

ICA Report on the online segment of the Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-10) of Rotterdam Convention

July 30, 2021

The Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-10) of the Rotterdam Convention has divided its order of business in two segments: an online segment and a face-to-face segment. The online segment has taken place between 26 and 30 July 2021 and has been solely online. The face-to-face segment is expected to be organised between 13 and 24 June 2022 in person in Geneva, Switzerland.

ICA, as an accredited observer, has only been allowed to participate in the meeting of the Conference of the Parties, but has been barred from Contact Groups, Regional Preparatory and Regional meetings, despite numerous contacts and letters to the Secretariat expressing our willingness to take part in them. This entails a grievance as regards previous COP meetings, where ICA was allowed to participate in those subsidiary and accompanying meetings. Moreover, Rotterdam Convention becomes a less transparent and accountable organisation by not allowing observers into these meetings.

Regarding formal matters, the online segment has been characterised by many technical problems that have hindered the good development of the meeting, particularly during the session on 26 July. The platform where the meeting took place, i.e., Interprefy, and/or the organisation have proven unprepared to deal with a meeting with a large number of participants and a high number of interventions.

Moreover, many participants, including important Parties, have had numerous connection problems, which has slowed or even temporarily stopped the development of the meeting. Therefore, multiple Parties have expressed their willingness to resume face-to-face meetings as soon as possible, especially if important substantial items are to be discussed. As they have expressed, Internet and connectivity capabilities in some countries are not optimal, and they find important difficulties in following the meeting.

Regarding substantial matters, the topics discussed have covered the adaptation of Rotterdam Convention to a two-year COP and the continuation of business, which would have been hindered if the whole COP had been postponed to 2022. Specifically, there have been discussions on financial resources, notably requesting the executive

secretary to prepare a revised proposal for the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022-2023; the election of new officers; and the discussion of the report on the outcomes of the Contact Group, i.e. draft decision for an interim budget for 2022 and the venue and date of the face-to-face meeting, which has been adopted.

During the meeting, the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly expressed its annoyance and rejection to the approval of the decision on the working plan which sets the financing of the new Compliance Committee of Rotterdam Convention. This Committee was approved during COP-9 by majority voting, instead of consensus (unanimity), as decisions had been traditionally taken at Rotterdam Convention. Furthermore, this decision was taken with the opposition of Iran.

Regarding this new body, during the online segment, there has been the nomination of eight candidates to serve until the closing of COP-11. They are the following:

- African States: Mr Frederick Muchiri (Kenya)
- Asia-Pacific: Mr Awidya Santikajaya (Indonesia)
- Eastern European States: Ms Karmen Krajnc (Slovenia), Ms Lendita Dika (North Macedonia)
- Latin American and Caribbean States: Ms Vilma Morales Quillama (Peru) and Ms Tamara Morrison (Jamaica)
- Western European and other States: Mr Adly Manseri (Belgium) and Mr Martin Lacroix (Canada)

Seven other candidates have been nominated to serve until the closing of COP-12:

- African States: Mr P'Malinam Essolakina Bafei (Togo) and Ms Paulina Pashukeni Shilunga (Namibia)
- Asia-Pacific: Mr Syed Mutjaba Hussain (Pakistan) and Ms Hanadi Al Rabai'eh (Jordan)
- Eastern European States: Ms Silvana Bunea (Romania)
- Latin American and Caribbean States: Ms Osvaldo Alvarez-Perez (Chile)
- Western European and other States: Mr Matthias Wold (Germany)

Due to the technical and substantial limitations of the online segment, the Secretariat has urged the Parties to postpone some of the topics and discussions to next year's face-to-face segment, as they can be addressed then more easily.

In conclusion:

1. **No substantial aspects referring to chrysotile have been discussed** during the online segment of the COP (at least, in the meetings where ICA has had access,

i.e., the Conference of the Parties meeting). However, these points are scheduled in the agenda for the face-to-face segment. Thus, **we recommend being attentive to the Convention's activity in the next 11 months**, particularly during the Seventeenth meeting of the Chemical Review Committee, which will take place between 20 and 24 September 2021.

2. **The Secretariat has struggled in the organisation and management of the online segment**, both for technical reasons and in managing the agenda with the Parties.
3. **The Secretariat continues to push for a decision-taking process based on majority voting**, instead of consensus. This move has been noticed during the discussions held during the COP and, if finally confirmed, would undermine the letter and the spirit of the Rotterdam Convention based on cooperative efforts among all the Parties.