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Fourth meeting of the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020
Bucharest, Romania, 23-27 March 2020

Item 6 of the provisional agenda¹

Any other business

Activities of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, in the annex to the present note, the contributions of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. The document presented in the annex has been developed and submitted by the Special Programme Secretariat and has not been formally edited.

¹ SAICM/IP.4/1

Annex

Activities of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

I. Introduction

1. With the view to addressing the increased need for sustainable, predictable, adequate and accessible financing for the chemicals and waste agenda, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) proposed the establishment of an integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and waste to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its twenty-seventh session, in February 2013.
2. The Governing Council, in its decision 27/12², section VIII, welcomed the integrated approach to address the financing of the sound management of chemicals and wastes, and underscored that the three components of the integrated approach: mainstreaming, industry involvement and dedicated external finance were mutually reinforcing and were all important for the financing of sound management of chemicals and wastes.
3. Furthermore, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEA), in its resolution 1/5³, section II, also welcomed the integrated approach to the financing of chemicals and waste management and adopted the terms of reference for a special programme, to be funded by voluntary contributions, to support institutional strengthening⁴ at the national level to enhance the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).
4. The Special Programme was subsequently established and is part of subprogramme 5, on chemicals, waste and air quality, within the UNEP programme of work.
5. The objective of the Special Programme is to support country-driven institutional strengthening at the national level, in the context of the integrated approach to address the financing of the sound management of chemicals and wastes, taking into account the national development strategies, plans and priorities of each country, to increase sustainable public institutional capacity for the sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle. The Special Programme is one of two complementary elements of dedicated external financing under the integrated approach, with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) being the further element.
6. The terms of reference of the Special Programme stipulate eligibility for support from the Programme as follows:
 - (a) 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, with priority given to those with least capacity;
 - (b) Applicants will be eligible if they are party to any one of the relevant conventions or have demonstrated that they are in the process of preparing for ratification of any one of the conventions; and
 - (c) Applications are to include identification of the associated domestic measures to be taken to ensure that the national institutional capacity supported by the Special Programme is sustainable in the long term.

² Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/12221/Governing%20Council%20Decision%2027-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

³ Available at <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17285/K1402364.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

⁴ For the purposes of the Special Programme, institutional strengthening is defined as enhancing the sustainable institutional capacity of Governments to develop, adopt, monitor and enforce policy, legislation and regulation, as well as to gain access to financial and other resources for effective frameworks for the implementation of the Instruments for the sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle.

7. The terms of reference also stipulate the following operational arrangements:
- (a) The Special Programme will receive applications directly from national Governments;
 - (b) Applications should be outlined within the context of an overall country approach to strengthening institutional capacity;
 - (c) Applications should contain proposed measures and performance targets and information relating to long-term sustainability;
 - (d) Cumulative allocations to a country should be decided by the Executive Board, based on the contributions received and the needs expressed in the applications submitted. Of that total, an amount not exceeding 13 per cent may be retained for administrative purposes;
 - (e) Beneficiary countries will contribute resources equal to the value of at least 25 per cent of the total allocation. The Executive Board may reduce that percentage, commensurate with consideration of the specific national circumstances, capacity constraints, gaps and needs of the applicant; and
 - (f) Beneficiary countries are to submit annual reports on progress achieved; a final report and financial audit, including a full accounting of funds used and an evaluation of outcomes, as well as evidence of whether performance targets have been met, are to be submitted upon completion of each project.
8. Furthermore, the terms of reference provide information regarding the duration of the Special Programme, which will be open to receive voluntary contributions and applications for support for seven years from the date it is established⁵. On the basis of a satisfactory review and evaluation, and subject to a recommendation from the Executive Board to the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Special Programme may be eligible for a one-time extension, not to exceed an additional five years. Special Programme funds may be disbursed for a maximum of 10 years from the date the Programme is established, or eight years from the date it is extended, if applicable, at which point the Programme will complete its operations and close.
9. The present document provides information on activities of the Special Programme to date.

II. Governance of the Special Programme

10. The Executive Board is the decision-making body overseeing the Special Programme with the support of the Secretariat. The term of its representatives is in a two-year rotation. The composition of the Executive Board reflects a balance between donors and recipients as follows:
- (a) Four representatives of recipient countries, reflecting equitable, geographical representation, drawn from the following United Nations regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean
 - (b) One representative from a least developed country or a small island developing State on a rotational basis;
 - (c) Five donor representatives, which are not also recipient countries.
11. The call for nominations from countries wishing to serve on the Executive Board during its 2020-2022 term was launched in November 2019. The Executive Board is pending full membership and the composition will be announced on the Special Programme website⁶ once it is fully constituted.
12. At the final meeting of the outgoing Executive Board held via teleconference on 3 February 2020, the Executive Board agreed that the co-chairs of the outgoing Executive Board, represented by Mr. Clarence Matewe (Zimbabwe) and Ms. Sofia Tingstorp (Sweden), should continue with the role of the co-chairs until the new incoming Executive Board is confirmed to ensure a smooth transiting period and support to the Secretariat in the interim.

⁵ The Special Programme was established in September 2015, at the same time as the establishment of the Special Programme Trust Fund.

⁶ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/special-programme-executive-board>

III. Meetings of the Executive Board

A. First meeting of the Executive Board

13. At its first meeting, held from 2 to 3 February 2016 in Geneva Switzerland⁷, the Executive Board reached an agreement on the Rules of Procedure for the operations of the Executive Board of the Special Programme, the application guidelines, and application forms.

14. The Executive Board also agreed to launch the first round of applications in April 2016.

B. Second meeting of the Executive Board

15. The first round of applications for funding from the Special Programme was launched on 4 April 2016. The deadline for the submission of applications to the Secretariat was 4 July 2016. Following the application deadline, the Secretariat received 54 applications from 45 countries.

16. The second meeting of the Executive Board was held from 11 to 13 October 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand⁸. The meeting was attended by 10 of the 10 Executive Board members and represented quorum for decision making in accordance with Rule 17 of the rules of procedure for the Executive Board of the Special Programme.

17. The main objective of the meeting was to review the 42 eligible and complete applications submitted for the first and pilot round of applications.

18. The Executive Board approved projects for the first and pilot round of applications, as outlined in table 1 of the appendix, amounting to US\$ 1.75 million, taking into consideration, regional balance and the special needs of least developed countries and small island developing States.

19. The Board agreed that the second round of applications would be launched in February 2017.

C. Third meeting of the Executive Board

20. The second round of applications for funding from the Special Programme was launched on 22 February 2017. The deadline for the submission of applications to the Secretariat was 20 June 2017. Following the application deadline, the Secretariat received 43 applications from 37 countries.

21. The third meeting of the Executive Board was held from 2 to 3 December 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya⁹. The meeting was attended by 8 of the 10 Executive Board members and represented quorum for decision making in accordance with Rule 17 of the rules of procedure for the Executive Board of the Special Programme.

22. The Executive Board reviewed each of the applications submitted and approved 17 projects, as outlined in table 2 of the appendix, amounting to US\$ 5,096,735, taking into consideration regional balance and the special needs of least developed countries and small island developing States.

23. It was also decided that projects that were not approved during the second round would be invited to resubmit their application to the third and subsequent rounds of applications.

24. In addition, a communications strategy and a resource mobilization strategy were considered and endorsed by the Executive Board during its third meeting. The Executive Board noted that such strategies would allow the Special Programme to attract well-developed applications and donors in a competitive environment.

25. Furthermore, the Executive Board agreed that the third round of applications would be launched in early 2018.

⁷ The report of the first meeting of the Executive Board is available at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22904/Special%20Programme%201st%20Executive Board meeting Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22904/Special%20Programme%201st%20Executive%20Board%20meeting%20Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

⁸ The report of the second meeting of the Executive Board is available at http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17014/2nd_EBMR_Oct2016_advance_copy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁹ The report of the third meeting of the Executive Board is available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27357/boardRep.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

D. Fourth meeting of the Executive Board

26. The third round of applications for funding from the Special Programme was launched on 23 February 2018. The deadline for the submission of applications to the Secretariat was 21 June 2018. Following the application deadline, the Secretariat received 37 applications, from 34 countries.

27. The fourth meeting of the Executive Board was held from 29 to January 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland¹⁰. The meeting was attended by 9 of the 10 Executive Board members and represented quorum for decision making in accordance with Rule 17 of the rules of procedure for the Executive Board of the Special Programme.

28. The Executive Board approved 18 projects amounting to US\$ 4,703,849. The approved projects were selected taking into account the project's merits, regional balance and priority to countries with least capacity, taking into account the special needs of least developing countries and small island developing States, as outlined in table 3 of the appendix.

29. It was also decided that projects that were not approved during the third round would be invited to resubmit their application to the fourth and subsequent rounds of applications.

30. In addition, the Executive Board requested the Secretariat to initiate the midterm evaluation for the Special Programme internal UNEP project in early April 2019.

31. With regards to resource mobilization, the Executive Board requested the Secretariat to develop a focused action plan that outlines activities and necessary resources to showcase the Special Programme's priorities over the next two years.

32. Furthermore, the Executive Board approved the proposed branding and visual identity of the Special Programme and welcomed the proposed activities that will be implemented under Phase II of the communications strategy.

33. The Board also welcomed the proposed improvements to the Special Programme project database to include a search engine that facilitates the retrieval of information and the development of the application guidelines and e-learning modules and hoped that they will facilitate the application process and contribute to the improvement of the quality of the applications submitted.

E. Fifth meeting of the Executive Board

34. The fifth meeting of the Executive Board of the Special Programme was held from 6 to 7 October 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand¹¹, taking place back to back with the third meeting of the SAICM Intersessional Process.

35. At the meeting the Board members endorsed the revised documents of the application package for the fourth round of applications for funding from the Special Programme and the e-learning platform. The Board also agreed to make the guidance and guidelines available in five of the UN languages.

36. Furthermore, the Board requested the Secretariat to launch the fourth round of applications in the margins of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which took place on 29 November 2019.

37. The Board also reflected positively on the findings of the midterm evaluation of the Special Programme and approved the proposed timeline for the finalization of the report of the midterm evaluation, which took place in January 2020.

38. With regards to resource mobilization, the Executive Board endorsed the resource mobilization action plan as presented by the Secretariat. In addition, the Board requested that representative from the private sector are invited the next meeting of the Board to discuss how to strengthen private sector engagement in the context of the Special Programme and the integrated approach to financing of chemicals and waste.

¹⁰ The report of the fourth meeting of the Executive Board is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/events/working-group-meeting/fourth-meeting-executive-board-special-programme>

¹¹ The report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Board is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/events/working-group-meeting/fifth-meeting-executive-board-special-programme-support-institutional>

39. Furthermore, the Executive Board approved the proposed Request for Proposals for targeted communications presented with the view to facilitating the implementation of the second Phase of the Special Programme Communications Strategy.

IV. Status of the Special Programme Trust Fund

40. The generous contributions of donors to the Special Programme trust fund and its operations continue to be greatly appreciated by the recipient countries.

41. An update of donor contributions since the establishment of the Special Programme Trust Fund in September 2015 is shown in table 1 below. In addition, some donors provided financial resources for the operations of the Special Programme (for example, convening of the Executive Board meetings, outreach and communications) and the Special Programme Secretariat.

Table 1

Contributions and pledges received 2015 – 2020 (all amounts in US\$ as of 12 February 2020)

Donor	Total amount pledged*/contributed
European Union	19 631 656
Sweden	2 937 940
United States	1 410 000
Norway	1 359 271
Germany*	1 022 607
Finland	219 954
The Netherlands	248 006
Austria	65 923
Denmark	31 764
Belgium	39 800
Total contributions and pledges realised**	26 966 921

*Pledge amounts will be adjusted with the exchange rate on the day of receipt

42. In line with the Special Programme terms of reference, all signatories and parties to the conventions and other Governments with the capacity to do so, as well as from the private sector, including industry, foundations and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, are encouraged to contribute to the Special Programme Trust Fund.

IV. Status of the Implementation of Special Programme Funded Projects

A. First and pilot round of applications

43. At its second meeting, the Executive Board approved seven projects in Argentina, Benin, the Dominican Republic, Iraq, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tanzania, and Ukraine following the first and pilot round of applications for funding from the Special Programme.

44. The projects from Benin, the Dominican Republic, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tanzania, are scheduled to complete their projects in the first quarter of 2020. An overview of the projects and updates on their status of implementation and lessons learned will be presented on the Special Programme website in due course¹².

B. Second round of applications

45. At its third meeting, the Executive Board approved seventeen projects in Afghanistan, Belarus, Brazil, China, Ecuador, North Macedonia, Gambia, The, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Uganda and Viet Nam.

46. An overview of the projects and updates on their status of implementation and lessons learned can be found on the Special Programme website¹³.

¹² Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/special-programme-projects-database>

¹³ Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/special-programme-projects-database>

C. Third round of applications

47. At its fourth meeting, the Executive Board approved eighteen projects in Albania, Angola, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Eswatini, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine (State of), South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Vanuatu.

48. An overview of the project objectives can be found on the Special Programme website¹⁴.

D. Fourth round of applications

49. The fourth round of applications for funding from the Special Programme was launched on 29 November 2019, with a deadline for the submission of applications of 17 April 2020.

50. Announcements for the launch of the fourth round of applications were also made by the Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management through their websites, broadcasts and social media.

51. To facilitate this round of application, revised application guidance, guidelines and application forms were developed by the Special Programme Secretariat¹⁵. The application guidance and guidelines provide detailed information on the scope of the Special Programme and steps on how to complete the forms and what information would be required for submission of complete applications.

52. As agreed by the Executive Board at its third meeting the application guidance and guidelines will also made available in 5 of the official UN languages, specifically, Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish¹⁶, with the view to facilitating the submission of high-quality applications.

53. The Special Programme also developed an e-learning tool to assist Governments with the process of completing a Special Programme application based on the project application guidelines. Countries are invited to complete the eLearning course to facilitate the submission of high quality applications during the fourth round¹⁷.

54. A regional webinar is planned for the Latin America and the Caribbean regions. This activity will be convened by the UN Environment Regional Office and the Special Programme Secretariat, and will provide detailed information on the application process, as well as, guidance on how to complete the applications.

55. In addition, the Secretariat is available to provide one on one technical support and assistance in response to questions and queries from countries during the development of their application packages.

56. The sixth meeting of the Executive Board is scheduled to take place in the fourth quarter of 2020 to consider the applications submitted for the fourth round of applications, and other issues related to the operations of the Special Programme.

¹⁴ Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/special-programme-projects-database>.

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/applying-funding-through-special>

¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/applying-funding-through-special>

¹⁷ Available at <https://specialprogramme.unenvironment.org/>

Appendix

Table 1

List of projects approved by the Executive Board at its second meeting

Country	Project Title
<i>Argentina</i>	Strengthening national capacity for the sound management of chemicals and waste
<i>Benin</i>	Legal and institutional strengthening for the sound management of chemicals in Benin
<i>Dominican Republic</i>	Strengthening institutional capacity for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and SAICM in Dominican Republic
<i>Iraq</i>	Develop and strengthen the institutional structure for the management of chemicals and waste in Iraq
<i>Kyrgyz Republic</i>	Strengthening capacities for national implementation of chemicals and waste related international agreements
<i>Tanzania</i>	Strengthening institutional capacity for sound management of chemicals and waste in the United Republic of Tanzania
<i>Ukraine</i>	Strengthening the enforcement of the Rotterdam Convention in Ukraine, and building capacity to counteract illegal trafficking of chemical

Table 2

List of projects approved by the Executive Board at its third meeting

Country	Project Title
<i>Afghanistan</i>	Enhancing the sustainable institutional capacity to regulate toxic chemicals
<i>Belarus</i>	Establish a sustainable national infrastructure to join and support the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention in the Republic of Belarus
<i>Brazil</i>	Strengthening Institutional Capacity for the Sound management of Chemicals through the Establishment of necessary structure to implement the national legislation on industrial Chemicals
<i>China</i>	China-Strengthening institutional capacity for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and SAICM
<i>Ecuador</i>	Strengthening of the national control system for the management of dangerous materials in Ecuador
<i>North Macedonia</i>	Strengthening Institutional capacities for mainstreaming quadruple synergy schemes in implementation of the National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementation of SAICM and Inclusion of Minamata convention
<i>Gambia, The</i>	Institutional Capacity Building for the Implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in The Gambia
<i>Ghana</i>	Strengthening Institutional Capacity for the Sustainable Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste throughout their Life-cycle and the Effective Implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) in Ghana
<i>India</i>	Institutional Capacity Building for Sustainable Management of Chemical and Wastes with Special Focus on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
<i>Kenya</i>	Support to chemicals and wastes MEAs and SAICM implementation in Kenya
<i>Kiribati</i>	Strengthening legal systems, institutions and data collection infrastructure in Kiribati
<i>Nigeria</i>	Strengthening of the legal and institutional infrastructures for sound management of chemicals (SMC) in Nigeria
<i>Papua New Guinea</i>	Strengthening the institutional framework and national capacity of key stakeholders in Papua New Guinea in wastes and chemical management
<i>Republic of Moldova</i>	Improving sustainable institutional and regulatory framework for chemicals and waste management throughout their lifecycle in the Republic of Moldova
<i>Serbia</i>	Strengthening the synergies between the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions at the national level in the Republic of Serbia
<i>Uganda</i>	Strengthening national institution capacity in sound management of chemicals and waste in Uganda

Viet Nam Strengthening national capacity in sound chemical and waste management for the implementation of the Stockholm, Basel, Rotterdam, Minamata Conventions, SAICM in Viet Nam

Table 3
List of projects approved by the Executive Board at its fourth meeting

Country	Project Title
<i>Albania</i>	Strengthening sound chemicals and waste management in Albania, demonstrating improvement of Health Care Waste (HCW) management.
<i>Angola</i>	Strengthening Angola's National Chemicals and Waste Management Programme by establishing sustainable, integrated, and coherent national structure with emphasis on Private Sector participation
<i>Bolivia (Plurinational State of)</i>	Special Program for the Strengthening of National Capacities for Chemical Substances and Hazardous Waste Management in the Plurinational State of Bolivia
<i>Cambodia</i>	Institutional strengthening in Cambodia for efficient and coordinated implementation of the chemicals and waste management international agreements
<i>Ethiopia</i>	Enhancing Ethiopia's Institutional Capacity for Sound Management of Hazardous Wastes and POPs Chemicals and Improving Reporting Obligation under Basel and Stockholm Conventions
<i>El Salvador</i>	Institutional strengthening for El Salvador in the implementation of the Basel, Stockholm, Minamata and Rotterdam Conventions and the Strategic Approach for the Management of Chemical Products at the International Level
<i>Eswatini</i>	Institutional Capacity development and strengthening for the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste in the Kingdom of Eswatini
<i>Iran (Islamic Republic of)</i>	The Implementation of Cleaner Production Practices to Manage Chemicals and Waste in Oil Refinery
<i>Kazakhstan</i>	Strengthening the National Capacity of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Regulate Chemicals Through Ensuring Compliance with Obligations Under International Multilateral Environmental Agreements
<i>Micronesia (Federated States of)</i>	Strengthening Institutional Capacity for the Chemicals Management in the FSM
<i>Nauru</i>	Strengthening the national capacity for integrated chemicals and waste management in Nauru
<i>Pakistan</i>	Strengthening of national legislation and capacity building of stakeholders for sound chemicals and hazardous waste management in Pakistan
<i>Palau</i>	Strengthening the national institutional capacity for chemicals and waste management in Palau
<i>Palestine (State of)</i>	Strengthening the institutional capacity of the State of Palestine for sound waste and chemicals management and fostering stakeholder buy-in under the BRS Conventions and supporting process towards ratification of the Minamata Convention
<i>South Africa</i>	Phasing out of lead in paint and the development of an action plan for SAICM emerging contaminants (lead in paint, HHPs, EPPPs, EDCs, & Cd)
<i>Tajikistan</i>	Strengthening institutional capacity for national implementation of the Stockholm and Basel international conventions and building capacity for accessing the Rotterdam Convention in Tajikistan
<i>Tunisia</i>	Institutional strengthening and capacity building project towards achieving Environmental Sound Management (ESM) of hazardous wastes and chemicals at the industrial level as well as enhancing compliance and implementation of chemicals and waste Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) including Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions
<i>Vanuatu</i>	Strengthening the National Institutional Capacity for Chemicals and waste management in Vanuatu