UNITED NATIONS

UNEP

UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/37

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Distr.: General
23 October 2023

English only

Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury
Fifth meeting
Geneva, 30 October–3 November 2023
Item 4 (k) of the provisional agenda*

Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties: effectiveness evaluation

Update from the Open-ended Scientific Group on its work during the intersessional period

Note by the secretariat

1. At its fourth meeting, in decision MC-4/11, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury agreed to begin the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention and adopted a framework, as set out in annex I to the decision. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties established the Open-ended Scientific Group to develop a scientific report and draw conclusions thereon for consideration by the Effectiveness Evaluation Group.

2. Further to the progress report on the matter to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting, contained in document UNEP/MC/COP.5/16/Add.2, and the draft plans contained in document UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/24, an update on the work of the Open-ended Scientific Group is set out in the annex to the present note, without formal editing.

* UNEP/MC/COP.5/1.

Annex*

Update from the Open-ended Scientific Group on its work during the intersessional period

1. The present document contains an update by the Open-ended Scientific Group on its latest work to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury. This document is meant to be read in conjunction with the Open-ended Scientific Group progress report, as contained in document UNEP/MC/COP.5/16/Add.2, and draft plans, as contained in document UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/24.

2. This document summarizes steps taken by the Open-ended Scientific Group to advance work with regard to:

(a) Provision of data to support the first effectiveness evaluation;

(b) Review of the draft plan for data analysis;

(c) Schedule of work in view of possible timeline scenarios for the first effectiveness evaluation.

A. Provision of data to support the first effectiveness evaluation

3. Further to the work described in its progress report, the Open-ended Scientific Group started planning for the compilation and analysis of available data on mercury levels in biota, water, sediment, soil, and in humans, as well as data from emissions and releases inventories, with a view to addressing the guiding questions outlined in the "Guidance on monitoring of mercury and mercury compounds to support evaluation of the effectiveness of the Minamata Convention".[1]

4. Accordingly, on behalf of the co-Chairs to the Open-ended Scientific Group, on 26 September 2023, the Executive Secretary invited countries or organizations, through their relevant technical experts, to express their intent to assist the Open-ended Scientific Group to better plan for and coordinate a subsequent step for the compilation of data. The expression of intent was to indicate a preliminary wish to support the effectiveness evaluation by providing data. The expression of intent was voluntary and non-binding and could be withdrawn at any time by the focal points or technical experts of the relevant country or organization at their sole discretion. In the invitation, it was further noted that, once the expressions of intent have been received, the OESG would liaise with the data providers on how the data could be accessed by, or submitted to, the Open-ended Scientific Group and that, ideally, one data provider would be identified for each type of data to be submitted.

5. The deadline for submission of expressions of intent to provide data to support the first effectiveness evaluation was 20 October 2023. At the time of writing, the Secretariat had received twenty-two expressions of intent to provide data, including some with multiple types of data, to support the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention.[2]

B. Review of the draft plan for data analysis

6. In the same invitation, the Executive Secretary, on behalf of the co-Chairs of the Open-ended Scientific Group, also invited Parties and relevant stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the "draft plan for data analysis",[3] which was prepared by the Open-ended Scientific Group to guide the analysis of data to address the guiding questions in the monitoring guidance.

7. The deadline to submit feedback on the draft plan is 24 November 2023. To date, submissions are yet to be received by the Secretariat.

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* The annex has not been formally edited.

[1] Available as document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/12.

[2] A link to the submissions is available through the website of the Convention. The submissions will continue to be uploaded as they are received.

[3] Available at https://minamataconvention.org/en/intersessional-work-and-submissions-cop-5#sec1565.

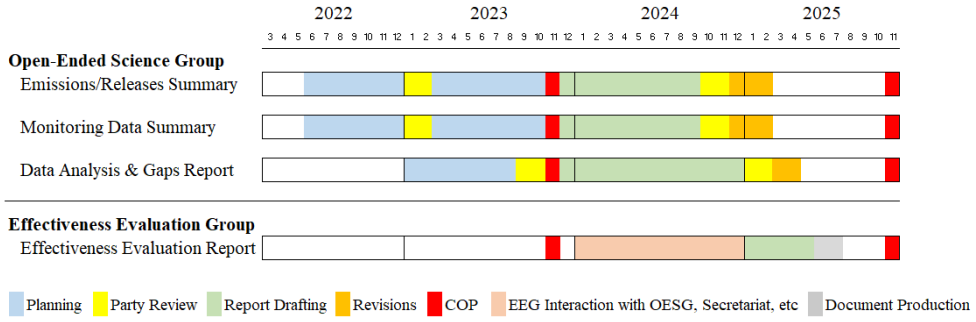
C. Schedule of work in view of possible timeline scenarios for the first effectiveness evaluation

8. At its fourth meeting, in decision MC-4/11, the Conference of the Parties agreed to consider the timeline for the first effectiveness evaluation at its fifth meeting, which will take place from 30 October to 3 November 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. In practical terms, the Conference of the Parties may wish to decide by which of its meetings the outcome of the first effectiveness evaluation will be considered.

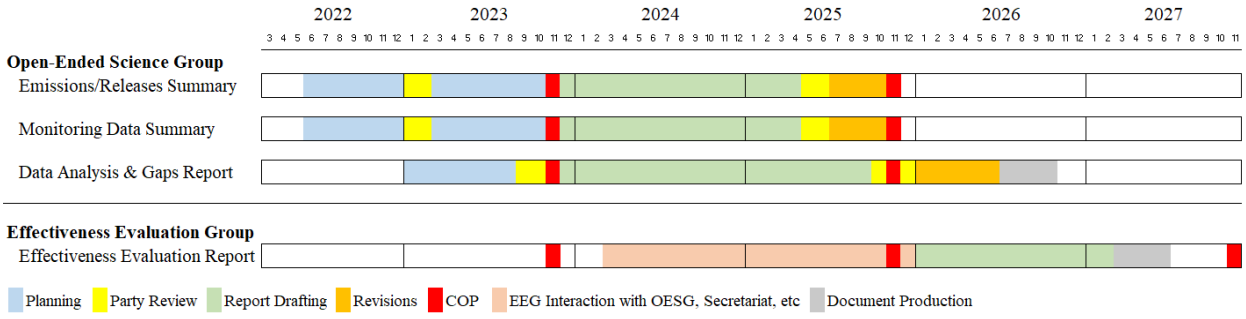
9. Although the framework diagram that is set out in annex I to decision MC-4/11 does not clearly identify the completion date for the first effectiveness evaluation, it seems to imply that the process should be completed over a 4-year period. Thus, the Open-ended Scientific Group has been working under the assumption that the outcomes of the first effectiveness evaluation would need to be submitted for consideration by the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in 2025. To achieve this goal, the Open-ended Scientific Group has set out a very ambitious schedule to plan its work, collect available information, perform analyses, and write its report. While the Open-ended Scientific Group has made significant progress, each step in the process has taken longer than originally expected.

10. In anticipation of the deliberations at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the timeline for the first effectiveness evaluation, the co-Chairs of the Open-ended Scientific Group have produced two illustrative scenarios showing how the work of the Open-ended Scientific Group and the Effectiveness Evaluation Group may progress if the outcome of the first effectiveness evaluation is set to be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting, in 2025 (scenario A), or at its seventh meeting, in 2027 (scenario B).

Scenario A: Illustrative schedule in the event that the outcome of the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting.



Scenario B: Illustrative schedule in the event that the outcome of the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting.



11. If the end target for completing the first effectiveness evaluation is set at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Open-ended Scientific Group must complete data collection, data analysis, and report writing in about one year. Under this scenario, it is likely that only a fraction of the available information will be able to be included in the analysis by the Open-ended Scientific Group. Moreover, pending a decision by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting, the Effectiveness Evaluation Group will have limited time to get organized and to interact with the Open-ended Scientific Group, before it will need to analyse a number of inputs, including those

prepared by the Secretariat and by the Open-ended Scientific Group, to then prepare its own report to the Conference of the Parties.

12. If the end target for completing the first effectiveness evaluation is set at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Open-ended Scientific Group will have more time to collect and analyse data. Likewise, the Effectiveness Evaluation Group will have more time to interact with the Open-ended Scientific Group and the Secretariat as they develop information for their use, as well as a full year to draft their own report after receiving input from the Open-ended Scientific Group and Secretariat.

13. Irrespective of what end date is decided by the Conference of the Parties, it is likely that many useful lessons will be learned from the first effectiveness evaluation that will help inform future evaluations and related decisions by the Conference of the Parties.