Guidance to co-chairs of contact and other groups at BRS meetings

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Before the start of your group

- Familiarize yourself with the Convention(s) text(s), rules of procedure and relevant documents; prepare carefully for each session; review the draft text to be negotiated.
- Listen closely to plenary discussions on the topic, views expressed and the mandate given to the group.
- Meet with your co-chair and Secretariat to discuss:
  - What will be the task of the group (specific mandate if already given by plenary);
  - The desired/possible outcomes, how you will go about the task and your strategy;
  - How to share the chairing with your co-chair.
- The Secretariat will inform you of the final deadline for your work, which needs to be respected in order to have the text edited/translated for adoption in plenary. You need to manage time accordingly.
- Come to the room well in advance in order to ensure that the set-up is ready, that you have all the resources you need (reference materials, experts, Secretariat support, document to project, etc.)
- Ensure that there are enough delegates in the room with sufficient regional representation.

At the start of the meeting

- Welcome the group and introduce yourself and your co-chair.
- Repeat the mandate given by plenary to be shown on screen (confirm with the Secretariat beforehand).
- Explain to the group how you are planning to go about the work: what document will be the basis of your discussions, what is the envisaged timeframe, what are the rules of engagement of the group (e.g. Parties interventions are taken before observers, text proposals from observers need to be taken up by Parties to be reflected on screen).
- Invite questions about organization of work before you start the substantive work.

Managing debates on the text

- If considered appropriate and time permits, you can invite general comments prior to starting negotiations and/or ask the Secretariat to provide background information.
- Then proceed with a **first reading** paragraph by paragraph through the text projected on the screen, reflect- ing proposals from Parties (asking them to make focused text proposals); consider leaving preambles for later and starting with operative paragraphs. The first reading is the opportunity for all Parties to reflect their views in the text, this should be made clear to Parties to avoid new proposals being introduced at a later stage.
- The Secretariat keeps a list of speakers for you so you can focus on the debate. It can also provide advice related to rules of procedure and/or factual information.
- Summarize when necessary to keep everyone informed of what has been agreed to and where there are still open questions/disagreements.
- Identify contentious areas and insert brackets / alternative text as you go through the text; the Secretariat will only reflect text on the screen upon your direction.
- During a **second reading**, focus on the remaining brackets and try to clean up the text as much as possible.
- Once the text is cleared of brackets, it should not be revisited unless revisiting helps resolve issues elsewhere in the text.
- If brackets cannot be resolved, consider the following:
  - Ask for a break for doing informal consultations;
  - Ask the opponents or a smaller group to come up with a compromise text;
  - Propose a co-chairs' compromise text for the group's consideration;
  - Seek advice from your co-chair and/or the President;
  - Send the text with brackets back to plenary if no solution can be found in the group. Make sure you alert the President / Chair of the meeting of this situation;
  - If you can't answer a question, take your time to consult. Turn off the microphone when consulting. You can offer to bring the answer back to the room at the next meeting while putting the issue aside.

Once the work / session is finished

- Thank the group and lay out the next steps: will the group ask the Bureau for more time to meet or is the work completed? What work is remaining and how will you go about it?
- If the work is completed, the Secretariat will prepare a Conference Room Paper (CRP) based on the out- comes of your group's work. Co-chairs need to remain available, either in person or by email/phone, to clear the CRP for processing, editing and translation. This may happen late in the night.
- (One of the) co-chairs attend(s) the Bureau meeting on the following day to report briefly on the work of the group, which matters are outstanding and whether additional negotiation time is needed.
- One of the co-chairs is usually invited to report to plenary on the progress or conclusion of work, if the group met the previous day.

Role of the chair

- As a chair, it is your role to ensure that the meeting is conducted in an orderly and efficient manner and in accordance with the rules of procedure, for example by controlling the level of noise in the room, giving speakers the floor, ensuring that all delegates have an appropriate opportunity to express their point of view, etc. The chair is to be mindful of process deadlines and needs to be able to move on when a point is discussed as far as possible.
- From a substantive point of view, the co-chairs take responsibility for seeing that the meeting produces a result that is coherent and internally consistent and acceptable to the greatest number of Parties.
- Chairs need to be impartial and show respect for the views of others; keeping a positive atmosphere and staying calm, maintaining a tone appropriate to the United Nations will facilitate discussions.

For more information, please consult the Training Manual for Chairs of Meetings of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (https://www.brsmeas.org/tabid/9630/).

Arrangements at BRS meetings

- Contact groups are usually open to the participation of observers. Observers do not dictate text for insertion but make observations, which are inserted into the text if taken up by one of the Parties.
- There is a long-standing practice for Parties to not raise points of order about the running of the meeting in BRS contact and smaller groups which are informal in nature. Should a Party do so, the rules of procedure provide that they have to be addressed by the chair before continuing the substantive discussion. It is advised to find an amicable way forward rather than to proceed with a ruling.
- Interim products of the group can be posted on the groups' intranet page. Other useful documents for the discussions (background documents, submissions by participants, etc.) can also be posted there.
- If you set up any smaller (break-out) groups, these need to report back to your group.

Rules of conduct

- As a chair, you set the tone for discussions in your group. If you experience improper behaviour by meeting parti- cipants or if a meeting participants complains, please alert the Secretariat immediately. If needed, remind the participants of the rules of engagement.
- Three guidelines for rules of conduct have been developed and include action to be taken in case of improper behaviour of participants:
  - Guidelines on preventing and addressing all forms of harassment at meetings of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.
  - Guidelines for the participation of representatives of observers at meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (BRS) and their subsidiary bodies.
  - Guidelines on the use of cameras and audio/ video recording devices by participants at meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (BRS) and their subsidiary bodies.

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