basis, noting that members for this committee would need to be drawn from Parties.

54. There was a request from the African region for additional information on projects underway. It was agreed that information on all projects underway would be useful, and the compilation should include, as far as possible, information on GEF projects and also on those funded through bilateral arrangements. The interim secretariat was encouraged to reach out to both donor and recipient countries to obtain suitable information for the information document. The Chair indicated that this could be a very good way to highlight work undertaken under the Convention, and could serve to mobilise press coverage. One Bureau member asked if the Secretariat would be in a position to receive reports of mercury-related activities from countries, and to make them available either on the website or elsewhere. The interim secretariat agreed this was possible.

55. The need for very focused and informed discussions at INC7 was raised, particularly as this may influence the success of COP1. Significant concerns regarding the lack of submissions were highlighted, as, at the close of the submission periods, submissions had been received from only six countries, one regional economic integration organization and one non-governmental organization, and that these submissions were only from only two regions. It was also noted that an offer to host the secretariat had been received. It was noted that the original dates for closing of submissions were set to accommodate the INC7 being

held in late 2015. The Bureau expressed that it would be feasible, given the postponement of the session until March 2016, to extend the deadline for all submissions, along with an encouragement of further submissions by the Bureau and interim secretariat to ensure adequate submissions for a robust discussion. The Bureau agreed that the deadline for all submissions (with the exception of the comment phase for BAT/BEP) should be extended until 31 August 2015, and also agreed that the Bureau would encourage further submissions, particularly from additional regions. The Bureau further requested the interim secretariat to inform governments of their decision.

(v) Summary of submissions received following request from secretariat

56. As indicated above, submissions had been received from a limited number of countries, and only from two regions. The Bureau decided to extend the deadline for all submissions (as stated above with the exception of the comment phase for BAT/BEP) to ensure robust documents for INC7.

(vi) Strategic planning for INC7 and beyond

57. The Chair highlighted the need for excellent planning for INC7, particularly considering the expectation that there would not be an INC8. He raised the question of whether a 6 day meeting was required, noting the precedents for this. INC4 was six days, reflecting the need to gather all views to support the negotiation. INC5 was six days reflecting the need to reach agreement on all aspects of the Convention text. For INC6, a five day meeting had been considered sufficient. Considering the need to resolve as many issues as possible at INC7, there may be a need for additional time. Careful consideration of the issues, and strategic planning on how to manage all of them, will be needed. To facilitate that, the Bureau may wish to consider a further Bureau meeting in January 2016, immediately prior to regional meetings. There would then be further Bureau meetings at INC7 to continue discussions.

58. The Bureau was generally supportive of a six day meeting, however did raise the question on the day spread of the meeting. It was noted that the opening day should be on a working day in the host country, to facilitate attendance by high-level delegates at an opening session. Mr. Xia provided the option used in other Conventions of holding the meeting over only a single weekend to maximise the work-life balance of delegates, who otherwise would lose two weekends to travel and meeting participation. This will be further considered in consultation with the host country.

59. The need for smaller groups was considered, however it was agreed that the number of structure of such groups would need to be determined closer to the meeting, when it was clearer which technical and policy challenges there were. There was a need to plan for useful side events and technical meetings, including the need to highlight success to date, as this can be important as a means of outreach and awareness raising. The concept of whether there should be breaks scheduled within the timetable was also briefly considering, noting that these can be a useful opportunity for socialisation and informal discussions. The opportunity for industry to bring forward presentations on technologies was raised, with the option of having an event similar to the Science Fair at the BRS COPS put forward.

(vii) Challenges and opportunities at INC7, including role of Bureau members

60. The Chair raised the need to increase awareness of the need to ratify the Convention, in particular to take part in the decision making process at COP1. Ms. Seymour indicated her country's view that consensus decisions are extremely important in that they demonstrate a political commitment to implementation of the Convention, resulting in the environmental benefit. She therefore expressed the hope that the constructive and inclusive spirit of the INC process would continue.

61. The need for overall endorsement and ownership of smaller group discussions by the whole of INC7 was noted as important for overall success. Challenges should be considered from both the technical and the political perspective, and the broader agenda of other issues should be considered. The selection of co-chairs for smaller groups is key, and all of the experiences of potential co-chairs should be taken into consideration.

(viii) Draft scenario note for INC7

62. The Chair reminded the Bureau that the scenario note which had been circulated has a similar structure from previous notes. It covers key aspects about INC7, however does not provide details on how many contact groups, or which topics would be sent to smaller groups, as these decisions would be taken by the Bureau immediately before, or even during, INC7.

63. The Bureau indicated that they would like to see further information on the priorities set out in the Final Act included in the scenario note, as well as flagging the rules of procedure as a key priority. The Chair noted the comments, and indicated that Bureau members would have a further ten days to provide comments on the draft.

(ix) Regional preparations for INC7

64. The Chair recognized the value of regional preparatory meetings to assist countries in their preparation for the INC, particularly as there were a large number of issues, both technical and political. He noted that consideration should be given to ensuring attendance by BAT/BEP experts and also finance experts to ensure understanding of the work undertaken in these intersessional processes.

65. The interim secretariat presented progress in the organization of regional meetings, indicating that following a letter from the UNEP Executive Director calling for funding, some earmarked funding had come forward, with other countries indicating their intention to support the meetings. The meetings would be convened when documents are available in languages, with current tentative plans for the meetings to be held as follows: Asia Pacific – 3 days – in the third week of January; CEE – 2 days – in the fourth week of January; Africa – 3 days – in the first week of February; GRULAC – 4 days – in the second week of February. Currently locations are being determined, with initial interest being expressed by some countries to host the meetings. There would be potential to add an additional day to each meeting to include work on BRS. The interim secretariat also invited WEOG to consider whether they would be interested in a regional preparatory meeting, as this could also be arranged. Mr. Kapindula highlighted the need for these regional meetings to be more strategic, rather than the information sharing which had been the focus of the previous BRS regional meeting. The Chair highlighted that the agenda should be developed in consultation with the interim secretariat, and should be structured to meet the needs of the region. The participation of regional organizations in the meetings should be encouraged.

66. The Chair noted that it was important for Bureau members to check the proposed dates, and consider their availability. He noted that there will be interpretation at the regional meetings, and also highlighted the need for interpretation at the INC. The interim secretariat noted that anticipated finance for the regional meetings would include coverage of interpretation. In relation to interpretation for regional groups at the INC, contracting interpretation services was always challenging, as it could not be organized directly by UNEP through conference services and a separate contract was required.

67. For the regional consultations held back to back with INC7, the Chair highlighted the possibility of a combination of intraregional and interregional discussions, depending on needs expressed. There may also be the possibility of a technical briefing if required.

(x) Logistical planning for INC7

68. The interim secretariat indicated that there were ongoing discussions with the Government of Jordan regarding their offer to host INC7. The Government is very keen to host the meeting, however notes that there are significant costs in holding an INC. The Government of Jordan would welcome additional financial support to assist in ensuring a successful INC7 meeting, recognizing with thanks the support already provided by the Government of Switzerland. The interim secretariat indicated that funding to support local costs would need to be provided directly to the Government of Jordan. UNEP would not be in a position to support any local costs such as a conference venue, technical equipment, provision of local security, provision of local transport, any hospitality and any other local costs associated with the meeting. Governments who were interested in supporting the government of Jordan with local costs for INC7 should contact the government directly, and fund these costs through bilateral arrangements. An indication of support had been received by the interim secretariat which would cover the incremental UNEP costs for the meeting associated with hosting a meeting outside a UN venue. The interim secretariat planned to reiterate the call for financial resources to support the host government, and would make this call more formally.

69. The conference facilities requested will have the facility to handle smaller groups as needed. The interim secretariat is currently organizing a visit to Jordan to make further progress on these issues.

H. Next Bureau meetings before INC7

70. The Chair highlighted the need to plan an additional face to face meeting of the Bureau, considering that this should be held in early January 2016 back to back with a regional preparatory meeting in preparation for INC7. As usual, the Bureau would meet throughout the INC to monitor progress and deal with issues.

I. Any other issues raised by the Bureau

71. No additional issues were raised by the Bureau. In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked the Bureau members for their hard work and responsiveness. He looked forward to meeting with others working on chemicals in the margin of the ICCM, as this provides a useful opportunity to consult on a number of issues. He thanked Mr. Lenev for his hospitality, and indicated that all had enjoyed their visit to Moscow. He thanked the interim secretariat for their work in organizing the Bureau meeting, and looked forward to close contact with the interim secretariat in the coming months. Mr. Lenev then thanked the Bureau for their participation and highlighted the usefulness of having the Bureau meeting in the Russian Federation, noting that a press release from the Ministry of the Environment had been issued, which set out the importance of the Convention and the need for its ratification.