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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

International cooperation and coordination

Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fifth meeting

Note by the secretariat

1. The annex to the present note sets out the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fifth meeting. The report highlights the activities carried out by UNEP in relation to work on mercury and to the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention at its previous meetings, covering the period from February 2022 to June 2023. The annex is presented as received, without formal editing.

2. Following the introduction, which refers to the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme that contribute to the goals of the Convention and the implementation of the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, the report is divided into two sections. Section I sets out updates on programmatic collaboration between UNEP and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention, and section II presents updates on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the secretariat of the Minamata Convention. The report also includes an appendix on the core services of UNEP provided in support of the Minamata Convention.

* UNEP/MC/COP.5/1.

Annex*

Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fifth meeting

Introduction

1. This report is submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the fifth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Minamata Convention). The report highlights the activities undertaken by UNEP in relation to work on mercury and to the decisions taken at the first, second, third and fourth meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP-1, COP-2, COP-3 and COP-4). As such, the report covers the reporting period between February 2022 and June 2023.

2. The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has adopted the following resolutions, which contribute to the implementation of the strategic goals of the Convention and decisions of its Conference of the Parties as listed in the table 1 below.

Table 1
Relevant UNEA Resolutions

No	Relevant UNEA Resolutions
1	UNEA5/7: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste
2	UNEA5/8: Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution
3	UNEA 5/12: Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management
4	UNEA4/7: Environmentally sound management of waste
5	UNEA4/8: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste
6	UNEA3/4: Environment and Health
7	UNEA3/5: Investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
8	UNEA3/6: Managing Soil Pollution to Achieve Sustainable Development
9	UNEA 3/8: Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally
10	UNEA3/10: Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems
11	UNEA2/7: Sound management of chemicals and waste
12	UNEA2/8 Sustainable consumption and production
13	UNEA2/18: 'The relationship between United Nations Environment Programme and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) for which it provides the Secretariats'
14	UNEA1/5: Chemicals and waste

Section I: Programmatic collaboration between UNEP and the Minamata Convention

a. UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

3. UNEP provides secretariat support to the Global Mercury Partnership, which gathers over 235 stakeholders committed to protecting human health and the environment from the impacts of mercury and reducing its global environmental releases.

4. Initiated in 2005 by a decision of the UNEP Governing Council, the Partnership was instrumental in helping build momentum for a global legally binding instrument on mercury, and contributed knowledge to negotiators, other stakeholders, and the public during the negotiation process through the entry into force of the Minamata Convention. The Partnership currently focuses its work on supporting timely and effective implementation of the Minamata Convention, as well as on

* The annex has not been formally edited.

providing state of the art knowledge and science on mercury and on undertaking outreach and awareness raising towards global action.

5. The Partnership is structured around 8 priorities for action or so-called "partnership areas": (1) artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM); (2) mercury cell chlor-alkali production; (3) mercury air transport and fate research; (4) mercury in products; (5) mercury releases from coal combustion; (6) mercury waste management; (7) mercury supply and storage; and (8) mercury releases from the cement industry. Detailed activity reports from individual Partnership areas are made available on the Partnership website[1].

6. Work under the Partnership is also conducted in a cross-cutting manner and has been carried out in the present reporting period on the topics of mercury from oil and gas and from non-ferrous metals, pursuant to the request of the Partnership Advisory Group at its tenth meeting (PAG-10, November 2019, Geneva). Experts' consultations were launched in April 2020 on these two topics, with the overall objective of identifying potential useful contributions from the Partnership, within the context of its mission and its existing areas of work. Interested Partnership area leads, together with the PAG co-chairs, subsequently agreed to guide a process for developing study reports. The study report on mercury from oil and gas aims amongst others at better understanding of potential releases of mercury, as well as possibly how waste is treated and accounted for and may be entering the market for other uses. As for the study report on mercury from non-ferrous metals, its aims include to better understand the mercury mass balance globally between supply, storage, and waste treatment related to non-ferrous metals mining and smelting operations. Both reports also include considerations on possible future work, research, and cooperation. Partners and other relevant stakeholders contributed to the reports by providing inputs through open consultations and online expert meetings. Both of these reports have been published in 2022. Further consultations and information dissemination on these topics is planned.

7. Several awareness-raising, information dissemination and experience-sharing activities have been conducted by the Partnership since COP4. To enhance communication and outreach, a Partnership Newsletter was launched in 2020, to share on a regular basis with partners and interested stakeholders' latest highlights by Partnership areas and partners. The Partnership also launched a series of webinars to support sharing of information and experience. Online information-sharing sessions[2] were held on topics such as mercury waste treatment, emissions from cement, Minamata Initial Assessments, and waste from the chlor-alkali sector. In addition, the Partnership organized a side event on mercury waste management at the BRS COPs in May 2023 in Geneva. In June 2023 the Partnership organized a workshop on mercury-containing lamps to help prepare countries for discussions of the topic at COP5.

8. The Secretariat of the Partnership also contributed to the review process of project proposals submitted by Parties in the framework of the third Round of applications to the Specific International Programme of the Minamata Convention, through the provision of technical input and the participation in Cross-Secretariat Task Team meetings, together with the secretariats of the Minamata Convention, Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Special Programme.

9. Finally, during the reporting period, the Partnership Advisory Group held its twelfth[3] and thirteenth[4] meeting (PAG-1212 and PAG-13) in March 22 (online), and November 2022 (Paris), respectively, under the co-chairmanship of Rodges Ankrah, Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America, and Teeraporn Wiriwutikorn, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand. At PAG-13, Ms. Wiriwutikorn informed participants that she was not able to seek a second term as PAG co-chair and was sincerely thanked for her service and leadership. Mr. Ankrah was selected as chair for a second term. PAG-13 was the first in-person PAG meeting since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there was rich discussion on the possibilities to collaborate among partnership areas on topics such as trade, waste management, and non-ferrous metals. The Partnership Advisory Group will be holding its fourteenth meeting in fourth quarter of 2023.

a. Contribution to intersessional work of the Minamata Convention

10. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties agreed on a number of action items to effectively implement the Minamata Convention and prepare for its fifth meeting. UNEP participated

[1] www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/

[2] https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/events

[3] https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/events/unep-event/partnership-advisory-group-meeting-12

[4] https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/events/unep-event/partnership-advisory-group-meeting-13

as an observer and provided input to activities that took place intersessionally according to the decisions of COP4, including participating in the meetings of the technical experts on guidance in relation to mercury releases (decision MC-4/5), of the technical experts on waste thresholds (decision MC-4/6), of the open-ended scientific group on effectiveness evaluation (decision MC-4/11) and contributed to their work in the lead up to the fifth meeting.

11. In addition, UNEP and the Global Mercury Partnership have been working jointly with the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention to disseminate the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining National Action Plan Guidance Document as invited in decision MC-4/4. The Global Mercury Partnership organized study tours in West and East Africa with government officials to learn about National Action Plan strategies and help to plan for the Action Plan's implementation in accordance with the Minamata Convention and the Guidance Document.

b. Support to countries in the ratification and implementation of the Minamata Convention

12. With funding from Global Environment facility (GEF), UNEP has been supporting to date[5] 68 countries in the development of Minamata Initial Assessments (MIA), including through assistance and training in the use of the UNEP Mercury Inventory Toolkit. Preceding the introduction by the GEF of the MIA "concept", UNEP had supported a number of other countries through similar projects (so called "pre-MIAs").

13. UNEP has been supporting 33 countries in the development of their National Action Plans to reduce mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (NAP), by providing technical assistance and guidance in mercury-free technologies, formalization, baseline assessments, amongst others.

14. Supported MIAs have been completed in 33 countries and NAPs in 23 countries. Reviewed projects reports have been submitted to the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention and have been made publicly available through the website of the Convention[6].

15. UNEP supports the global component for the NAP projects. This work encompasses the development of methodologies and guidelines, facilitation of experts engagement, assistance in the planning and development of the NAP project components, support to the development of baseline estimates, provision of in-house and peer review of the national overview reports on artisanal and small-scale gold mining and draft NAP documents, "help desk" services responding to various requests from participating countries, as well as organization of regional knowledge and experience sharing workshops. Key tools and original guidance materials have been developed through the global component on topics such as baseline estimates, formalization, mercury-free processing techniques, mercury trade, incorporating gender dimension and rapid environmental assessments. Since COP4, three regional NAP development lessons learned, and implementation workshops have been co-organized and regional trainings and webinars are regularly organized by UNEP to ensure countries are able to use and benefit from guidance materials and share experiences in their actions to address mercury use in ASGM and development of their NAPs. The regional exchanges included hands-on experience learning about challenges, sustainable models in ASGM sectors as well as discussions related to NAP implementation and review. UNEP has also reviewed the NAPs submitted to the Minamata Secretariat, subsequently extracted the data, and developed interactive dashboards[7] featuring key quantitative and qualitative information that demonstrate the latest trends and mercury reduction objectives in the sector globally.

16. UNEP supports a similar global component for MIAs. Through this component, reviews of final MIA reports are being undertaken, using a standard checklist. UNEP is compiling and analyzing data from the inventory reports produced as part of the Minamata Initial Assessments to identify trends and national priorities for future technical assistance and capacity building activities.

17. UNEP is the lead agency of the planetGOLD programme8.In April 2022, the programme organized its first Global Forum, a 3-day virtual event that brought together leading thinkers and practitioners to discuss key issues facing ASGM globally. Conservation International, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are also implementing agencies for several child projects within the

[5] as of June 3 2023

[6] https://minamataconvention.org/en/parties/minamata-initial-assessments and https://minamataconvention.org/en/parties/national-action-plans.

[7] https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/insights-asgm-national-action-plans

[8] Further information about planetGOLD is available on the programmes website: https://www.planetgold.org

programme. The programme entered its second phase in the first quarter of 2023 and is currently working in a total of 23 countries with plans to continue its expansion through the GEF8 replenishing cycle. The programme aims to develop innovative models to support artisanal and small-scale gold miners in improving their livelihoods while reducing mercury use. The programme focuses on formalization, access to finance and international markets, technology transfer and knowledge management and communication to achieve a sustainable reduction of the mercury used by the sector. Furthermore, UNEP is developing a project to bridge the planetGOLD and ISLANDS programmes in Guyana, in the aim of curtailing mercury imports, further supporting artisanal and small-scale gold miners and ensuring the alignment of both programmes' work in the country. The expected submission date is early 2024.

18. UNEP is the lead agency for the multifocal GEF Programme "Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security". In this programme, UNEP works with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in the region to address land-based pollution sources. The project has conducted inventories of mercury-containing medical devices in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia for replacement; and is developing a remediation plan for a former chlor-alkali plant in Bosnia Herzegovina. With the recent ratification of the Minamata Convention by Algeria, preparations are underway for disposal of mercury stockpiles from Algeria.

19. UNEP is leading the preparation of two regional projects to improve the understanding and control of mercury trade in Latin America (project stage, expected submission is December 2023) and Asia (concept stage, expected submission is June 2024).

20. UNEP is implementing a project addressing primary mercury mining in Mexico. The project aims to assist the country in its efforts to comply with Article 3 of the Convention (Mercury supply sources and trade) and will introduce sustainable alternative livelihood options for the communities currently relying on mercury mining.

21. With support from the GEF, UNEP also leads the implementation of a project in Mexico to support the conversion of chlor-alkali plants, developing contaminated sites management plans, assessing remediation options, and stabilizing the excess mercury resulting from the conversion. This project is supported by the private sector which provides the investment for the conversion. UNEP is also in the conceptual stage for another chlorchloral alkali project in Brazil, the expected submission date is June 2024.

22. UNEP is the lead agency for the GEF Programme "Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States, ISLANDS programme". In this programme, UNEP is working with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNDP to assist 33 Small-Islands Developing States with the management of chemicals and chemicals-containing products. The programme contributes to the implementation of the Minamata and Stockholm Conventions as well as SAICM. The first three UNEP child projects have been initiated in 2021 and the fourth child project has been scheduled to start in 2023.

23. UNEP is working with WHO, as the executing agency, on several health -related mercury projects addressing some of the priorities identified in MIA reports. These include mercury use in dentistry, mercury-containing medical measuring devices and mercury in skin lightening products (SLPs) and the Global Mercury Partnership is providing targeted technical assistance in all three projects. On the SLP project, UNEP has created a knowledge hub[9] under the Global Mercury Partnership dedicated to the issue and the project, as well as established the Project Stakeholder Group – a platform intended to drive exchange between the project's beneficiary countries -Jamaica, SriLanka and Gabon - and the broader stakeholders with an aim to multiply the project benefits more broadly. The dental amalgam project (targeting Senegal, Thailand, and Uruguay) was launched in April 2022 while the medical measuring devices (targeting Albania, Burkina Faso, India, Montenegro and Uganda) has its launch planned in the third quarter of 2023.

24. For other mercury containing products, especially on lighting and batteries, listed on Annex A of the Convention, UNEP is in the conceptual stage of developing a GEF proposal related to assist with phase out and waste management of these products in several SADC countries, the expected submission date is June 2024.

[9] https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/our-work/mercury-products/eliminating-mercury-skin-lightening-products https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/our-work/mercury-products/eliminating-mercury-skin-lightening-products

25. UNEP is also working on developing interventions to address mercury emissions from sources listed in Article 8 (Emissions) and Annex D (List of point sources of emissions of mercury and mercury compounds to the atmosphere). Since end of 2021, UNEP is implementing a project aiming at demonstrating both mercury and POPs emissions reduction potential from coal-fired power plants and industrial boilers. The project supports governments of developing countries with substantial coal consumption and emissions (such as China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Africa) with implementing control and reduction strategies for new and existing sources. It is expected to yield key outcomes in the third quarter of 2024, further strengthening the capacity of countries to implement relevant provisions of the Minamata and Stockholm Conventions.

26. With funding from the Government of China, UNEP has been supporting China, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam in the implementation of chemicals and waste MEAs, including the Minamata Convention. Based upon nationally identified needs, a public awareness raising video on the issue of mercury in products, as well as a report and the corresponding training materials have been produced. This activity benefitted from the input of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention.

c. Support through the Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening

27. In March 2022, UNEA adopted resolution 5/7 on chemicals and waste, paragraph 16 of which decided to extend the duration of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)[10] for a period of five years, in accordance with paragraph 24 of the terms of reference adopted in Environment Assembly resolution 1/5, and to include the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 in the Special Programme. Paragraph 10 of the same resolution encouraged the Executive Board of the Special Programme to review the procedures for application for funding in the light of the needs and challenges expressed by developing countries, including those related to operating costs, with a view to promoting an effective and efficient application of the eligibility criteria in line with the terms of reference of the Special Programme, without jeopardizing the ability of the Special Programme to receive funding from existing sources

28. The Executive Board of the Special Programme during its seventh meeting, which took place online from 28 March to 1 April 2022,11 held an initial discussion on the request from UNEA and requested the Secretariat to arrange an intersessional meeting in the last quarter of 2022 to discuss the matter in depth. The Board also approved nine new projects under the fifth round of funding with a total budget of US $2,641,160 and endorsed the arrangements for the launch of the sixth round of funding.

29. The intersessional meeting of the Executive Board, which took place online on 5 December 2022, discussed the issue of eligibility for funding under the Special Programme, in preparation for further consideration of the matter in the context of the arrangements for the launch of the seventh round of funding.

30. The eighth meeting of the Executive Board took place in hybrid format in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15 to 17 February 2023. The Board considered eligible and complete applications under the sixth round of funding and approved nine new projects with a total budget of US $2,207,875. The Board also endorsed arrangements for the launch of the seventh round, and in doing so revised the eligibility and appraisal criteria for funding under the Special Programme. The revised eligibility and appraisal criteria are as set out in the text box below and are included in the documentation for the seventh round of funding, which launched on 6 April 2023 with a closing date for applications of 11 August 2023 12.In addition, the Board received an update on operations of the Special Programme including feedback from the assessment of closed projects[13] undertaken by the Secretariat in 2022.

[10] The Terms of Reference of the Special Programme were adopted by UNEA resolution 1/5 and the Special Programme was established in September 2015. Following UNEA's decision to extend the duration of the Special Programme, the Special Programme will be open to receive contributions and applications for funding until September 2027 and to disburse funds until March 2030.

[11] https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/applying-funding-through-special

[12] Available at the following link: https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/42168;jsessionid=27DCA23788110B7A372B7DBF3F12B8C1

REVISED ELIGIBILITY AND APPRAISAL CRITERIA

a. Under section 2.2 of the Guidance on the Scope of the Special Programme, 'Who can apply for funding under the Special Programme?':

"Eligible Governments can apply to the Special Programme.

'Governments' specifically refers to the national government ministry or department in charge of the chemicals and waste agenda at the national level. Affiliations of Governments and local governments are not eligible.

Countries should refer to paragraph 6 of the Terms of Reference for eligibility which states that 'Support from the Special Programme will be available for developing countries, taking into account the special needs of least developed countries and small island developing States, and for countries with economies in transition[1], with priority given to those with least capacity'.

Note that a number of donors have strict policies of funding only applications that meet the eligibility requirements of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of Official Development Assistance (ODA)[2] at the time of application.

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[1] See United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects Report available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/document_gem/global-economic-monitoring-unit/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-wesp-report/ with annexes available at https://desapublications.un.org/file/1113/download?_ga=2.247642817.739791176.1676889344-1020178047.1591942680

[2]https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm"

b. Under Annex III to the Guidance on the Scope of the Special Programme dealing with Appraisal Criteria:

"1.5 Questions for prioritization on the basis of country capacity, in accordance with paragraph 6 of the Terms of Reference

These questions are for the Board to consider:

P1. What is the level of ownership, impact and sustainability of the project?

P2. Is the country classified as high income by the World Bank?

If yes,

P2.1. Is the country able to implement the project by its own financial means and capabilities?

P2.2 Does the beneficiary contribution from the applicant exceed the minimum 25% threshold provided for in paragraph 21 of the Terms of Reference and if so by how much?

P 3. Are there other factors relating to the country's capacity that should be taken into account?"

A detailed update on developments with respect to the Special Programme as of 31 May 2023 has been provided as an information document for the meeting (document UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/18).

d. Collaboration on cross-cutting aspects between UNEP and the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention

31. Continuous consultations and collaboration are regularly taking place to facilitate programmatic cooperation, including based on UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2025 and relevant UNEP sub-programmes such as Chemicals and Pollution action, Science Policy, and Environmental Governance.

32. Pursuant to UNEA resolution 4/8 on the sound management of chemicals and waste, UNEP produced "An assessment of options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste". The report seeks to facilitate and inform discussions on strengthening the science-policy interface for chemicals and waste management and thereby support and promote science-based local, national, regional and global action on the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. It aims to provide elements for bringing agendas

together, and on how science-policy platforms need to interact and inform each other. Following a brief description, each option is assessed according to its potential strengths, weaknesses, and implications, including budgetary considerations. In its assessment, the report highlights that a Science-Policy Interface should be authoritative, policy relevant but not policy prescriptive, highly responsive platform to address the challenges posed by chemicals and waste including its links with other agendas.

33. In its resolution 5/8, the Environment Assembly decided that a science-policy panel (SPP) should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and prevent pollution.

34. Pursuant to UNEA resolution 5/8, UNEP convened an ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) to prepare proposals for the science-policy panel and established a secretariat to support the OEWG process. The open-ended working group include Governments and regional economic integration organizations, and are open to observers from United Nations entities, relevant multilateral agreements (including the Minamata Convention), other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, and stakeholder representatives. The open-ended working group commenced its work in 2022, with the ambition to complete its work by 2024.

35. The first session of the open-ended working group was held in two parts, with the participation of the secretariat of the Minamata Convention as an observer. The first part (OEWG 1.1) took place on 6 October 2022 in Nairobi in a hybrid format. At the first part of its first session, the open-ended working group considered important procedure matters, including the establishment of a Bureau for the open-ended working group, as well as adopted rules of procedure for the conduct of its work. The meeting allowed Member States and observers the opportunity to deliver general statements on the establishment of the science-policy panel.

36. The resumed first session of the open-ended working group (OEWG 1.2) was held in person in Bangkok, Thailand, from 30 January to 3 February 2023. The open-ended working group elected a Chair for the open-ended working group and considered the scope and principal functions of the science-policy panel. As the meeting outcomes, the open-ended working group agreed on an objective of the panel, which may be refined subject to future discussion, and principal functions of the panel, including the four principal functions outlined in UNEA resolution 5/8 on horizon scanning, assessments, communications, and information-sharing, as well as an additional principal function on capacity building. Furthermore, the open-ended working group agreed on an intersessional work plan leading up to the second session (OEWG 2), including the development of a meeting document on the relationship of the panel with key relevant stakeholders such as the Minamata Convention.

37. To prepare Governments and stakeholders for the OEWG process, the UNEP SPP OEWG secretariat has conducted a series of stakeholder engagement activities, including webinars and calls for written submissions, which have been widely disseminated. In addition, in preparation of OEWG 2, the SPP OEWG secretariat has planned a set of regional consultations back-to-back with the Minamata COP5 regional preparatory meetings.

e. Information sharing and dialogue facilitating programmatic cooperation between UNEP and the MEAs

38. UNEP continues to support coherent implementation of MEAs in line with paragraph 89 of the Rio+20 outcome document and in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to periodic dialogue and information sharing between the Executive Director of UNEP and the Heads of the UNEP-administered MEAs, the Executive Secretaries of the global UNEP-administered MEAs regularly engage with UNEP's Senior Management Team. At a technical level, there are several mechanisms in place to promote regular dialogue between UNEP and the MEAs including the meetings organized through the MEAs Focal Points Network, which offer an opportunity to discuss work relevant for strengthening programmatic cooperation among the MEAs and UNEP. The UNEP initiated Network of MEAs Gender Officers and Focal Points shares gender-related information such as seminars, publication announcements and capacity building opportunities.

39. In response to CBD COP decision 14/30, UNEP, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention and other MEAs Secretariats convened the second consultation workshop of Biodiversity-related conventions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (Bern II), from 18 January–2 February 2021. The aim of the consultation was to facilitate engagement of MEAs, both the Parties and Secretariats in the development and implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The report of the consultation workshop was shared with governing bodies of MEAs as an

information document or as a link[14], including in the Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fourth meeting[15]. The Bern Process was recognized by decision CBD COP 15/13[16], inviting UNEP and the governing bodies of the MEAs to continue supporting the Bern process. Further, the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention actively participated in the Bogis-Bossey Workshop held from 27 to 30 June 2023, and provided advice to UNEP on the organization of the Bern III Conference to be held early 2024.

f. Additional UNEP Tools

40. Since 2005, UNEP has developed and maintained the Mercury Inventory Toolkit[17] to provide countries a scientifically robust methodology to assess their mercury emissions and releases. Over 100 countries have used the Toolkit to set their national priorities as a part of their MIA and related projects. The Toolkit is also one of the methods recommended in the guidance from the Minamata Convention on preparing inventories of emissions pursuant to Article 8[18]. In 2023 Toolkit levels 1 and 2 were updated with new emissions and distribution factors. In addition, a new Level 3 version of the toolkit was created to allow users to conduct a full mass balance analysis of mercury in their countries.

41. The Minamata Convention Secretariat continued to provide support as an active member of the InforMEA Initiative. The InforMEA Portal's standards, schemas and best practices inspired the information architecture of the recently launched new Website of the Minamata Convention. In turn, the development of the Minamata Website's Calendar has triggered the enhancement of the InforMEA Meeting Calendar, which brings together meetings from all MEAs in an automated and frequently updated manner, to facilitate informed scheduling of meetings during frequently adjusted planning in times of a global pandemic. The Minamata Convention further informed the Initiative's work on dashboards and outreach related issues. The e-learning course on the Minamata Convention has to date 1800 registered learners of who soon 1000 have obtained a certificate of completion. A one-stop portal for information on MEAs, the InforMEA helps member states and other users access information. In addition to access to over 40 courses on International Law and MEAs, InforMEA provides access to treaty texts, Conference of Parties decisions, national plans and reports, laws, court decisions, and how these relate to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It serves over 100,000 registered users form over 90 countries.

g. Regional cooperation

Mercury flow analysis and monitoring

42. UNEP, with the support from the Government of Japan, is implementing a regional project to help countries in the areas of information exchange (Article 17), awareness and education (Article 18), and research, development and monitoring (Article 19) of the Convention. The project covers 12 countries (Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar[19], Nepal, Palau, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam) and establishes partnership with institutions in and around Minamata area, namely the Minamata Environmental Academia and the National Institute for Minamata Disease (NIMD) to provide knowledge and experiences they have accumulated. The project has published multimedia training materials on mercury flow analysis and monitoring to enable users to organize local training programmes. It also conducted laboratory proficiency testing (PT) to the public laboratories and universities to examine their relative proficiencies for mercury analysis. 26 laboratories successfully completed the first round PT in 2021-22 and approx. 50 laboratories have enrolled in the second round in 2022-23. The project is also supporting the participating countries to undertake local mercury surveys, monitoring and training programmes.

[14] https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35906/Bern2rep21.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=

[15] https://minamataconvention.org/en/documents/report-executive-director-united-nations-environment-programme-conference-parties

[16] https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-13-en.pdf

[17] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/mercury/mercury-inventory-toolkit

[18] Guidance on the methodology for preparing inventories of emissions pursuant to Article 8 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury" available at https://minamataconvention.org/en/documents/guidance-methodology-preparing-inventories-emissions-pursuant-article-8-minamata.

[19] Currently the cooperation has been in suspension since February 2021.

The programme on capacity building related to MEAs in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries phase III (ACP MEAs III)

43. UNEP is coordinating the implementation of an EC-UNEP partnership programme (ACP MEAs), which addresses challenging environmental issues in the African, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) regions. This programme builds national and institutional capacities, processes, and infrastructure in the 79 ACP countries to enforce and comply with MEAs including those related to chemicals and wastes, and to improve national legal frameworks, including legislations, and mechanisms, for the effective implementation of the Minamata Convention. The ACP-MEAs programme provided comments to the report jointly produced by the Secretariats of the BRS Conventions and the Minamata Convention entitled "Interlinkages between the chemicals and waste Multilateral Environmental Agreements and biodiversity: KEY INSIGHTS[20]" and will actively pursue actions to implement some of the recommendations from the report. The Minamata Convention Secretariat is part of the extended partners of the Programme and will implement activities under the Programme related to the organization of regional preparatory meetings for the meetings of the Conferences of the Parties. It also provides information on developments and activities happening under the convention to other implementing partners in the conduct of their activities.

Section II: Administrative and financial management support provided to the Minamata Convention Secretariat by UNEP

a. Enhancements to the UN system-wide Enterprise Planning Tool, Umoja

44. Umoja is the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tool that has been implemented in 2015 to process all administrative transactions within a common platform for the entire United Nations Secretariat. Umoja has been implemented in phases, in 2018, the Implementing Partner module was rolled out. This module enhances transparency and accountability in the selection of partners with whom the United Nations Secretariat engages with to execute its mandate.

45. UNEP will continue to engage the Convention's Secretariat to ensure adequate representation, training and incorporation of its requirements resulting in a successful implementation.

46. As presented in the previous report of the Executive Director to the 4th COP in -person segment in March 2022 in Bali, Indonesia, the roll out of the Integrated Planning Management and Reporting (IPMR) module of the United Nations Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system (Umoja) has led to an increase in license fees attributed to all UN entities that are currently using the system. The cost allocation methodology is based on the number of users and the increased user support provided by UN Headquarters.

b. Support provided to the Convention from programme support resources

47. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217 and UN procedures stipulated in the administrative instruction on Programme Support Accounts (ST/AI/286), programme support cost (PSC) is charged on all extrabudgetary resources at a standard rate of thirteen percent (13%) to recover the incremental costs incurred while supporting activities financed through such resources. Full waiver and/or a reduction in the PSC rate is strongly discouraged by the UN Controller as this would lead to inability to meet administrative costs associated with the programme implementation. In his memo dated 10 June 2022, the UN Controller noted that decreasing programme support resources could not sustain demands unless the established PSC rates of thirteen percent (13%) charged against voluntary contributions is applied consistently to all donors, including Member States. Any deviation would draw the attention of auditors and other compliance-monitoring bodies. Requests for lower PSC rates must be approved by the UN Controller.

48. In 2022, based on the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/18 on "Relationship between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provides the secretariats", some MEA Secretariats requested a waiver of PSC for contributions to support travel to COP meetings for participants from developing countries. However, this request was not approved by the Controller. This decision set precedence for all such requests, therefore no further requests will be considered.

49. As part of the Secretary-General's reforms, a new Global Service Delivery Model has been implemented by the UN Secretariat. This necessitates an ongoing review of the cost recovery

[20] http://minamataconvention.org/biodiversity-report/

arrangements for sharing and utilization of programme support resources, and to clarify and streamline the responsibilities of both the MEAs secretariats and UNEP Headquarters.

50. UNEP is committed to the continuous review of the existing PSC policy to determine its adequacy in the sharing and apportionment of programme support resources.

c. After service health Insurance (ASHI)

51. The ASHI programme, which stands for After-Service Health Insurance, is a benefit provided to eligible staff members of the UN that ensures continued health insurance coverage throughout their retirement. This programme allows retired staff to access the same health insurance schemes available to active staff. However, since this benefit is earned during active service but utilized after retirement, it creates an accrued liability for the UN. The financing of the ASHI liability has been a topic of discussion among various UN bodies, including the General Assembly and the Advisory Committee on Administration and Budget Questions (ACABQ). These bodies have made various recommendations to the executive heads of the UN organizations, urging them to explore ways of financing the unfunded portion of the liability. The goal is to ensure that UN organizations do not continue to have unfunded ASHI liability by applying the available funds to the recognized liability. In the case of the UNEP, it has been accruing six percent (6%) of staff costs to offset the ASHI liability. However, a financial review has determined that this rate is not sufficient to cover the liability. Urgent containment measures are required to address the growing portion of the unfunded liability. As a response to this situation, the UN Controller has approved an increase in the ASHI accrual rate to 9 percent (9%) during the last quarter of 2022, and all staff budgets should now reflect the increased cost associated with the ASHI programme.

Appendix

UNEP's core services in support of the Minamata Convention

Table 3 below provides the list of core administrative and support services provided by UNEP in support of the Minamata Convention. Core administrative and support services are those services provided by UNEP against the 33% share of the programme support costs income attributable to all Minamata Convention trust funds. The list of core services is not exhaustive and may include additional core services, as mutually agreed from time to time between UNEP and the Convention. The table below is without prejudice to the delegation of authority from the Executive Director of UNEP to the Executive Secretary of Minamata Convention.

Table 2
List of core administrative and support services

Service Category	Description
Policy, guidelines, and procedures	All policies concerning administrative arrangements are governed by the United Nations General Assembly resolutions and those of United Nations Environment Programme's governing body. United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules supplemented by Multilateral Environmental Agreements' and entities' financial procedures or rules ensure effective and efficient use of resources in accordance with the purposes for which funds are provided, within authorized limits and available income. The United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules also regulate the organization's procurement activities. United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules set the framework within which United Nations Environment Programme's personnel, including different categories of staff members, consultants, and independent contractors, are recruited, and administered. United Nations Secretariat policies supplement and provide details on the implementation of the resolutions and regulations. They are embodied in United Nations administrative issuances i.e. Secretary-General's Bulletins, Administrative Instructions and Information Circulars which may be further interpreted and translated into guidelines and procedures for day to day operations.
Human Resources	Recruitment and performance management.
Talent Acquisition and Management	Developing staffing plans and implementing related recruitment activities namely classification, vacancy announcement, assessments, evaluation, review, and selection.
Staff Administration	Advise on staff, on-boarding administering contracts, processing entitlements and benefits, review, and update of dependency status, leave records, lateral move, separation from service etc. Advise on Administering end-of-service and post-retirement benefits including pension fund deductions and After Service Health Insurance scheme.
Staff development and training	Mandatory online ethics and integrity training, competency based interviewing skills, management development programme etc. Identify capacity building needs and provide opportunities for continuous learning with a view to build a multi-skilled workforce promoting career development for staff. These include in-house developed training modules on Results Based Management and Gender Mainstreaming, among others.
Performance Management	Implementing and monitoring compliance with performance management policies, process, and tools (INSPIRA) to reward/recognize/retain staff and address underperformance. Supporting rebuttal process guidance and conducting training on writing workplans and performance assessments. Managing the Financial Disclosure programme.
Budget and Finance	Review, management, oversight and reporting of budgets and financial resources of the governing bodies and donors.
Budgeting / Fund Management	Review, support on presenting and justifying budgets to the governing bodies. Process budgetary authorizations and financial transactions. Advise staff, management, and governing bodies on the use of financial resources. Create, maintain, and close Trust Funds.

Service Category	Description
General Accounting / Financial Statements	Authority to sign the consolidated financial statements rests with the Executive Director. Extracts from the consolidated statements are signed by UNON. Maintenance of accounts and preparation of Financial Statements including the Programme Support account. Advise on processing accounting entries/adjustments including donor refunds; year-end accruals; statutory reporting and support to the annual external audit.
Payments / Expenditure	Advise on the processing of payments to Implementing Partners, consultants, vendors, and meeting participants as well as advise on monitoring advances and recording expenditures from financial reports received from Implementing Partners.
Payroll	Advise on processing payment of salaries, entitlements, related advances, and maintenance of payroll accounts.
Contributions / Cash Management	Authority to accept contributions from the Parties rests with the United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director. Advise on issuance of invoices to Parties, recording and monitoring contribution receivables, processing contributions upon receipt of payments; reconciling applied deposit accounts.
Treasury/Banking/ Investment	Advise on the receipt and disbursement of funds, House Bank management, bank reconciliations, maintenance of banking details for staff, vendors, implementing partners and consultants. Investment of United Nations Environment Programme funds in the right products is managed by UNHQ Treasury.
Oversight	Coordinate internal audit, investigation, inspection, and external audit.
Legal	Legal advice, opinions, and representation in the Internal Justice System.
Advisory and Representation	Provision of corporate legal advice and institutional support. Representing the organisation before the Management Evaluation Unit with regards to requests filed by staff members. Representing the organisation at the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and provision of support to the Office of Legal Affairs with regards to appeals filed at the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. Negotiating settlements of claims; provision of legal support and advice in mediation, reconciliation, and arbitration. Legal and institutional support in disciplinary procedures; provision of legal advice in cases of alleged misconduct and relevant investigations. Reviewing and clearing Host Country Agreements and legal instruments in accordance with the Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework for the Management and Administration of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Provision of legal advice on human resources issues e.g., interpretation of the Staff Regulations and Rules, advise on outside activities, separation from employment, settlements. Coordinating audits, inspections and evaluations undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Providing advice on engaging with implementing partners, provision of templates for this purpose.
Support Services	Services to support operations including office space, premises, host country arrangements and protocols.
Contracts and Procurement	Supervising procurement related functions and providing advice on procurement proposals of significant financial or operational impact; reviewing the proposed strategy/approach to best serve office's interests. Providing oversight over the service providers. Representation at the High-Level Committee on Management Procurement Network on development of policies and procedures of interest to the office. Liaising with the contracts committee for the preparation and presentation of cases for approval and addressing to follow-up queries. Provision of general contract administration services including amendment, extension, or closure.
Inventory / Asset Management	Provision of services to manage inventory of equipment items and assets including bar coding, maintain records and track movement of items; conduct physical inventories; process the disposal of obsolete and unserviceable items.

Service Category	Description
Travel, Shipping and Visa	Providing advice on developments in Secretariat travel policies and procedures. This includes advice on shipping services, handled through external vendors under contracts encompassing all aspects of incoming and outgoing official shipments of organizational goods and property as well as staff members' personal effects during recruitment, transfer and separation.
Facilities Management	Advising on the provision of comfortable and efficient working environment for the staff.
Mail Pouch	Advising on different mail services i.e. postal, international express courier and diplomatic pouch, including but not limited to cost, transit days, document preparation, etc.
Archives / Document Management	Advising on and overseeing the implementation of policies for the management of archives in accordance with established archival standards and practices. Advise on Maintaining and managing archives.
Enterprise Resource Programme (ERP) – Umoja	Advising on all aspects of workflow analysis, business process reengineering and organizational transformation. Managing core transformational activities connected to the Umoja implementation and system life cycle. Providing training and guidance on Umoja functionality, access, and modality for the execution of administrative processes.
Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) and Internal Controls	Implementation of the United Nations Secretariat ERM policy and framework, its monitoring and development. Advise on developments and activities related to the life cycle of ERM. Liaison directly with the UN Secretariat's Department of Management for all issues relating to ERM and IC implementation and update of the ERM treatment plan.
Information and Communications Technology	Computing, telecommunications, office automation, infrastructure support including electronic mail as well as consulting, advisory and help desk services.
ICT Infrastructure and services	Advising on the Provision of secure infrastructure services such as internet connectivity and Wi-Fi access; local area network and systems directory services; office computer, standard software productivity tools and security software; email, file storage and sharing, print, IP telephony; computer and video conference services. Provision of cloud and on-premises hosting services for websites, software applications, and databases. Access to corporate internet/intranet and mail systems.
Software development and maintenance	Providing advice from tactical, operational, and strategic aspects with consideration to the specific needs of the office. Making recommendations on cost effective options e.g. outsourcing or in-house IT services. Provision of customised / off the shelf software applications to support the specific needs of office.
Help desk services	Provision of local and global services to staff in resolving various IT related issues for the UN enterprise applications.