

**Montreal Protocol
on Substances that
Deplete the Ozone Layer**

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**Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the Parties to
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Item 6 of the provisional agenda for the preparatory segment*

Ensuring the viability of Montreal Protocol operations

**Ensuring the viability of Montreal Protocol operations:
supplementary report****I. Introduction**

1. In decision XXXVII/7, the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer requested the Ozone Secretariat to prepare a report, for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol at its forty-eighth meeting, on the options for making effective and efficient changes, with associated cost estimates, to the timing of, Ozone Secretariat support for and length of the Meetings of the Parties and meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, the Implementation Committee under the Non-Compliance Procedure for the Montreal Protocol and the assessment panels, and to the timing of replenishment decisions. The report was set out in documents UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4 and UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4/Add.1.

2. Discussions on the matter were held in plenary during the forty-eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and in a contact group co-chaired by Alessandro Peru (Italy) and Sergio Merino (Mexico). The plenary discussions are summarized in paragraphs 154–164 of the report of the meeting (UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/5). In the contact group, the Secretariat compiled a list of all questions posed by participants during the discussion, and the parties were able to submit additional questions after the meeting, with a deadline of 31 August 2026. All the questions raised have been compiled in a background note, which is available on the meeting portal of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the Parties. As was agreed during the forty-eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, the Secretariat has prepared the present report to address those questions. The information contained in the present document supplements the information provided in the report submitted and discussed at the forty-eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group.

**II. Scenarios presented in the report considered by the Open-ended
Working Group****A. Derivation and selection of scenarios**

3. The scenarios presented in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4 were developed on the basis of the parameters set out in decision XXXVII/7, namely the timing and length of and Secretariat support for the Meetings of the Parties, their subsidiary bodies and the assessment panels; and the timing of decisions on the replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the

* UNEP/OzL.Pro.38/1.

Montreal Protocol. Scenario A, the business-as-usual scenario, reflects the current meeting cycles of the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol and the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the current work cycles of the assessment panels and the replenishment cycle of the Multilateral Fund. Using scenario A as the reference scenario, the Secretariat developed two additional scenarios by varying the above-mentioned parameters. In developing the variations, the Secretariat was guided by the intention underlying decision XXXVII/7: to explore opportunities to increase efficiency while maintaining the effective functioning of the institutions and processes of the ozone treaties.

4. Scenario B retains the annual Meeting of the Parties, maintaining the current annual decision-making cycle as well as the assessment and replenishment cycles, while modifying the modalities of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group and the Implementation Committee. Scenario C goes further by changing the decision-making cycle itself, with biennial Meetings of the Parties, accompanied by corresponding changes to the meeting modalities of the Open-ended Working Group and the Implementation Committee, as well as to the assessment and replenishment cycles. Scenarios B and C thus represent readily identifiable and implementable adjustments to the current arrangements reflected in scenario A, with different degrees of change, which would help to ensure the efficient and effective continued operation of the ozone treaties.

5. In developing the scenarios, the Secretariat also considered other possibilities, including further reductions in meeting frequency, such as a triennial cycle for the Meeting of the Parties combined with fewer Open-ended Working Group meetings. Such arrangements, however, would represent more substantial departures from current practice and could result in considerable disruptions to the operation of the Montreal Protocol, with potential implications for the effectiveness and sustainability of its institutional arrangements.

6. Numerous other variations in meeting modalities could also be envisaged, including shorter in-person meetings, the addition of, or substitution with, online meetings of different durations, and meetings conducted without interpretation. Applying different combinations of these modalities to the Meetings of the Parties and the meetings of the various subsidiary bodies would generate a very large number of possible scenarios, many of which would represent slight variations of the same underlying scenarios rather than materially distinct approaches.

7. Rather than attempting to present every possible combination, the Secretariat developed the three scenarios as a structured basis for considering a range of possible arrangements. In section IV of document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4, discussed at the forty-eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, some meeting costs associated with different modalities were provided in order to enable parties to develop and consider additional or alternative permutations to the scenarios and meetings. The cost estimates have been updated in the present document.

8. Therefore, the scenarios presented in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4 should be understood not as the only set of possible future arrangements, but as a set selected with a view to illustrating plausible options for change that maintain the viability of the ozone treaties and providing a basis for considering further permutations.

B. Implications of the scenarios

9. The scenarios presented in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4 have different implications for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment, depending on the extent to which the conditions represented by each scenario affect the timing and timeliness of decisions and the ability of the parties to take the decisions necessary to advance implementation.

10. The control measures, reporting of data and other obligations under the Montreal Protocol, including those introduced by the Kigali Amendment, would continue to apply in accordance with their established schedules, irrespective of the frequency and other modalities of meetings. The scenarios themselves would therefore not alter parties' obligations or implementation timelines, but would affect the frequency with which parties collectively considered implementation issues and the speed with which policy responses could be developed and adopted. This consideration may be particularly relevant for the implementation of the Kigali Amendment. As parties make progress in the successive phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), issues relating to implementation may arise, including the availability and uptake of alternatives, safety standards, energy efficiency, servicing requirements, HFC data reporting, licensing and quota systems, and funding. Some issues may require technical consideration and exchange among parties before a policy response or decision can be developed.

11. Scientific, technical, technological and implementation developments, as well as new and emerging issues, do not necessarily arise according to formal meeting cycles. The current meeting and work cycles have been well suited for addressing and handling such issues, first in the Open-ended Working Group and then at the ensuing Meeting of the Parties on an annual basis.
12. Scenario B maintains the current meeting and work cycles, but introduces changes to the format of Open-ended Working Group meetings, which would be held online rather than in person. The impact on the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment is likely to be similar to that of scenario A. The challenges associated with online meetings are discussed in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4 and mentioned in the present document, for example in paragraph 19. To compensate for the loss of face-to-face discussions in the Open-ended Working Group, it is suggested that the Meeting of the Parties be extended in duration to enable sensitive negotiations to be held in person. The first meeting of the Implementation Committee each year would also be online. The previous experience of conducting Implementation Committee meetings online during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was positive, and all the issues on the agenda at that time were addressed. The use of online meetings to replace in-person ones could result in cost savings.
13. Under scenario C, meetings of the Open-ended Working Group and the Meetings of the Parties would be held in alternate years, rather than both being held every year. The principal implication would be the longer gap between the time when issues are first considered and responses developed by the Open-ended Working Group and when they are subsequently submitted, where appropriate, to a Meeting of the Parties for a decision. As a result, an issue might remain pending until the year following a meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. Conversely, an issue requiring urgent consideration at a Meeting of the Parties might suddenly arise without having been considered by the Open-ended Working Group, depriving the parties of opportunities to develop a common understanding and mature proposals before decisions are required. Ways to mitigate the potential shortcomings of scenario C include strengthened planning of agendas over a multi-year period; early identification of matters requiring a decision by a Meeting of the Parties; appropriate use of intersessional consultations; and retaining the possibility of convening additional or extraordinary meetings where warranted.
14. Scenario C could yield significant cost savings by reducing the number of meetings held each year and through the associated changes in the work cycles of the assessment panels, technical options committees and task forces of the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel, including their work related to the replenishment of the Multilateral Fund. Those savings would, however, need to be considered together with the potential need for intensified intersessional work and processes to maintain the continuity of work and ensure sufficient flexibility and responsiveness in the processes to support timely implementation of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment and to address new and emerging issues.
15. For parties operating under paragraph 1 of Article 5 of the Montreal Protocol (Article 5 parties), implementation is largely supported by the Multilateral Fund. The operations of the Fund are managed by its Executive Committee, but overarching policy issues are submitted to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration and decisions. The practical effects of biennial, rather than annual, decision-making by Meetings of the Parties are therefore not likely to significantly disrupt the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment by Article 5 parties as long as Executive Committee operations can continue with regard to projects and related policy development and approvals.
16. The impact of longer intervals between the adoption of decisions at Meetings of the Parties would depend on the nature and urgency of the issues that arise. Many matters could continue to be addressed through the work of the Secretariat, the assessment panels, the Implementation Committee, the Executive Committee and other established mechanisms. Intersessional consultations and virtual meetings could also facilitate the exchange of information and development of issues between formal meetings. Extraordinary Meetings of the Parties or decisions made by silence procedure may be organized for urgent decision-making. Such arrangements could mitigate some effects of scenario C, although they could also give rise to additional intersessional work and resource requirements.
17. Table 1 summarizes the implications of the three basic scenarios across the dimensions addressed in the discussions and the questions raised by the parties; some of those dimensions are addressed in the paragraphs above. Certain explanations are reiterated from document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4.

Table 1
Summary descriptions of scenarios A, B and C and their implications

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Scenario A (business as usual)</i>	<i>Scenario B (extended annual MOP)</i>	<i>Scenario C (biennial MOP)</i>
Description of elements^a	Continued cycles and modalities of meetings, with annual MOPs and OEWG meetings every year; two ImpCom meetings a year; continued cycles of quadrennial assessment and annual progress reports; MLF replenishment every three years; ExCom to continue its meetings as appropriate Continuation of Vienna Convention ORM meetings (with COP Bureau meeting) and meetings of the COP every three years	Replacement of in-person OEWG meetings with online meetings and extension of MOPs to accommodate negotiations that could not be held in online OEWG meetings; one MOP Bureau meeting; two ImpCom meetings, with the first one each year held online; quadrennial assessment and annual progress reports; MLF replenishment every three years; ExCom to continue its meetings as appropriate Continuation of Vienna Convention ORM meetings (with COP Bureau meeting) and meetings of the COP every three years	MOPs every two years and OEWG meetings in alternating years; biennial MOP Bureau meetings in conjunction with MOPs; ImpCom meeting once a year; continued quadrennial assessments, and progress reports every four years, in between quadrennial assessments; MLF replenishment every four years; ExCom to continue its meetings as appropriate Extraordinary MOPs may be organized if decisions need to be taken urgently Vienna Convention ORM meetings (with COP Bureau meeting) and meetings of the COP every four years
Impact on work and decision-making (pros/cons)	No disruptions to current Montreal Protocol operations Annual decision-making Existing high intensity of engagement by parties and stakeholders would be maintained Sometimes forced inclusion of agenda items	Online OEWG meetings Negotiations concentrated in extended MOPs Informational items taken up online Careful agenda management required Challenges posed by online meetings (time zones, connectivity issues, increased intersessional planning and consultations, etc.); sometimes forced inclusion of agenda items	Longer intervals between MOPs resulting in heavy workload and more MOP decisions; careful planning of the programme of work of the parties; strategic biennial agenda for OEWG and MOP meetings and discussions Improvised planning when needs arise (e.g. decision-making needs, emerging issues) Risk of backlog and reliance on extraordinary MOPs; possible overload of agendas; possible increase in online briefings and intersessional consultations; need for careful planning of work to avoid delays in the timing of discussions and decisions
Assessment work	No change to the work cycle; annual meetings of panels and TOCs; annual progress reports; quadrennial assessments; replenishment report every three years; specific annual tasks based on decisions of MOP Business-as-usual cycles and predictable operations	No change to the work cycle; annual meetings of the panels and TOCs; annual progress reports; quadrennial assessments; replenishment report every three years; specific annual tasks based on decisions of MOP Savings on travel for OEWG meetings	Quadrennial assessments; progress reports every four years, in between quadrennial assessments; replenishment report every four years; specific requests based on MOP decisions every two years Savings from fewer panel, TOC and task force meetings and reduced travel to OEWG meetings and MOPs
Compliance	No change in the modalities of the meetings, thus business as usual in handling cases related to compliance and data reporting; timely decisions by MOPs on those cases	ImpCom meetings twice a year, with first meeting online No disruptions to the work cycle of ImpCom; positive experience with ImpCom meetings online in 2020–2021; timely consideration of compliance-related cases and MOP decisions Savings from reduced travel due to online meetings	ImpCom meeting once a year; MOP decisions on cases related to compliance and data reporting adopted only once every two years; a mechanism could be devised to ensure that parties implement ImpCom recommendations arising in between MOPs Savings from reduced conference servicing and travel due to reduced frequency of meetings

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Scenario A (business as usual)</i>	<i>Scenario B (extended annual MOP)</i>	<i>Scenario C (biennial MOP)</i>
Replenishment	No change to replenishment cycle; ExCom to continue meeting as appropriate (currently twice a year)	No change to replenishment cycle; ExCom to continue meeting as appropriate (currently twice a year)	Change from a three-year to a four-year cycle; timing of TEAP replenishment study would also change accordingly
Costs^b (average annual budget, 2028–2031)	\$6.18 million	\$5.18 million (savings compared with scenario A: 16% (\$1.01 million))	\$4.57 million (savings compared with scenario A: 26% (\$1.61 million))
Financial sustainability	Reserve maintained through 2030 at a collection rate of 75%	Reserve maintained through 2031 at a collection rate of 75%	Reserve maintained through 2031 at a collection rate of 75%, in addition to approximately \$500,000 for implementing activities

Abbreviations: COP – Conference of the Parties; ExCom – Executive Committee; ImpCom – Implementation Committee; MLF – Multilateral Fund; MOP – Meeting of the Parties; OEWG – Open-ended Working Group; ORM – Ozone Research Managers; TEAP – Technology and Economic Assessment Panel; TOC – technical options committee.

^a Unless otherwise specified, the meetings would be held in person.

^b The cost figures are the grand totals of the Montreal Protocol trust fund budgets set out in table 3 of document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4, averaged over the period 2028–2031.

C. Implications for effective, equitable and inclusive participation

18. Reducing the frequency of meetings could generate savings but would lengthen the intervals between opportunities for parties to engage directly with one another and with other stakeholders. The significance of that effect would depend on the workload during the interval periods and on the availability of effective intersessional mechanisms for consultation, the exchange of information and the provision of technical support.

19. Greater use of online meetings could facilitate participation by eliminating travel requirements and by enabling additional national officials or technical experts to participate without travelling. At the same time, differences in connectivity, access to appropriate technology, time zones and working environments could affect the ability of some parties to participate fully. Online formats may also provide fewer opportunities for informal consultations and direct exchanges, which can be important for clarifying complex technical and negotiation issues and for facilitating consensus. Where interpretation is required, reliable services would also need to be available.

20. Access to interpretation is an important component of equitable participation in intergovernmental meetings. Any changes affecting interpretation would therefore need to be considered not only in terms of their financial implications but also in terms of their effect on parties' ability to understand, make interventions on and negotiate matters under consideration. Interpretation and translation supported by artificial intelligence are developing rapidly (see sect. III.C below).

21. A number of safeguards could be considered to ensure that efficiency measures do not disproportionately affect small countries with limited institutional and technical capacity, which may have a greater need for timely access to information, technical guidance and capacity-building during the interval periods. To enable delegations, in particular small delegations attending meetings, to fully benefit from the meetings, the following measures need to be taken: avoid organizing simultaneous negotiating sessions; provide adequate interpretation during plenary sessions; ensure predictable schedules and sufficient time for regional and informal consultations; maintain travel support for eligible Article 5 parties for in-person meetings; provide documentation sufficiently in advance of meetings; ensure accessible intersessional technical support; and use virtual arrangements selectively to enhance rather than constrain participation.

22. A guiding consideration in choosing the right modalities for the meetings could be that measures to improve efficiency should, to the extent possible, preserve the capacity of all parties to participate effectively and equitably in the work of ozone treaty institutions and to receive the information and support necessary to implement their obligations.

D. Impact of the scenarios on Secretariat staffing and personnel costs

23. In document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4, changes to the Secretariat's capacity to support the implementation of the ozone treaties were not considered. The impact of the scenarios on Secretariat staffing and personnel costs would depend on the nature and scale of the changes envisaged. Reductions in the frequency and duration or changes in the format of meetings would not necessarily result in proportional reductions in the workload of the Secretariat or in personnel costs.

24. A significant part of the Secretariat's work consists of functions that would continue to be necessary, irrespective of the number or duration of meetings. Those functions include supporting parties in their implementation of and compliance with the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol; receiving, reviewing and processing data and other information submitted by parties; supporting the Implementation Committee and the Bureau; servicing the assessment panels and other bodies; preparing and processing documentation; maintaining information systems and institutional records; responding to requests from parties; coordinating various activities with the Multilateral Fund secretariat, implementing agencies and other relevant organizations; and carrying out financial, administrative and programme management functions. As the Ozone Secretariat is part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), coordination with and participation in UNEP meetings and activities would also remain necessary.

25. Changes in meeting arrangements would mainly affect the meeting-related components of the Secretariat's workload. Even with reductions in the duration of meetings, much of the preparatory and follow-up work would remain: documents for meetings would still need to be prepared and processed, consultations with parties and partners would still need to be conducted, logistical arrangements would still be required, and the meeting report and subsequent follow-up would still need to be completed. Shorter meetings could also result in some work being transferred to intersessional consultations or virtual meetings rather than being eliminated. Accordingly, scenarios involving relatively limited

changes in meeting duration would be expected to have a greater immediate effect on meeting costs, such as conference servicing, interpretation, travel and daily subsistence allowance payments, than on Secretariat staffing and personnel costs.

26. Scenarios involving a more substantial or sustained reduction in the frequency of meetings, such as scenario C, could have a greater effect on workload. Any resulting staffing implications would, however, need to be assessed by examining the functions and workload associated with the relevant scenario rather than by applying a proportional reduction based on the frequency and duration of meetings. A reduction in staffing may arise only where a sustained reduction in workload makes it possible to abolish or downgrade posts, leave vacant posts unfilled, reduce the use of temporary personnel or consultants, or otherwise restructure staffing arrangements. Such changes would need to account for the capacity required to discharge the functions of the Secretariat as assigned by the parties and to maintain the continuity of operations and services.

III. Updated and new information

A. Update on the UN80 process

27. The UN80 initiative was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in March 2025, in the year of the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations, as a system-wide reform to enhance internal efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining processes, reviewing mandate implementation and exploring structural changes and programme realignment across the United Nations system. Work package 27, one of the work packages established under the initiative, is aimed at making United Nations environmental support more coherent, efficient and impactful, and at addressing the increasing fragmentation of the United Nations environmental architecture, despite major achievements in that area. Four principal areas – environmental science, governance, coordination, and implementation support to countries – are examined, specifically with regard to possible institutional restructuring and functional optimization. The work package does not include proposals to change the legal mandates of multilateral environmental agreements, but is instead aimed at improving coordination, implementation and delivery while respecting the autonomy of treaty bodies.

28. Work package 27 is co-led by the Executive Director of UNEP and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the participation of some 20 other entities, including the Ozone Secretariat. A final draft report on the work package was submitted to the Secretary-General in June 2026, followed by briefings of Member States and the Steering Committee of the UN80 initiative. The report, including the goals and recommendations set out therein (see box below), was expected to be finalized by August 2026, after which the Secretary-General was expected to present an information brief. At the time of the preparation of the present note, the report had not yet been issued.

Summary of the three goals and 10 recommendations of work package 27

A. Elevate the environment in the multilateral system

1. Recognize that a healthy environment undergirds all three pillars of the Charter of the United Nations
2. Enable the United Nations Environment Assembly to achieve its potential as the universal United Nations body serving as the convening platform for coherent, system-wide environmental action
3. Reposition environmental science as a shared United Nations asset
4. Elevate the environmental coordination function: United Nations Environment Management Group 2.0

B. Strengthen multilateral environmental governance

5. Explore consolidation options where feasible
6. Strengthen programmatic synergies across multilateral environmental agreements
7. Advance administrative synergies across multilateral environmental agreements and harmonized reporting

C. Scale implementation of country commitments and priorities

8. Establish a coordination architecture for United Nations system-wide policy coherence and delivery
9. Create artificial intelligence-enabled support centres, starting with a pilot climate support centre, as “one-stop shops” that facilitate implementation support for Member States
10. Institutionalize direct engagement with real-economy actors to accelerate implementation and shift private capital towards sustainable outcomes

29. In the light of the UN80 initiative's aim of achieving the above-mentioned institutional restructuring and functional optimization, UNEP began its system-wide process of reviewing efficiency with a view to streamlining operations and sharpening programme activities and their impact in order to enhance their effectiveness and to navigate financial uncertainties triggered by shifts in the policies and priorities of countries. As part of that effort, UNEP plans to consolidate the administrative functions of its divisions into a hub to achieve efficiencies and reduce administrative fragmentation. A relevant review and assessments are being conducted and are expected to be completed in 2027.

B. Implications of different meeting modalities

1. Changing the modalities of meetings

30. The modalities of meetings include their frequency, timing, duration and format. Each of those parameters can be adjusted, individually or in combination, for the meetings included in the scenarios, with different operational and financial implications. Given the large number of possible permutations, a few key examples of changes that could be considered, along with indicative cost estimates, are presented in this section.

31. In general, the costs of the meetings are largely driven by:

(a) The meeting venue, which influences the costs of using the venue itself and the travel costs of funded participants, Secretariat staff, and conference servicing staff, which include interpreters, report writers, editors, and editorial and document management assistants;

(b) The agenda of the meeting, which has an impact on the number of documents edited and translated into the languages of the meeting;

(c) The format (online, in person) and duration of the meeting.

32. Table 2 provides cost estimates for Meetings of the Parties and Open-ended Working Group meetings with their current modalities and with changes in the duration and format of those meetings, along with estimated cost differences:

(a) A Meeting of the Parties is currently a five-day in-person meeting. Table 2 shows the cost increase associated with changing it to a seven-day in-person meeting (with a five-day preparatory segment and a two-day high-level segment), as envisaged in scenario B;

(b) The Open-ended Working Group currently holds five-day in-person meetings. Table 2 shows the cost savings that would result from changing to four-day and three-day in-person meetings, and to four-day and two-day online meetings to consider agenda items that are informational in nature, with and without interpretation.

Table 2
Cost estimates for Meetings of the Parties and Open-ended Working Group meetings with current modalities and examples of altered modalities

<i>Modalities</i>	<i>Indicative conference servicing costs per meeting</i>	<i>Indicative savings/additional conference servicing costs per meeting</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Current practice (five-day MOP, in person)	\$600 000	n/a	Estimates based on MOP to be held in Nairobi
Two additional days of MOP in Nairobi	n/a	Additional costs: \$150 000	Two additional days of daily subsistence allowance for 120 participants from Article 5 parties: \$70 000
Current practice (five-day OEWG meeting, in person)	\$650 000	n/a	Estimates based on OEWG meeting to be held in Bangkok according to document UNEP/OzL.Pro.38/4
Four-day OEWG meeting, in person	\$545 000	\$105 000	Savings from use of venue (rental, security, utilities) and from conference servicing, which includes interpretation, report-writing and editing (fees and daily subsistence allowance) Savings from travel of participants from Article 5 parties would be \$35,000 (one day of daily subsistence allowance for 120 participants)
Three-day OEWG meeting, in person	\$480 000	\$170 000	Savings from use of venue (rental, security, utilities) and from conference servicing, which includes interpretation, report-writing and editing (fees and daily subsistence allowance) Savings from travel of participants from Article 5 parties would be \$70,000 (two days of daily subsistence allowance for 120 participants) Risk of not being able to finish all agenda items
Four-day OEWG online meeting (eight sessions, two hours each) with interpretation	\$360 000	\$290 000	Based on average actual expenses of OEWG meetings held in 2020–2021, adjusted for inflation Savings from use of venue (rental, security, utilities) and conference servicing staff travel partially offset by use of online meeting platform Savings from travel of participants from Article 5 parties would be \$420,000 Savings from Secretariat staff travel would be \$100,000 Risk of not being able to finish all agenda items Inability to meet, discuss and negotiate issues in the margins of the plenary and contact groups Uncertain availability of remote simultaneous interpretation by United Nations interpreters during the sessions
Four-day OEWG online meeting (eight sessions, two hours each) without interpretation	\$227 000	\$423 000	Based on average actual expenses of OEWG meetings held in 2020–2021, adjusted for inflation Savings from use of venue (rental, security, utilities), interpretation and conference servicing staff travel partially offset by use of online meeting platform Savings from travel of participants from Article 5 parties would be \$420,000 Savings from Secretariat staff travel would be \$100,000 Risk of not being able to finish all agenda items Inability to meet, discuss and negotiate issues in the margins of the plenary and contact groups
Two-day OEWG online meeting (four sessions, two hours each) with interpretation	\$180 000	\$470 000	
Two-day OEWG online meeting (four sessions, two hours each) without interpretation	\$113 000	\$537 000	

Abbreviations: MOP – Meeting of the Parties; OEWG – Open-ended Working Group.

33. The Implementation Committee meets twice per year, in conjunction with the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and the Meeting of the Parties. Due to the heavy workload of the Committee in recent years, mainly resulting from requests for HFC baseline revisions for several Article 5 parties, the duration of the meetings has been increased to two days. In addition to the cost drivers mentioned in paragraph 31 above, the costs of Committee meetings are also driven by:

- (a) Membership, which affects the number of languages required for interpretation and the translation of pre-session documents;
- (b) Travel costs for members;
- (c) Number of cases to be considered by the Committee, which affects the volume of documentation and, of late, also the duration of the meeting.

34. The estimated savings from and impact of the different modalities described are summarized in table 3.

Table 3

Estimated costs of Implementation Committee meetings with current and different modalities

<i>Modality</i>	<i>Indicative conference servicing cost per meeting</i>	<i>Indicative savings from conference servicing costs per meeting</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Current practice: two-day Implementation Committee meeting, in person, with interpretation	\$100 000	n/a	Estimates based on meeting costs according to document UNEP/OzL.Pro.38/4
One-day Implementation Committee meeting, in person, with interpretation	\$85 000	\$15 000	Average cost per meeting held in 2024, adjusted for inflation for a meeting in 2027 In 2024, interpretation costs exceeded documentation costs Savings from interpretation, venue and servicing days; documentation unchanged; one day of daily subsistence allowance (\$2,000 for Article 5 members) Risk: insufficient time in years with heavy caseloads
One-day Implementation Committee meeting, in person, without interpretation and without translation of pre-session documents	\$54 000	\$46 000	Estimates based on meeting costs according to document UNEP/OzL.Pro.38/4/Add.1 Savings as indicated above, plus those from non-translation of pre-session documents
Two-day Implementation Committee meeting online (four 2-hour sessions per day), with interpretation	\$70 000	\$30 000	Based on actual costs of online meetings held in 2021, adjusted for inflation for a meeting in 2027 Experience of 2020–2021 indicates that online meetings were successful and did not present many difficulties, except for the challenge of finding a time zone that suited all members of the Committee Savings of approximately \$32,500 from travel of participants from Article 5 parties Increased preparatory work to organize online sessions
Two-day Implementation Committee meeting online (four 2-hour sessions), without interpretation and without translation of pre-session documents	\$39 000	\$61 000	Based on actual costs of the online meetings of 2020–2021, adjusted for inflation, after eliminating interpretation and pre-session translation costs, for a meeting in 2027 Savings of approximately \$32,500 from travel of participants from Article 5 parties
One-day Implementation Committee meeting online (two 2-hour sessions), without interpretation and without translation of pre-session documents	\$30 000	\$70 000	Estimates based on 2021 expenses, adjusted for inflation for a meeting to be held in 2027 2021 expenses were adjusted to reduce interpretation, report-writing, non-translation of pre-session documents and platform costs

35. The indicative conference servicing costs presented in tables 2 and 3 are consistent with the costs provided in the budget contained in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.38/4/Add.1. In addition to the indicative cost savings presented in the two tables, further cost savings could be considered from the following budget items:

(a) Bureau meetings held in English only could reduce the normal budget of a Bureau meeting by approximately \$16,000;

(b) The meeting documentation component, including editing and translation, represents a significant part of the conference servicing costs (approximately 25% for Open-ended Working Group meetings and 35% for Meetings of the Parties); therefore, reducing the amount of documentation edited and translated would reduce costs.

36. Reducing the duration of meetings, such as those of the Open-ended Working Group, could be implemented as a specific efficiency measure without implying that further reductions in the frequency, duration or scope of meetings, or in other elements of the institutional arrangements of the Montreal Protocol, would necessarily follow. Any subsequent changes would remain subject to consideration and decision by the parties in the light of currently prevailing circumstances.

37. At the same time, experience gained from implementing such a measure could provide useful information for future consideration by the parties. A shorter meeting could therefore be reviewed after an appropriate period of time to examine its impact on the ability of parties to cover all items on the agenda, conduct contact group meetings and informal consultations, ensure effective and inclusive participation and prepare matters adequately for consideration by a Meeting of the Parties. The review could also consider the actual financial savings achieved and whether shortening the formal meeting resulted in additional intersessional, virtual or other work.

38. More broadly, the history of the ozone treaties demonstrates that their institutional arrangements have evolved in response to changing workloads and requirements. As is described in section III.F below, the frequency of meetings has been adjusted at different stages in the development of the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol. Experience suggests that meeting arrangements can be adapted while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to periods of increased negotiation activity and higher scientific or technical workloads.

2. Intersessional workload and provision of support to parties

39. Any reduction or restructuring of formal meetings could result in work being transferred to the intersessional period. The extent of that additional workload would depend on the scenario concerned, the volume and complexity of the agenda and the extent to which matters could be concluded under the revised meeting arrangements.

40. For example, shortening the duration of an Open-ended Working Group meeting while retaining a similar agenda could require additional preparatory work, written exchanges, virtual consultations or discussions before or after the meeting. Similarly, reducing the frequency of formal meetings could increase the need for intersessional consultations to address matters arising between meetings. Greater use of online meetings could reduce travel and some conference costs but would continue to require Secretariat support for scheduling, documentation, coordination and, where applicable, interpretation and technical arrangements. Conducting meetings online rather than in person would also require intense intersessional planning and preparations.

41. Additional intersessional work could also affect the Secretariat's capacity to perform its other mandated functions and to provide timely technical and policy support to parties. This consideration is particularly relevant as parties progress in the implementation of the Kigali Amendment and address evolving implementation and compliance requirements.

42. Should parties decide to implement changes to meeting modalities, the effects of those changes could be reviewed after an appropriate time period. Such a review could involve assessing the actual financial savings achieved, additional intersessional work generated and any effects on the Secretariat's capacity to provide timely support to parties, and could inform subsequent decisions on whether arrangements should be maintained, further modified or, where necessary, reinstated.

C. Use of artificial intelligence

1. Use of artificial intelligence in online meetings with interpretation

43. To assess the practical feasibility and costs of servicing online meetings with the support of artificial intelligence, the Secretariat conducted a survey of the three virtual meeting platforms Zoom,

Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex, comparing the subscription costs, the availability and cost of artificial intelligence-powered interpretation and captioning in the six official languages of the United Nations, and platform availability and accessibility in countries around the world. The results are summarized in table 4. The one-time cost of equipment for a hybrid meeting room (three to five podium microphones, two room cameras and ancillary equipment) is estimated at approximately \$4,000 (rental or purchase). In certain countries, none of the platforms are available (see para. 46 below).

Table 4

Comparison of the subscription costs of Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex

<i>Platform</i>	<i>Subscription plan</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Base cost (US dollars)</i>	<i>Artificial intelligence-powered interpretation (US dollars)</i>	<i>Artificial intelligence-powered subtitles/captions (US dollars)</i>	<i>Total cost (US dollars)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Zoom	Yearly unlimited	< 300	300	300	50	650	Unlimited meetings for one year (all languages) Easy to integrate third-party interpretation and human interpretation Temporary subscription during meeting period
		1 000	2 000	300	50	2 350	
	Two months	< 300	60	Not available	–	60	
		1 000	350	Not available	–	350	
Microsoft Teams	Yearly unlimited	< 300	300	300	Not specified	600	Unlimited meetings for one year Additional hidden costs may apply Microsoft Teams Enterprise account needed
		1 000	1 000	300	Not specified	1 300	
Webex	Yearly unlimited	200	144	300	Not specified	444	Webex Meet: per-user price
		1 000	15 000 to 45 000	300	Not specified	15 600 to > 45 600	Webex Enterprise large enterprise price > 95 000 (non-official price)

44. The survey confirmed that annual licences for two of the platforms, Zoom and Microsoft Teams, can be obtained at very reasonable prices (\$2,350 and \$1,300, respectively) for meetings of up to 1,000 participants, with artificial intelligence-powered interpretation in all six official languages. In contrast, the standard cost for human interpretation is approximately \$150,000 for an in-person meeting and \$130,000 for an online meeting.

45. The decisive consideration is still quality. The most rigorous evaluation available within the United Nations system is the one conducted by the World Health Organization. The evaluation concluded that the technology was not yet fit for meetings with external stakeholders. For negotiations in which the precise rendering of treaty language, country positions and technical terminology is essential, artificial intelligence-powered interpretation cannot, at present, replace human interpreters.

46. The survey revealed that all three platforms are subject to some restrictions in certain countries, including Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Any formal online meeting serviced through one of those

platforms would therefore require alternative arrangements in those countries (e.g. dial-in bridges or exceptional licensing) to guarantee equitable and inclusive participation.

47. On this basis, it is suggested that the platforms be reviewed periodically as the technology matures, noting that the Secretariat already uses artificial intelligence unofficially for transcripts, summaries and record searches (see also UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4, para. 41).

2. Use of artificial intelligence for the translation of meeting documents

48. The Secretariat examined a commercial artificial intelligence-powered translation tool, DeepL, which supports all six official languages of the United Nations and is offered on subscription plans. The resulting information is summarized in table 5, along with the measured character volumes of the documentation prepared for two recent meetings of the parties.

Table 5
DeepL subscription comparison for translation of documents

<i>DeepL plan</i>	<i>Annual fee (US dollars)</i>	<i>Limit (characters per month)</i>	<i>Limit (files per month)</i>	<i>Character count</i>	
				<i>OEWG48</i>	<i>MOP37</i>
Individual	105	300 000	3	n/a	n/a
Team	345	1 000 000	20	598 290	734 580
Business	689	Unlimited	100	n/a	n/a

49. The assessment demonstrates that the technology cost of machine translation has become negligible: a business-grade subscription covering the full documentation of the Meeting of the Parties and the Open-ended Working Group meeting in all six languages of the United Nations would cost \$689 per year, compared with the costs of human translation, which came to approximately \$150,000 for the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the Parties. The translation itself can be performed using artificial intelligence, but human expertise would still be required to verify, correct and finalize the translation.

50. This model of machine translation with human verification, post-editing and finalization is already institutionalized within the United Nations system. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management operates the eLUNA/gText suite, which includes machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools based on the United Nations corpus in all six official languages. However, the conference services do not offer post-editing services alone for documents translated by the Secretariat using artificial intelligence.

51. Actions that the Secretariat could take to advance its use of artificial intelligence include the following:

- (a) Pilot-test a commercial tool for the translation of documents such as meeting information notes and web content, at a cost in the range of \$345–\$689;
- (b) Build an ozone-specific terminology glossary (e.g. controlled substances, treaty formulations, institutional names) into a chosen tool;
- (c) Outsource human post-editing services for all translated documents or selected documents (e.g. decision texts, compliance-related documents and meeting reports).

52. In the light of the above, artificial intelligence in document translation is an available, lower-risk efficiency measure in comparison with artificial intelligence-powered interpretation, which remains a technology to monitor rather than to deploy for formal meetings at present.

D. Efforts relating to contributions

53. The Secretariat dispatches invoices to parties twice a year, reminding them of their contributions to be paid to the trust funds for the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol. The Secretariat also reports to parties on the status of contributions as at 30 April, 30 September and 31 December every year. To align its practices with those of UNEP and other multilateral environmental agreements administered by UNEP, the Secretariat has started publishing reports on the status of contributions on its website, which are updated on a monthly basis.

54. In accordance with the budget decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and of the Meetings of the Parties, the Secretariat, together with the President of the Conference of the Parties, follows up with parties to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol that have outstanding contributions of two or more years by sending letters urging them to contribute,

then by following up bilaterally. While the Secretariat believes that the follow-up efforts have resulted in outstanding payments being made, an assessment has not been conducted on whether those efforts have resulted in improved payment rates over time.

55. Practices and approaches under other multilateral environmental agreements for the non-payment of contributions vary from reminders and payment plans to restrictions on eligibility for membership in the bureau and other bodies, travel support and voting rights. Examples include the following:

(a) The Convention on Biological Diversity provides that parties with contributions outstanding for two or more years are ineligible for membership of the Bureau and subsidiary bodies and cannot nominate members of the compliance committees;

(b) Under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, contributions outstanding for three or more years can result in a loss of voting rights and exclusion from holding offices in Convention bodies;

(c) Under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, parties with contributions outstanding for two or more years may be ineligible for election to the Bureau of the respective conference of the parties or to its subsidiary bodies, while contributions outstanding for four or more years may result in loss of voting rights and ineligibility for travel support for certain intersessional activities, with some exceptions;

(d) The Minamata Convention on Mercury provides for the Conference of the Parties to consider appropriate measures in certain cases involving contributions that remain outstanding for more than two years.

56. The Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol currently do not provide for such consequences for non-payment.

57. The Secretariat is ready to explore ways of mobilizing funds from other sources, such as from philanthropic organizations or the private sector. Such funding could support specific, clearly defined activities consistent with mandates established by the parties. Those funds would be complementary to the contributions by the parties for the core activities of the Secretariat. Any such funding would need to be accepted and managed in accordance with the applicable United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations and the United Nations Environment Programme partnership policies and procedures, and with appropriate safeguards concerning conflicts of interest, accountability and independence.

58. Subject to the relevant safeguards, philanthropic and private sector funding could provide additional resources for appropriate activities, complementing the financing of the core and mandated functions of the Secretariat.

E. Assessment panels

1. Impact of the frequency of assessment panel work and meetings on the quality of assessments

59. The frequency of meetings and other collaborative work undertaken by the assessment panels is one of several factors that can affect the preparation, quality and timeliness of their assessments. The nature and working methods of the Scientific Assessment Panel, the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel and its technical options committees, and the Environmental Effects Assessment Panel differ, however, and the implications of changes in the frequency or format of their work would therefore not necessarily be the same.

60. The preparation of an assessment is an iterative process involving, among other activities, scoping, literature review, drafting, exchange and review of findings among experts, reconciliation of different expert perspectives, integration of material across chapters or areas of expertise, peer review and finalization. Some of those activities can be carried out effectively through electronic correspondence and virtual meetings. Other stages, in particular those involving the integration of findings, the resolution of complex scientific or technical issues and the development of consensus among experts, can benefit significantly from more intensive interaction in person.

61. The Technology and Economic Assessment Panel, its technical options committees and the Environmental Effects Assessment Panel normally meet in person once a year to prepare their annual progress reports and other specific reports requested by the parties. If necessary, they may meet twice in a year when finalizing their quadrennial assessments. The Scientific Assessment Panel organizes

separate meetings of chapter authors and reviewers, normally in the latter two years of their quadrennial assessment preparations. For the preparation of progress and specific reports, the Co-Chairs of the Scientific Assessment Panel consult among themselves and with key scientists without holding formal meetings. Reducing the number or frequency of meetings would not necessarily result in a corresponding reduction in the quality of an assessment, provided that sufficient opportunities for expert interaction, review and quality assurance were maintained through other means, including online meetings. There would nevertheless be a point at which further reductions in the number or frequency of meetings could negatively affect the panels' ability to produce assessments of the quality and timeliness expected by the parties.

62. Reducing the frequency of in-person meetings would make sense if implemented with a reduction in the number of reports that the panels and technical options committees are requested by the parties to prepare; for example, instead of annual progress reports, panels and technical options committees might prepare biennial progress reports or brief reports when compelling issues arise in the relevant sectors addressed by the committees, or no progress reports at all between quadrennial assessments. Extending the interval between progress reports could reduce the costs and resources required over a given period, but could also significantly delay the reporting of the latest, new and emerging information, particularly if knowledge in the areas covered by the panels and technical options committees is developing quickly.

63. Replacing in-person meetings with online meetings would save costs but also shift the workload associated with the preparation of assessments. For instance, work that would otherwise be undertaken collectively during meetings might need to be conducted through additional virtual meetings, correspondence and individual intersessional work. Such arrangements could have implications for the workload and participation of panel members, including experts participating from different time zones or with differing levels of institutional and technical support.

64. Any consideration of changes to the work cycles of the assessment panels and the modalities of their meetings would therefore need to balance potential efficiencies against the need to maintain the scientific and technical quality, independence, comprehensiveness and timeliness of the assessments and their usefulness in supporting decision-making by the parties.

2. Costs of the meetings of the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel and technical options committees

65. A review of costs of the meetings of the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel and the technical options committees over the past four years revealed that the average cost of one in-person meeting, including the venue costs and the travel costs of at least eight Article 5 experts, came to approximately \$33,000 and \$32,000, respectively. Those costs are presented in tables 6 and 7 below.

66. If technical options committee meetings were held online, they could be set up in either the Microsoft Teams or Webex platform of the Secretariat, meaning that no costs would be incurred for the venue and the travel of participants. Holding the technical options committee meetings back to back with Technology and Economic Assessment Panel meetings could save air travel costs for about six co-chairs, amounting to roughly \$10,000.

Table 6
Costs of technical options committee meetings, 2023–2026

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of meetings</i>	<i>Venue costs^a</i>	<i>Number of Article 5 participants funded</i>	<i>Article 5 participant travel costs</i>
2026	5	22 314	35	117 923
2025	6	2 008	60	232 369
2024	6	12 820	43	132 682
2023	4	7 291	34	147 146
4-year average^b	5	11 108	43	157 530
Cost/meeting		2 116	8	30 006
Total cost per meeting, including venue and travel				32 122

^a Technical options committees find free or inexpensive venues, often hosted by United Nations organizations such as UNEP, or by organizations with which members are affiliated.

^b In 2025, venue costs were very low because a few meetings were held at no-cost venues (e.g. that of the International Maritime Organization), while travel costs remained high due to those locations having high daily subsistence allowance rates.

Table 7

Costs of Technology and Economic Assessment Panel meetings, 2023–2026

(United States dollars)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Venue costs</i>	<i>Number of Article 5 participants funded</i>	<i>Article 5 participant travel costs</i>
2026	1 500	13	43 800
2025	12 940	6	23 237
2024	4 860	6	18 514
2023	7 121	5	21 639
4-year average	6 605	8	26 797
Total cost per meeting including venue and travel			33 403

67. Two of the tables contained in document UNEP/OzL.Pro.WG.1/48/4/Add.1, namely table 3 (Costs incurred for meetings of assessment panels and technical options committees during the period 2022–2025) and table 4 (Costs incurred for the participation of co-chairs and essential experts from Article 5 countries in meetings of the Open-ended Working Group and the Ozone Research Managers and in Meetings of the Parties during the period 2022–2025), have been combined into a single table and updated to include 2026 data. The updated table is available as a stand-alone background note on the meeting portal of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the Parties.

F. Historical experience with changes in the frequency of meetings

68. At its first meeting, held in 1989, the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention adopted rules of procedure providing for ordinary meetings once every two years, unless the parties decided otherwise. At its second meeting, in 1991, the Conference decided that, beginning with its third meeting in 1993, meetings would be convened once every three years. That triennial cycle has been maintained since that time. The change reflected the nature and timing of the work to be undertaken under the Convention and established an appropriate frequency that enabled the Conference to consider, at appropriate intervals, matters relating to scientific research and systematic observations, cooperation and the administration of the Convention, while relevant activities continued during the intersessional periods.

69. The frequency of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group has also varied over the history of the Montreal Protocol. During the early years, the Open-ended Working Group met frequently as parties developed important elements of the regime. The first meeting was held in August 1989, and four meetings with several sessions had been held by June 1990. At the second Meeting of the Parties, in June 1990, the Secretariat was authorized to convene, if necessary, up to six meetings of the Open-ended Working Group before the Third Meeting of the Parties. At that time, the Open-ended Working Group was addressing several important issues, including the development of the financial mechanism, adjustments and amendments to the Protocol, workplans for Articles 9 and 10, and the trade provisions of the Protocol. Only one meeting was held between the Second and Third Meetings of the Parties, and three meetings were held between the Third and Fourth Meetings of the Parties.

70. As those institutional arrangements became established and the nature of the work evolved, such a high frequency of Open-ended Working Group meetings was no longer required. The meeting pattern consequently evolved towards the current arrangement, under which an ordinary meeting of the Open-ended Working Group is generally held once a year, in advance of the annual Meeting of the Parties. During the negotiations of the Kigali Amendment in 2015 and 2016, the number of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group increased again due to several resumed sessions of the Open-ended Working Group meetings. At the time of COVID-19 pandemic, when all meetings were held online, the number of Open-ended Working Group meetings increased as well. Each meeting was a briefing, with question-and-answer sessions on the various reports of the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel, including on the replenishment, CFC-11 and energy efficiency.

71. The frequency of meetings of the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund has also evolved in response to its workload. During the early years of the Fund, the Executive Committee met frequently, including four times in 1994, before a pattern of three meetings per year became established. The possibility of reducing the number of meetings was subsequently considered on several occasions. At times when the workload remained high, including during the development and consideration of hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) phase-out policies and plans, the pattern of three

meetings per year was retained. In 2014, the Executive Committee introduced two meetings per year on a trial basis, while retaining the option of holding an additional intersessional meeting should urgent matters require consideration. Two meetings per year subsequently became the normal pattern. The terms of reference of the Executive Committee continue to provide flexibility for it to hold two or three meetings each year.

72. Historical experience shows that the frequency of meetings under the ozone treaties has been adjusted over time in response to the nature and volume of work and institutional needs. A reduction in meeting frequency has not automatically brought about a reduction in the effectiveness of the regime. Rather, where the volume and urgency of work permitted, meetings have been held less frequently, while other substantive, scientific, technical and administrative work continued intersessionally.

73. At the same time, historical experience also demonstrates the importance of maintaining flexibility. Periods of significant policy development or negotiation activity have required more intensive meetings and consultations. Any future adjustment to meeting frequency would therefore need to take account of the expected workload and provide sufficient flexibility to increase the frequency or duration of meetings when required.

G. Brief comparison of meeting schedules and frequency under other multilateral environmental agreements

74. For informational purposes, the Secretariat has prepared a comparison of the schedule and frequency of meetings of governing and subsidiary bodies under other multilateral environmental agreements:

(a) The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions generally hold conferences of the parties biennially, but they also maintain substantial subsidiary and intersessional machinery. One point of particular relevance to the Montreal Protocol comparison is that the Open-ended Working Group of the Parties to the Basel Convention generally meets in the year in which the Conference of the Parties to the Convention does not meet. Compliance and technical committees across the three conventions meet annually or according to workload, using combinations of in-person and online meetings. The joint secretariat has around 65 staff members serving the three conventions;

(b) The Minamata Convention on Mercury illustrates how meeting frequency can evolve as a treaty matures. The first five meetings of the Conference of the Parties were essentially annual, after which ordinary meetings of the Conference moved to a biennial cycle. The meetings of the Conference are complemented by regional preparatory meetings, several Bureau meetings, annual meetings of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, and scientific and expert work. The secretariat of the Convention comprises 13 staff members;

(c) The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Convention on Migratory Species have substantially less frequent meetings of governing bodies. Meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species have generally been held every three years since 2004, but its Standing Committee performs important intersessional functions and the Animals and Plants Committees each meet twice between conferences of the parties. The secretariat of the Convention has around 39 staff. The Convention on Migratory Species also operates on a triennial cycle, supported by annual intersessional meetings of its Standing Committee and periodic meetings of its Scientific Council; its secretariat has around 35 staff;

(d) The Convention on Biological Diversity moved from annual to biennial meetings of the Conference of the Parties in 2000. Its Cartagena and Nagoya Protocol governing bodies also meet biennially in conjunction with the Conference of the Parties. However, substantial work continues between the meetings of the Conference of the Parties: Its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice has generally met annually since 2010, its Subsidiary Body on Implementation operates intersessionally, and its Bureau meets online and during subsidiary body meetings. The Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat has around 110 staff;

(e) The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, has held biennial sessions of its Conference of the Parties since 2001, and its main subsidiary bodies also meet biennially. Importantly, its bureaux remain active between sessions and can meet online or in person, while intergovernmental working groups conduct substantive analytical work intersessionally. The secretariat has approximately 31 staff;

(f) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change system is the most meeting-intensive of those reviewed. Its governing bodies meet annually, its two principal subsidiary bodies meet twice a year, and it has numerous constituted bodies. This is supported by the largest secretariat in the comparison by far, with around 450 staff members.

75. A comparison with the Montreal Protocol and Vienna Convention suggests that the current ozone treaty arrangements are relatively intensive at the governing body level. The Montreal Protocol has an annual Meeting of the Parties as well as an annual Open-ended Working Group meeting, whereas most of the mature multilateral environmental agreements reviewed – the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury – have biennial conferences of the parties, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Convention on Migratory Species, like the Vienna Convention, operate on triennial cycles of conferences of the parties. A broad relationship can be observed between institutional complexity, workload and secretariat size.

76. Less frequent conferences of the parties do not mean less continuous governance; the relevant multilateral environmental agreements maintain activity between sessions of their governing bodies, including through the activities of bureaux, standing committees, scientific and technical committees, compliance bodies, expert groups, virtual consultations and other intersessional processes.

77. Experience under other multilateral environmental agreements indicates that less frequent meetings of governing bodies can be compatible with effective treaty operations when supported by appropriate subsidiary and intersessional mechanisms. Efficiencies in the frequency of Montreal Protocol meetings may be assessed together with the resulting intersessional workload, decision-making requirements and Secretariat capacity. The Protocol operates with a high intensity of work and a small secretariat of nine staff in the Professional and higher categories and eight staff in the General Service and related categories.
