Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference on Chemicals Management
Third meeting
Montevideo, 2–4 April 2019
Item 4 (e) of the provisional agenda*

Progress towards the achievement of the 2020 overall objective of the sound management of chemicals: financing of the Strategic Approach

Quick Start Programme and its trust fund

Report of the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its first session, the International Conference on Chemicals Management, by its resolution I/4, decided to establish the Quick Start Programme to support initial capacity-building activities for the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, building upon the outcomes of the first session of the Conference and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building.

2. In the same resolution, the Conference called for the establishment of a trust fund and provided that the Quick Start Programme trust fund would be open to receive voluntary contributions from Governments, regional economic integration organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations for a period of five years from the date of its establishment by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At its second session, by its resolution II/3, the Conference decided to allow the trust fund to remain open to contributions until the third session of the Conference. At its third session, by its resolution III/1, the Conference decided to extend the term for contributions to the Quick Start Programme trust fund until its fourth session. At its fourth session, it was decided that the secretariat would continue to perform its regular functions, provisionally up to and including 2019, until all Quick Start Programme projects had been finalized.

II. Possible action

3. Participants may wish to review progress made by the Quick Start Programme, taking into consideration the information set out in the present report.

III. Quick Start Programme oversight bodies

4. The International Conference on Chemicals Management is the main governing body of the Quick Start Programme. The Quick Start Programme, through its trust fund, has been recognized by the Conference as a useful tool in supporting the enabling activities of the first phase of implementation of the Strategic Approach globally.

5. By resolution I/4, the Conference established the Executive Board of the Quick Start Programme, consisting of two government representatives of each of the United Nations regions and

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* SAICM/OEWG.3/1.
all the bilateral and multilateral donors and other contributors to the Programme. The list of the members of the Quick Start Programme Executive Board for the period 2015–2019 is contained in annex II to the present report.

6. The Executive Board provides operational guidance on the Programme, including on eligibility for financing from the trust fund and administrative matters, and offers advice on other relevant aspects as appropriate. It provides its guidance on the basis of reports from both the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund Implementation Committee and the Strategic Approach secretariat on project implementation, as well as from UNEP, as trustee of the trust fund, on the financial situation of the trust fund. Since the fourth session of the Conference, the Executive Board has met once, via a webinar held on 14 December 2017. The meeting was co-chaired by Tatiana Tugui (Republic of Moldova) and Reginald Hernaus (Netherlands).

7. In addition, by its resolution I/4, the Conference invited representatives of the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals\(^1\) to form the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund Implementation Committee.

8. Following each round of applications to the trust fund, the Committee reviews and appraises proposals after they have first been screened by the secretariat for completeness and eligibility. It also provides guidance on the process of applying to the trust fund, including on completing application forms and following guidelines, and on project implementation arrangements, including the monitoring and evaluation of projects. The Committee monitors the implementation of trust fund projects and reports to the Executive Board on their status. Over the course of 14 rounds of applications, the Committee has appraised 341 applications and approved 184 projects. Since the fourth session of the Conference, the Committee has met once, in Paris on 5 November 2015.

IV. Quick Start Programme trust fund

A. Financial update

9. Since its establishment, the Quick Start Programme has mobilized over $50 million. That amount includes approximately $40 million in cash contributions and over $10 million in cash and/or in-kind contributions from project implementers and executing agencies. In addition, $88.5 million in non-trust fund contributions were reported over the period 2006–2017.

10. The contributors to the Quick Start Programme trust fund include the Governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as the European Commission.

11. The business plan for the Quick Start Programme is a working document, adopted by the Executive Board, which sets out a strategic action plan for securing appropriate resources and ensuring that the Programme performs effectively. Moreover, it provides information on the background, status and financial context of the Programme. It was conceived as a living document and a working tool, to be regularly updated and re-evaluated at meetings of the Executive Board. To enable the Board to monitor the effectiveness of the Programme, a set of performance indicators were developed. The secretariat produces annual reports that include data relating to the performance indicators. Several of those indicators relate to securing funding.

B. Closure

12. At the fourth session of the Conference, the trust fund was declared closed to new contributions. Acting on the recommendation of the secretariat, the Conference delegated to the Executive Board the setting of an appropriate date for the full and final closure of the trust fund, noting that it needed to be done before the fifth session of the Conference, which was scheduled to be held in 2020.

\(^1\) The participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the World Health Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Bank.
13. At its 11th meeting, the Executive Board agreed that 31 December 2019 would be the final closure date of the trust fund. At the request of the Executive Board, the secretariat conveyed that message to the Executive Director of UNEP.

V. Overview of the trust fund portfolio

Application rounds

14. Since its establishment, there have been 14 rounds of applications to the trust fund. The secretariat has screened project proposals for completeness and eligibility and submitted 341 applications for the appraisal of the trust fund Implementation Committee. Over the course of the 14 rounds, the Committee has approved 184 projects for funding, valued at approximately $37.8 million and covering 108 countries, including 54 least developed countries and/or small island developing States. Of the 184 approved projects, 163 are led by Governments and 21 by civil society organizations.

15. As at 30 November 2018, the projects approved from all applications rounds had been funded and the secretariat had processed all project funding agreements.

VI. Secretariat support for the Quick Start Programme

16. The secretariat is providing support for the Quick Start Programme and its trust fund as mandated in resolution I/4. The support includes facilitating meetings of the Trust Fund Implementation Committee and the Executive Board; providing administrative support for the Programme and the trust fund; and screening trust fund project proposals for completeness and eligibility.

17. In addition, the secretariat’s functions, which are set out in paragraph 28 of the Overarching Policy Strategy, include the provision of guidance to stakeholders in the initiation of project proposals.

18. As of January 2019, the staff members of the Strategic Approach secretariat working on the Quick Start Programme consist of a Programme Officer at the P-3 level who has been on maternity leave and subsequent special leave without pay since mid-August 2018. That staff member is expected to resume her functions on 29 March 2019. A temporary P-2 level staff member recruited in November 2016 recently left the secretariat. In order for the Quick Start Programme to continue receiving the support it needs, UNEP has temporarily assigned a staff member at the P-2 level to work on the Programme.

A. Facilitation of meetings of the Trust Fund Implementation Committee and the Executive Board

19. As at 30 November 2018, the secretariat had convened and serviced 11 meetings of the Executive Board and 18 meetings of the Trust Fund Implementation Committee. In addition, preparations for the 12th meeting of the Executive Board, scheduled for May 2019, have been made, including the development of meeting and information documents, which have been made available eight weeks in advance of the meeting, along with the logistical arrangements for the teleconference. The secretariat coordinates preparation and follow-up for each meeting with the meeting chair or co-chairs. For the Trust Fund Implementation Committee, a summary of each of the proposals is prepared, as well as detailed reports on the status of projects and other issues relating to the administration of the Quick Start Programme.

B. Administrative support to the Quick Start Programme and its trust fund

20. As at January 2019, the secretariat had completed the agreements for all approved projects from the 14 rounds of applications. The delays experienced in processing agreements have all been resolved. The introduction of the Umoja financial management system in June 2015 placed additional pressure on the administrative staff servicing both the Strategic Approach secretariat and the Chemicals and Health Branch of UNEP. Despite those challenges, which have been overcome, the secretariat has processed the remaining approved projects from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth rounds.

2 Quick Start Programme projects have been approved in a total of 108 countries, of which 105 are on the list of countries eligible to receive official development assistance that is issued by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
21. As part of its administrative duties, the secretariat monitors the progress of funded projects. Each project must submit semi-annual narrative and financial reports, midterm and final monitoring and evaluation reports, and final narrative and expenditure reports. The secretariat oversees the timely submission of those reports, assesses the overall performance of the projects and provides guidance to project implementers as needed. If remedial action is required, the secretariat consults the Trust Fund Implementation Committee for guidance.

22. The secretariat also maintains a record of trust fund contributions and facilitates the conclusion of agreements with donors, the transfer and recording of funds, and any necessary reporting to contributors and donors. Those tasks are coordinated with the administrative personnel in the Chemicals and Health Branch and the Treasury Services Unit of the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

C. Screening of trust fund project proposals for completeness and eligibility

23. The secretariat performs the function of screening project proposals for completeness and eligibility, and, as indicated in paragraph 28 of the Overarching Policy Strategy, guidance is provided to stakeholders in the initiation of project proposals. The secretariat assists prospective applicants through correspondence and by responding to requests for clarification. Following each application round, the secretariat informs applicants of the Trust Fund Implementation Committee’s decisions and evaluates whether conditionally approved projects have met the conditions for final approval before preparing legal agreements with applicants.

D. Participation in the reviewing of project proposals for the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

24. Following the recommendation made by the Conference during its fourth session, the Quick Start Programme officer represented the Strategic Approach secretariat in the internal task team created to review the project proposals submitted for the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. Where relevant, results and lessons learned from completed and ongoing Quick Start Programme projects in countries were included in the Special Programme submissions. In addition, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to find linkages between Quick Start Programme projects relating to the Strategic Approach and applications of the Special Programme.

E. Development of the Quick Start Programme database

25. In support of the objectives of the Quick Start Programme, the secretariat has developed a database of completed Programme projects in order to share the successes and outcomes of the Programme with Strategic Approach stakeholders. The aim of the database is to collect and share information regarding Quick Start Programme-funded projects online in a transparent and informative manner, thereby strengthening and further supporting the implementation of the Strategic Approach. The database is available on the Strategic Approach website (www.saicm.org).
Annex I

Summary of Quick Start Programme trust fund pledges, 2006–2015
(United States dollars)

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Annex II

Quick Start Programme Executive Board members (2015–2019)

Regional representatives

African States

Malawi

Carolina Theka
Environmental Officer
Environmental Affairs Department
Lingadzi House, Private Bag 394
Lilongwe
Malawi
Tel.: +265 1 775 062
Fax: +265 1 773 379
Email: caroltheka@yahoo.com, caroltheka@gmail.com

Togo

Nadjo N’Ladon
Coordonnateur National du Projet SAICM
Direction de l’Environnement
Ministère de l’Environnement et des Ressources Forestières
247, Rue des Nîmes
BP 4825
Lomé
Togo
Tel.: +228 90 27 87 45 / +228 22 43 18 28
Fax: +228 22 21 03 33
Email: nnadjonab@yahoo.fr, nadjo.nladon@gmail.com

Asia-Pacific States

Malaysia

Che Kodir Baharum
Deputy Undersecretary
Management and Climate Change Division
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
Level 6, Wisma Sumber Asli
No. 25, Persiaran Perdana, Precint 4
62574 Putrajaya
Malaysia
Tel.: +603 8886 1138
Fax: +603 8888 4473
Email: checkodir@nre.gov.my

Yemen

Murad Alfakih
General Director of Unit/ SAICM National Focal Point
SAICM and Mercury Protection Unit
Environmental Protection Authority
Ministry of Water and the Environment
19719 Zubairay Street
Sanaa
Yemen
Tel.: +967 773 72011
Fax: +967 1 207 327
Email: alfakihmurad@yahoo.com, muradalfakih41@gmail.com
Eastern European States

Albania
Lindita Tafaj
Head of Laboratories Section
Department of Environmental Health
Institute of Public Health
Rr. Aleksander Moisiu, Nr. 80
Tirana
Albania
Tel.: +355 4 2363066
Mobile: +355 672 047 683
Email: lindita.tafaj@gmail.com

Republic of Moldova
Tatiana Tugui
Environmental Pollution Prevention Office
Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova
Str. Mitrololit Dosoftei 156 A, bir 310
MD 2004, mun. Chisinau
Republic of Moldova
Tel./Fax: +373 22 22 25 42
Email: tuguitatiana@ymail.com

Latin America and Caribbean States

Panama
Maria Inés Esquivel
Medico / Coordinadora de Proyecto
Subdireccion General de Salud
Ministerio de Salud
Paseo Gorgas, Ancon, Edificio 237
Ciudad de Panana
Panama
Tel.: +507 523 4945
Fax: +507 523 4945
Email: miesquivelg@gmail.com

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Marcus Richards
Agricultural Officer
Plant Protection and Quarantine Unit
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Richmond Hill
Kingstown
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Tel.: +784 457 1283
Fax: +784 457 1688
Email: office.agriculture@mail.gov.vc, mldrds@yahoo.com, ppq@gov.vc
Western European and other States

Finland

Pirkko Kivelä
Ministerial Adviser, Material Economy/
Ministry of the Environment
PL 35, 00023 VALTIONEUVOSTO
PO Box 35, FIN-00023 GOVERNMENT, Finland
Tel.: +358 295 250 279
Email: pirkko.kivela@ym.fi

Norway

Sverre Thomas Jahre
Senior Adviser
Ministry for Climate and Environment
P.O. Box 8013 Dep.
NO-0030 Oslo
Norway
Tel.: +47 2224 9090
Fax: +47 2224 9563
Email: sverre-thomas.jahre@kld.dep.no
Donors

France
Finland
Germany
Netherlands
Republic of Korea
South Africa
Sweden (Swedish Chemicals Agency, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency)
Switzerland
European Union (Directorate-General for Environment, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development)