

Information on the reimbursement of communication costs for online meetings organized by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions during the time of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

Given the COVID-19 pandemic situation that imposes limitations on travel and mass gatherings, as well as teleworking due to domestic lockdowns, the Secretariat will, subject to the availability of resources and taking into account relevant UNEP policies, provide financial support on an exceptional basis towards the reimbursement of communication costs (i.e. costs incurred to secure a reliable and good quality internet connection) to assist eligible meeting participants from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in online meetings.

Online meetings for which the allowance may be sought are:

- (a) Meetings of bodies established under the conventions that were originally foreseen by the Conferences of the Parties to be organized face to face, in accordance with the programmes of work and budgets for the biennium 2020-2021;
- (b) Meetings mentioned above with respect to which sufficient financial resources are available to cover the allowance.

Accordingly, the allowance may not be sought for other forms of gatherings, such as technical assistance workshops, along with meetings which were originally foreseen by the conferences of the Parties to be conducted online, as per the programmes of work and budgets for the biennium 2020-2021.

With respect to the delegates eligible for receiving the allowance, the procedures for the allocation of funding from the conventions' core or voluntary trust funds for facilitating the participation of Parties in meetings of the COPs (Decisions BC-10/28, RC-5/1 and SC-5/2) apply *mutatis mutandis* to the allocation of the present allowance for online meetings. Accordingly, eligible delegates are delegates from developing country Parties and from Parties with economies in transition.

The following conditions need to be met by a delegate from an eligible country Party to be entitled to seek the allowance:

- (c) Being officially nominated and registered to the online meeting by the official registration deadline;
- (d) Having informed the Secretariat in advance of the online meeting that her/his attendance is contingent on the Secretariat providing funding for internet access whereby requesting the allowance;
- (e) Having attended the online meeting for which s/he was nominated and registered.

For meetings of bodies with fixed membership, only eligible members of the bodies are entitled to seek the allowance. For meetings of open-ended bodies, the number of eligible meeting participants will be determined on the basis of the funding available, as applicable.

Reimbursement of communication costs will be made on an hourly basis depending on the total meeting length. In addition to the actual meeting time, some additional sessions may be considered as an integral part of the meeting length (e.g. technical connectivity trials, preparatory sessions). The total length of the meeting in hours (i.e. the basis for reimbursement) will be decided according to the specificities of each online meeting.

As established by UNEP, the following standard rates for 1 GB cost per hour and per geographical region will be used for the calculation of the allowance:

Regions	Standard Hourly Rate in USD for 1 GB per geographical region
Africa	8
Asia/Pacific	9
Eastern Europe	6
GRULAC	8

Due to the transaction costs involved, the minimum reimbursable amount is USD 50. For reimbursement costs above USD 200, receipts to support the expense must be provided by the participant seeking reimbursement.

Reimbursement takes place after the meeting based on presentation of the signed reimbursement form made available by the Secretariat, and confirmation of attendance.