



Preparing for an MEA negotiating meeting

Representing your country in a multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) negotiation is a major responsibility, not to be taken lightly. Prepare as much as possible to understand the issues, your country's interests, and the interests of other countries. You should ask: what are my country's long-term priorities and what are our immediate goals for the upcoming meeting? What should we try to achieve at this session?

Where to begin

You can begin by locating all relevant background documents and other sources of information: are there documents that set out your country's priorities? Is there a report from the person or team that attended the last meeting? Did your country make statements at the last MEA meeting? Did your country make written submissions? You may be able to find submissions or copies of statements on the MEA's website.

If your country does not have a position, find out if there is a regional position or if neighbouring countries have positions. Countries within a specific region often develop a group position and you will want to cooperate and coordinate to the extent possible. It may be very helpful to speak to colleagues, including colleagues from the region who have attended

previous meetings. It may also be useful to meet with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are planning to attend the meeting. Many MEA secretariats can also provide information and advice if you contact them.

Coordinating with colleagues and stakeholders

It is important to find out if others from your country will attend the meeting and contact them in advance to coordinate your country's position. If your country does not yet have a position, start by considering what the meeting outcomes could mean. For example, could decisions support or undermine what colleagues from other ministries are trying to achieve? Discussions with colleagues and stakeholders can help identify important issues and you can then consult with them to clarify what your country's position should be.

Finding information

If you are unfamiliar with the MEA, the official MEA website is a good starting point, as it has background information and official meeting documents. There are helpful unofficial information sources, such as the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) reports (www.iisd.ca), but keep in mind that they do not have the same standing as official documents.

Don't try to read all the meeting documents, which can be hundreds of pages—focus on the important ones for your country. Download or print the documents, at least the most important ones. These include: the text of the MEA, the provisional annotated agenda and the meeting documents for your priority issues. If possible, it also helps to have key documents from the previous session, which help provide the context and evolution of the debate. It is also a good idea to have a copy of the Rules of Procedure.

The provisional annotated agenda (the annotated agenda is referred to as “provisional” until it is formally adopted at

the meeting) can help you check earlier decisions on priority agenda items or, for example, if workshops or expert meetings have taken place recently.

Focus on the most important things

If you have limited time, the most important document is the provisional annotated agenda, because it summarizes what will be discussed under each agenda item and which documents relate to that agenda item.

Remember: don't try to do everything; decide which things are the most important and focus on those.

Don't forget the practical side. Make sure to: get your credentials in order; apply for any visas in time; book your flights and hotel in time; check health and safety information; check for maps of the area surrounding your hotel and the conference centre; check the exchange rate for the local currency; and pack all the essentials you will need (e.g. notebooks, business cards, power plug adaptors).

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