

Fifth Programme for the Development and
Periodic Review of Environmental Law
(Montevideo Programme V):
delivering for people and the planet
Ninth Meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation
Microsoft Teams (online), 14 November 2024
14:00 – 17:00 (EAT/GMT+3)

Chair's Summary

Item 1: Welcome remarks from the Secretariat

1. The ninth meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation, under the fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V), was opened by Mr. Gracian Banda, Head of the Montevideo Coordination and Delivery Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Law Division. Discharging the secretariat functions on behalf of UNEP, according to paragraph 6(a) of the Montevideo Programme V, Mr. Banda welcomed the Steering Committee members to the meeting.
2. Another member of the secretariat, Mr. Alvin Gachie, shared brief information on how to best use the MS Teams platform, before proceeding to verify the quorum.
3. Mr. Banda delivered opening remarks, highlighting the Montevideo Programme V's ongoing importance, recalling the outcomes of the Second Global Meeting of National Focal Points, and outlining recent achievements. He then noted that paragraph 6(c) of Montevideo Programme V states that the national focal points will, at their global meetings, designate a Steering Committee for Implementation, composed of two to three representatives nominated from each United Nations region, ensuring gender balance to the extent possible. According to paragraph 9 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee for Implementation (UNEP/Env.Law/MTV5/GNFP.1/6 Annex), the Steering Committee is required to meet as soon as possible after the designation of its members to elect two co-chairs and a rapporteur and, should meet at least once a year, either online or in person. Mr. Banda reminded participants that, prior to any meeting, members of the Steering Committee may, to the extent possible, consult with national focal points in their United Nations regional groups.

Item 2: Introduction of members

4. Mr. Banda introduced agenda item 2 and invited members to introduce themselves, recalling that during the fifth plenary session of the Second Global Meeting, on 5 June 2024, the national focal points elected, by acclamation, the current members of the Steering Committee for Implementation, as nominated by the respective regions.

5. Mr. Banda then noted that the term of office of the new members of the Committee started at the end of the Second Global Meeting and will cease at the end of the Third Global Meeting.

Item 3: Adoption of the agenda

6. Mr. Banda introduced agenda item 3 and invited members to adopt or amend the agenda for the meeting (UNEP/Env.Law/MTV5/SCI.9/1), recalling that the Steering Committee agreed to the elements of a draft provisional agenda during its eighth meeting on 3 June 2024, as annexed to the Co-Chairs' summary of that meeting, available on the UNEP Law and Environment Platform (LEAP). The agenda was adopted with no amendments and is included as Annex II to the present document.

Item 4: Election of Office bearers of the Steering Committee

7. Mr. Banda introduced agenda item 4, noting that according to paragraph 2 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee, the Steering Committee should elect two co-chairs and a rapporteur from among its members, ensuring gender balance to the extent possible. He also reminded members that one of the co-chairs had to be from a developed country and the other from a developing country.
8. Further to that, Mr. Banda outlined that according to paragraph 3 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee, the overall responsibility of the co-chairs is to represent the Steering Committee, oversee and guide its work, and act as the contact points between the secretariat and the Steering Committee, as well as serve as co-chairs for the global meeting that follows their election. The responsibility of the rapporteur is to oversee the preparation of the reports of the meetings of the Steering Committee and the report of the global meeting that follows his or her election.
9. Mr. Banda also stated that according to paragraph 7 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee, the co-chairs and the rapporteur should begin their term of office at the meeting of the steering committee at which they are elected and should remain in office until the closure of the next global meeting. If the office of a co-chair becomes vacant, the other co-chair should act as the chair until the members of the Steering Committee elect a co-chair to serve for the remainder of the term.
10. Mr. Banda recalled that according to paragraph 4 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee, members of the Steering Committee may be subject to re-designation and may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms – and in consultation with the Steering Committee member from Uruguay, and the United States, subject to agreement of the Steering Committee, and in view of ensuring continuity in the work of the Steering Committee, the secretariat had received a proposal that the members from Uruguay and the United States of America, be elected as co-chairs of the Steering Committee.
11. Mr. Banda opened the floor for comments and, there being no objections and after consulting the candidates on their willingness to assume the roles, the Steering

Committee elected Mr. Marcelo Cousillas (Uruguay) and Ms. Rachel Westrate (United States of America) as co-chairs.

12. Mr. Banda also indicated that the secretariat had received a proposal that the member from Uganda be elected to serve as rapporteur.
13. Mr. Banda opened the floor for comments and, there being no objections and after consulting the candidate on her willingness to assume the role, the Steering Committee elected Ms. Sarah Naigaga (Uganda) as rapporteur.
14. Finally, Mr. Banda closed the agenda item and handed over to the new office bearers to conduct the meeting.

Item 5: Update on the mid-term review of the Montevideo Programme V

Sub-item (a): Progress

15. Mr. Cousillas introduced agenda sub-item (a), recalling that at its eighth meeting, the Steering Committee for Implementation agreed to have at this ninth meeting, a discussion on the report to be prepared by UNEP on a mid-term review of the Programme, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5 of Resolution 4/20 of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).
16. Ms. Bankobeza, on behalf of the secretariat, provided the Steering Committee with an overview of progress made through the Montevideo Programme V on each priority area – on legal responses to pollution, climate change, and biodiversity. She noted that the purpose of the progress report is so that the Steering Committee can monitor and track achievements and ongoing initiatives in collaboration with regional offices.
17. The floor was then given to UNEP's Regional Environmental Governance Coordinators to introduce themselves and provide brief highlights from their respective regions. Mr. Robert Wabunoha (Africa), Ms. Georgina Lloyd (Asia-Pacific), Ms. Leila Urekenova (Europe), and Ms. Andrea Brusco (Latin America and the Caribbean) took the floor before Ms. Bankobeza handed it over to the co-chair, Mr. Cousillas.
18. Mr. Cousillas concluded agenda sub-item (a).

Sub-item (b): Discussion and feedback

19. Mr. Cousillas introduced agenda sub-item (b), inviting members to provide feedback and discuss progress, focusing on any gaps and areas needing additional attention. The Co-chair noted that feedback gathered this way would inform future actions and adjustments, as necessary.
20. The meeting expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and efforts of the secretariat but noted that, due to the late sharing of the progress report, it had only limited time to

review it. The meeting expressed hope that the secretariat would provide adequate funding to support projects and welcomed the proposal to organize webinars—both globally and regionally—focused on Montevideo Programme priorities. The webinars were seen as a valuable means to mobilize lawyers and to assess progress. The member concluded by expressing optimism for strengthened collaboration in the future.

21. Members acknowledged not having had the opportunity to thoroughly review the progress report, noting only a brief glance at the document. The members emphasized the importance of updating the implementation roadmaps of each priority area, suggesting that the report would benefit from a clearer structure. Additionally, members pointed out that the report lacked an assessment of the impact of the activities, which would be crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of progress. Members reiterated the need for a more structured approach in future reports. It was noted that the report should also provide a structured direction with outcomes of engagements and synergies.
22. The meeting also expressed appreciation to the Regional Environmental Governance Coordinators and thanked the secretariat. Members referred to discussions at the Second Global Meeting on enhancing the visibility of the Programme, including promoting the Programme at the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), a point which was not reflected in the report. Members also called for further developments on previous requests to increase the Programme's profile.
23. In response to a question from a Steering Committee member, Ms. Bankobeza noted that the Montevideo Programme V is a 10-year initiative adopted by UNEA Resolution 4/20 in 2019, this resolution requires UNEP to prepare a mid-term review report at the halfway point, in 2025, marking the completion of its first five years.
24. Mr. Banda clarified that under this agenda item, the secretariat was mandated to provide an update on the mid-term review. Mr. Banda highlighted that, in accordance with UNEA resolution 4/20, the review is planned for consideration at the end of 2025, during the seventh session of UNEA (UNEA-7). He further noted that while the plan for the review is in place, the necessary funding to undertake it will only be available next year. Provisions will be made to engage consultants to assist in the process. Once the draft report is prepared, the Steering Committee will be convened to provide input prior to its submission to UNEA. An agenda item will be included at the next Steering Committee meeting, and efforts will be made to ensure that the draft report is available by that time.
25. Mr. Cousillas concluded agenda sub-item (b) and requested the secretariat to incorporate any comments received from the members of the Steering Committee, as well as to provide a further update at its next meeting.

Item 6: Update on the financial Status of the Montevideo Programme V

26. Ms. Westrate introduced agenda item 6 and recalled that, at its eighth meeting, the Steering Committee on Implementation agreed to hold a discussion on the financial status of the Montevideo Programme V, at the present meeting.

27. Following an invitation by the co-chair, Mr Banda provided an update, including a breakdown of the budget of the Programme and sources, covering expenditures, funding gaps, and anticipated funding needs.
28. Ms. Westrate invited members to raise any questions and provide any comments.
29. The meeting enquired whether the amount of core funds indicated was intended solely for the Montevideo Programme V, or if it would also cover projects outside of the Montevideo Programme V. Mr. Banda clarified that the funds presented were provided by UNEP and other donors under the framework of the Montevideo Programme V.
30. The meeting acknowledged the report and noted the need for fundraising drives and clear indicators on use of funds. It was recommended that secretariat should share the list of proposals and donors reached and where possible engage regional development banks to establish partnerships that could assist the Programme, provided this is procedurally viable. Additionally, the member suggested directly approaching Member States and regional institutions to contribute to the trust fund or other appropriate funds. The member proposed that the Steering Committee and other relevant bodies explore ways to gather further funds for the Programme.
31. Ms. Westrate closed agenda item 6 and requested the secretariat to reflect the comments made by members, in its next presentation on the same subject at its next meeting.

Item 7: Update on the implementation of priority areas

32. Mr. Cousillas introduced agenda item 7 and invited the secretariat to provide an oral update on the implementation of priority areas.
33. Ms. Bankobeza, on behalf of the secretariat, noted that the progress report submitted under the previous agenda item, was also for consideration by the Steering Committee under this agenda item. As such, the Steering Committee considered under this agenda item the overview of progress made through the Montevideo Programme V on each priority area – on legal responses to pollution, climate change, and biodiversity. Ms. Bankobeza noted that the secretariat was mobilizing funds for implementation of the priority areas as agreed at the Global Meetings.
34. Ms. Bankobeza clarified that the progress report shared during the meeting must be understood as an update to the one presented at the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation.
35. Mr. Cousillas opened the floor for comments.
36. The meeting thanked the secretariat and recommended that the secretariat should develop a priority area matrix with indicators and targets to be integrated into the implementation roadmap in line with the decision made at the last Global Meeting. The

members emphasized that highlighting progress against a clear roadmap would be crucial for fundraising efforts by giving potential funders a clearer understanding of what their contributions would support, potentially helping to address the current funding gap. In response, Mr. Banda assured the Steering Committee that work would be undertaken to review the implementation roadmap, with a report to be provided at the next Steering Committee meeting indicating funding gaps.

37. Mr. Banda informed the meeting that there had been staff changes at the secretariat and normalization was underway. By the first half of 2025, reporting on progress would improve.

38. Mr. Cousillas closed agenda item 7 and invited members to reach out to the secretariat with any comments or questions regarding the report or to request further information on the reports provided by regional representatives.

Item 8: Preparations for upcoming activities and events

39. Ms. Westrate introduced agenda item 8, inviting members to share any upcoming activities or events that they believed should be brought to the attention of the Steering Committee.

40. As no comments were provided, she encouraged members to inform the secretariat should anything arise and proceeded to close the agenda item.

Item 9: Next meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation

Sub-item (a): Date, time, and venue

Sub-item (b): Format (online or in-person)

41. Ms. Westrate introduced agenda item 9, sub-items (a) and (b) and recalled that, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the modalities of work for the Steering Committee for Implementation, the Committee should, at each of its meetings, decide on the date, time, and venue of its next meeting.

42. Ms. Westrate proposed that the Steering Committee convene its tenth meeting in May or June 2025, with the format (online or in-person) to be determined at a later stage. She further suggested that, while the decision on subsequent meetings would be made at the next session, it might be appropriate to hold the eleventh meeting back-to-back with UNEA-7, scheduled from 8 to 12 December 2025 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Ms. Westrate then asked the secretariat to identify dates for consideration by the Committee.

43. Mr. Banda, on behalf of the secretariat, agreed with the proposal and informed members that, considering the current state of funding, it was anticipated that the May-June meeting would likely be held online. He noted that more information on funding would be available in the first quarter of 2025.

44. Ms. Westrate closed sub-items (a) and (b).

Sub-agenda item (c): Draft provisional agenda

45. Ms. Westrate introduced sub-item (c) and asked Mr. Banda, on behalf of the secretariat, to provide an outline of a draft provisional agenda for the next meeting of the Committee (Annex III).
46. Ms. Westrate then opened the floor for comments.
47. The meeting suggested including as an item; update on the implementation roadmap under item 5, aligning with a previous suggestion. The meeting also proposed that this item would include a presentation on countries that would have received support under the Montevideo Programme, and the progress made in their respective contexts. This would provide the Steering Committee with an opportunity to stay informed about the ongoing work conducted under the Programme.
48. The meeting also suggested that it would be helpful for the Steering Committee to receive an update on the progress of ongoing technical assistance projects with insights into the impact of completed projects to better show case the outcomes achieved under the Programme.
49. In the absence of further comments, Ms. Westrate requested the secretariat to incorporate these changes and upload them onto LEAP.
50. Ms. Westrate closed sub-item (c).

Item 10: Any other business

51. Mr. Cousillas introduced agenda item 10, asking members if there were any other issues that they wanted to discuss.
52. One member took the opportunity to update the Steering Committee on two ongoing projects supported by that member's country. The first project focuses on drafting model regulations for lead-acid batteries, aligning closely with the priority areas on chemicals and pollution. The member indicated that a draft would be ready for review in the coming months and invited interested members to provide feedback and comments. The second project involves plans to develop model air quality legislation, leveraging guidelines produced by UNEP. The member highlighted the potential of this initiative to support implementation efforts and extended an invitation to countries interested in collaborating on the drafting process or utilizing the model once finalized. Following a request by another member, the member offered to share further information on the projects mentioned.
53. As no more comments were provided, Mr. Cousillas close agenda item 10.

Item 11: Closure of the meeting

54. Mr. Cousillas introduced agenda item 11 and delivered closing remarks, followed by the closing remarks of Ms. Westrate. The co-chairs thanked the secretariat for the material provided, emphasized the crucial role of the Steering Committee in advancing the Programme, welcomed the new members of the Steering Committee, and encouraged all members to send comments to the secretariat to continue the discussion on the progress report shared under agenda item 5.
55. Ms. Westrate closed the meeting.

Annex I: Members of the Steering Committee for Implementation in attendance at the meeting

Bhutan, Ms. Nima Om

Burkina Faso, Mr. Gontran Some

Colombia, Ms. Daniela Almario Aristizabal

France, Ms. Chloe Godefroy

Maldives, Ms. Fazeela Ahmed Shaheem

Saint Lucia, Ms. Kate Wilson

Slovenia, Ms. Tanja Pucelj Vidović

Switzerland, Mr. Vincent Bohnenblust

Uganda, Ms. Sarah Naigaga

Uruguay, Mr. Marcelo J. Cousillas

USA, Ms. Rachel Westrate

Zambia, Ms. Karen Banda

Annex II: Agenda of the Ninth Meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation as adopted

1. Welcome remarks from the secretariat.
2. Introduction of members.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Election of the Office bearers of the Steering Committee.
5. Update on the mid-term review of the Montevideo Programme V:
 - (a) Progress report;
 - (b) Discussion and feedback.
6. Update on the financial Status of the Montevideo Programme V.
7. Update on the implementation of priority areas.
8. Preparations for upcoming activities and events.
9. Next meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation:
 - (a) Date, time, and venue;
 - (b) Format (online or in-person);
 - (c) Draft provisional agenda.
10. Any other business.
11. Closure of the meeting

Annex III: Provisional Agenda of Tenth Meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation

1. Welcome remarks from the secretariat.
2. Introductions of members.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Update on the mid-term review of the Montevideo Programme V.
5. Update on the implementation of priority areas.
 - (a) Progress report including list of countries and status of technical legal assistance
 - (b) Roadmap for implementation on each priority area
 - (c) Country examples of technical legal assistance from invited countries
 - (d) Discussion and feedback
6. Update on the financial status of the Montevideo Programme V.
7. Preparations for the third global meeting of the national focal points.
8. Date, time, and venue of the next meeting of the Steering Committee for Implementation.
9. Any other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.