



## Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.  
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/Bur/2023/1/3  
27 February 2023

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

---

BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE  
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
13 February 2023

### MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

1. A teleconference session of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties (COP) was held via videoconference on 13 February 2023 at 7:00am EST. The purpose of the meeting was to have an update on the status of the Bureau and other officers, a general discussion of intersessional meetings during 2023-2024 and provide an overview of future Bureau meetings.

2. The meeting was attended by the following members of the COP Bureau and substitutes:

*Presidency:* H.E. Mr. HUANG Runqiu (China);

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

*Asia and the Pacific:* Ms. Leina Al-Awadhi (Kuwait); Mr. Naresh Pal Gangwar (India);

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

*Latin America and the Caribbean:* Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Ms. Eugenia Arguedas Montezuma (Costa Rica); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

*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 Benitez Diaz (Mexico), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

*COP Presidency:* Ms. Guomei Zhou, Mr. Zhibin Wang, Mr. Yingxian xia, Mr. Ning Liu, Mr. Xiaofeng Guo;

*Observers:* Mr. Neville Ash (UNEP).

The Secretariat was represented by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jihyun Lee, Director, Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Mr. Neil Pratt, Officer-in-Charge, Implementation Support Division; Mr. Wataru Suzuki, Global Coordinator, Japan Biodiversity Fund; Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety

/...

Unit; Mr. Taukondjo Shikongo, Head, Nagoya Protocol Unit; Ms. Kathryn Garforth, Programme Management Officer; Mr. David Ainsworth, Information Officer; Mr. Ide Ahmed Mohamed, Budget and Finance Officer, Administration Division; Ms. Inonge Mweene, Legal Officer; Ms. Li Gu, Programme Management Officer; and Mr. Lijie Cai, Programme Management Officer.

### **ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

3. The teleconference was opened on 13 February 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EST by the Minister of Ecology and Environment, Mr. Huang Runqiu, President of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties who chaired the Bureau meeting. Mr. Huang Runqiu welcomed the Bureau Members and conveyed his appreciation to them, to the Secretariat and to the Co-Chairs for their courage, perseverance, and joint efforts during the past two years, which served as a foundation for a successful COP and the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Chair asked Bureau members for their continuing support and reaffirmed that through sustained collaboration, the implementation of the framework can be achieved.
4. The Chair also expressed his deep condolences to the people of Syria and Türkiye for the tragic loss of life and damage caused by the recent devastating earthquakes.
5. The Chair mentioned that he met with Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, who spoke highly of COP15 and how the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was a key contribution towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Huang Runqiu congratulated Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary on her new role as Deputy Executive Director to United Nations Environment Programme.
6. In her opening remarks, and as her last address to the Bureau as CBD Executive Secretary, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, thanked the Government of China and the Bureau members for their dedication that led to the extraordinary achievement of adopting the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), as well as the other relevant decisions. She also thanked the Bureau for the trust and confidence she received and thanked the Secretariat staff for their dedication and professionalism that they demonstrated during her tenure; she particularly thanked, Mr. David Cooper, who will be Acting Executive Secretary as of the fifteen of February, for being instrumental in the historic COP outcomes.
7. Ms. Mrema highlighted the importance to support the ongoing discussions and negotiations on different themes, such as the multilateral mechanism on Digital sequence information (DSI), the strategy for resource mobilization, the monitoring framework, technical and scientific cooperation. She also mentioned that work needs to be strengthened with partners to assist Parties in updating their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and develop national targets. She concluded her remarks by asking for the Bureau's continued untiring support and guidance to succeed in delivering the numerous COP outcomes.
8. The Chair thanked Ms. Mrema for her suggestions on the work ahead and stressed on the need for the Bureau and the Secretariat to strengthen their friendship and understanding to promote and implement the new framework. He concluded by congratulating Mr. David for his appointment as Acting Executive Secretary.

### **ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

9. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting. There being no objections, the agenda was adopted.

### **ITEM 3. STATUS OF THE BUREAU AND OTHER OFFICERS**

10. Under this agenda item, the Chair invited the Secretariat to provide an overview regarding the options for follow-up to the suspension of Part 2 of COP-15, CP/MOP-10, and NP/MOP-4, as well as the status of the Bureau and other elected officers in light of this suspension.
11. Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer of the Secretariat, introduced this item and referred to the note outlining the options that had been provided to the Bureau. He noted that the document also provided some

background information, including the reasons why the meetings were suspended and the list of items that remained unfinished or unaddressed.

12. Mr. Yifru noted that the document addressed the terms of office of the officers of the bureau, chairpersons to subsidiaries bodies and members of the compliance committees under the Protocols. He explained that Bureau members and chairpersons could remain in office and noted that there were rules procedure in case members were not able to continue performing their functions.

13. Regarding the possible modalities for convening resumed sessions, Mr. Yifru presented the five different options: i) silence procedure, held remotely, a similar procedure to the one used in 2021 to adopt the interim budget of the Secretariat; 2) virtual meetings; 3) in-person meetings held back-to-back with one of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies; 4) resume sessions at the United Nations office in New York, and; 5) in-person meeting back-to-back with COP16 in Türkiye. He also mentioned that the document, provided analysis of each option.

14. Mr. Yifru updated the Bureau members on the status of credentials: He stated that out of the 196 Parties to the CBD, 188 registered to the meeting and 150 of these had submitted formal credentials to the COP that fulfilled the requirements and rules of procedures, and that by January 19, 2023, 10 more credentials were received raising the number of Parties that have presented valid credentials to 160. For the Cartagena COP-MOP, Mr. Yifru indicated that out of the 173 Parties to the Protocol, 168 registered to the meeting and 135 Parties presented full credentials by 19 December 2022, and that by January 19<sup>th</sup>, the Secretariat had received eight more credentials, with a total of 143 as of today. Lastly, for the Nagoya Protocol COP-MOP, out of the 138 Parties, 134 registered to the meeting and the Secretariat received 106 credentials by 19 December 2022, with a total of 114 credentials as of 19 January 2023.

15. Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary complemented that it was the Secretariat's hope to achieve common understanding among Bureau members on these issues.

16. In addition, Mr. Cooper provided some reflections on the different options to resume the meetings, mentioning that the first two options would probably not work unless there was consensus, and since the situation had not changed at this point with the Central and Eastern region, these two options likely not valid at his time. He then noted that an in-person meeting would be necessary if voting were to proceed. On the option to hold a meeting in the margins of SBSTTA and SBI, he noted that there could be issues with establishing quorum, given that the participation in these meetings was lower than that the participation at a COP. Before concluding his intervention, Mr. Cooper mentioned that for the option to resume the meetings in New York, the Secretariat would have to check with United Nations the type of arrangements and resources necessary for the resumed sessions to take place.

17. The Bureau members thanked and congratulated the President and his team, as well as the Secretariat for a successful COP, and for the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. They thanked Ms. Mrema for her leadership and strong commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), congratulated her on the new appointment and congratulated Mr. Cooper on his new role. Members of the Bureau also expressed their condolences to the people and governments of Syria and Türkiye for the lives lost due to the recent earthquakes.

18. The Bureau members thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of the background documents. They also noted that the document on item 3 was made available very late and labelled as confidential and thus were not able to share and obtain their regions' views on this. Bureau members asked the Secretariat to provide a date of when they could share the document. Due to this lack of consultations, the limited comments made by Bureau members were a reflection of their own thoughts and not of their regions.

19. Members of the Bureau indicated their shared view that the planning and implementation of the resumed sessions of these meetings should not be a distraction to Parties from their efforts towards the implementation of Global Biodiversity Framework and associated decisions. Some members indicated their preference to take action sooner rather than later and not wait until COP16 to resume the meetings. Bureau members requested the President and the Secretariat to reach out to the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region and continue to have consultations with its members.

20. Some members expressed their preference to the option to resume the meetings in New York and some requested more details from the Secretariat on this, especially regarding credentials.
21. Bureau members expressed that in the meantime, they were willing to continue with their functions and responsibilities.
22. In response to a question regarding the possibility of informally inviting, to the meetings of the Bureau, those representatives that were nominated for Bureau membership during COP15, Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer, advised that such measure would not be consistent with the rules and practices in the CBD process, as those representatives were merely nominated and not elected.
23. Mr. David Cooper confirmed that the Secretariat will review the document that was circulated to see if any adjustments are needed and will make it available to Bureau to allow them to use it for any consultation with their regions. Mr. Cooper also noted that the Secretariat will take other appropriate steps in response to the recommendations of the Bureau.

#### **ITEM 4. OVERVIEW OF INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS DURING 2023-2024**

24. Under this item, the Chair invited the Secretariat to brief the Bureau on the preliminary overview and schedule of the key intersessional meetings of the Convention, in the context of other key international meetings, to be held during the 2023-2024 biennium.
25. Mr. David Cooper referred to the document circulated a few days before the meeting, which provided some options for the CBD intersessional meetings for 2023-2024. He explained that there are normally two sets of meetings, the first one that take place during the fourth quarter of the first year, and the second one, which takes place during the second quarter of the second year. He mentioned that for this intersessional period, the Secretariat will have to accommodate two meetings on the ad hoc working group on DSI, and an additional meeting for the Subsidiary Body of Implementation (SBI), since the budget committee provided an allocation for this.
26. Mr. Cooper highlighted that the calendar of international meetings was very busy, especially for the year 2023, he also mentioned that the availability of suitable venues was limited. Based on this information, he presented the two windows of opportunity that the Secretariat had identified and clarified that if the CBD meetings were to take place during these windows, they would not overlap with those organized by CMS, CITES, FAO ITPGRFA, and UNFCCC. The following options were:
- 15 - 21 October 2023 (UNON, Nairobi) :
    - SBSTTA-25
    - SBI-4 (if necessary)
  - 11-18 November 2023 (at CICG, Geneva):
    - WG8J-12
    - WGDSI-1
27. Mr. Cooper added that the Secretariat was looking into other possible venues in Ottawa and Quebec City. He also explained that the availability of rooms in Geneva was limited and was not suitable to host SBSTTA 25. He recognized that splitting the meetings was not ideal and ask the Bureau for comments and feedback on this. For the second set of meetings, he mentioned that the Secretariat was exploring the possibility of organizing these meetings in Kunming or in Montreal.
28. Regarding COP16, Mr. Cooper mentioned that discussions with Türkiye were underway and that it was planned that the COP takes place during the last two weeks of October 2024. He added that there was a field visit planned this month to look at the venue, however it was postponed due to the recent earthquakes.
29. The Bureau members recognized that it was a very busy intersessional period and that a lot of planning would be needed to organize all the meetings. Some Bureau members expressed concerns of organizing CBD meetings overlapping with the Plastic Pollution meeting, since it affected Parties with small delegations.

30. The Bureau members asked the Secretariat to share as soon as possible the agendas and distribution of work for the SBI meetings. One Bureau member expressed concerns on splitting the meetings in two sections since it would increase the costs of organizing them.

31. Regarding the SBI meetings, Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist, SBI Chair, mentioned that there is an ongoing analysis of agenda items, timing, and workload of the different bodies and indicated that she hopes to consult with the Bureau very soon to hear their views on the draft agenda and decide whether there will be two SBI meetings or not.

#### **ITEM 5. INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, 2023**

32. Under this item, Mr. David Ainsworth, provided the Bureau with preliminary information on the theme and plans for the International Day for Biological Diversity which is celebrated on May 22 each year. Mr. Ainsworth shared that this year was the first occasion to launch the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and that theme proposed was the implementation and call for actions on the framework. He mentioned that this theme will allow countries to showcase their first steps towards implementation and highlight some early successes. Mr. Ainsworth added that the social media team of the Secretariat was working on putting together the assets to be used, such as hashtags, audio-visuals, logos, and suggested speaking points, and that these will be shared with Parties when available.

33. Furthermore, Mr. Ainsworth mentioned that the Secretariat will also be sharing a list of possible activities to organize at national level to start action, including the possibility to screen for free the film “Interactions” that was launched at COP15. Before concluding, Mr. Ainsworth noted that there have been some discussions with the governments of China and Canada to hold events that day to mark this important day and to encourage national celebrations around the world.

#### **ITEM 6. STATUS OF THE TRUST FUNDS AND STAFFING**

34. The Chair introduced this item noting that the high volume of work generated for the Secretariat, product of the key decisions adopted at COP15, could not be fulfilled without commensurable funds and staff to enhance the Secretariat’s capacity. He then invited the Secretariat to provide more information on this.

35. Mr. Ide Ahmed Mohamed referred to document UNEP/SCBD/COP/Bur/2023/1/2 which was circulated ahead of the meeting, on the Status of trust funds under the Convention and its Protocol and follow-up to decision 15/34. He mentioned that the COP approved a total of US\$ 41.6 million for the biennium, US\$ 19,931,600 for the year 2023 and US\$ 21,714,500 for the year 2024. He noted that the budget covers the provision of salaries for 82 staff, 78 existing positions and four new positions that were approved, in addition to provisions for staff travel, COP Bureau meetings, SBSTTA and SBI meetings.

36. Mr. Ahmed further added that the Secretariat was working with UNEP to issue invoices for 2023 contributions and that invoices for 2024 would be dispatched later this year. He added that there were some outstanding payments from Parties and that the Secretariat will work with the Presidency to circulate letters to those Parties that have not paid their contributions over 2 years.

37. On the issue of voluntary funds, Mr. Ahmed indicated that the Secretariat is preparing the funding estimate for the Trust Fund for Additional voluntary contributions to support the activities under the Convention and its Protocols for the period 2023-2024, on the basis of an ongoing analysis of the resources needed to implement the decisions adopted. It is expected that the Secretariat will complete such analysis by the end of February 2023 and will subsequently circulate a call for contributions for the Special voluntary trust fund (BE), Special voluntary trust funds for facilitating participation of Parties (BZ) and for the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (VB).

38. Ms. Mrema intervened on this item to thank the Bureau and the Parties for the four additional posts that were approved at COP15; however, she also noted that the number of activities, obligations and mandates for this intersessional period is phenomenal and that the current financial and human is inadequate to cover many of the activities. She made a call to encourage Parties to help in fulfilling these new requests that came as a result of the adoption of the new framework. She finalized by mentioning that the Secretariat will

send a call for resources on different activities and hope that the calls are answered positively and that resources are received on time.

39. There were no comments from the Bureau on this issue.

#### **ITEM 7. SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE BUREAU MEETINGS**

40. On this agenda item, the Chair mentioned that due to the pandemic and the postponing of COP15, the Bureau had over 40 meetings held virtually, and thanked Bureau members for their great efforts in participating in these numerous meetings that took place in different time zones. The Chair proposed then to have a reduced number of meetings during this biennium with most of them to be held in-person at the margin of intersessional meetings.

41. For 2023, the Chair suggested to have four Bureau meetings in total, the next one being in-person as a two-day stand-alone meeting to take place in the first semester of 2023 to focus on the strategic overview of the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Following that meeting, he suggested to have an online meeting in September to discuss the preparations of the intersessional meetings (SBSTTA-25, WG8J-12, WGDSI-1), and then an in-person meetings in October/November during the inter-sessional meetings. He noted that additional virtual meetings of the Bureau would only be held if necessary. Regarding timing of COP Bureau meetings, the SBI Chair raised the need to consult with the Bureau very soon to hear their views on the draft agenda for SBI.

42. Bureau members agreed with the suggestions from the Chair and asked him to share the dates of the next Bureau meetings as soon as possible, especially those that will take place in-person.

#### **ITEM 8. OTHER MATTERS**

43. Under this agenda item, the Chair recommended to invite Türkiye, as incoming COP16 President, to be part of the future Bureau meetings as an ex-officio member. There were no objections from the Bureau and therefore Türkiye will be invited to the next Bureau meetings.

44. There were no other matters raised during the meeting.

#### **ITEM 9. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

45. Before concluding the meeting, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, thanked the President for continuing to lead and guide the Bureau and the Secretariat and stressed that she will continue working with the CBD from the UNEP context on biodiversity related issues.

46. The Chair mentioned to Ms. Mrema that he counted on her continuing support and that she would be remembered by her contributions to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

47. The Chair offered a brief summary on the various issues discussed and thanked the Bureau and all participants for the fruitful meeting. The meeting was closed on 13 October 2022 at 10:30 a.m. EST.