



**Conference of the Parties to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Fourth meeting**

Online, 1–5 November 2021*

Item 4 (e) (ii) of the provisional agenda**

**Matters for consideration or action by the
Conference of the Parties: financial resources and
mechanism: Specific International Programme to
Support Capacity-Building and Technical
Assistance****Overall report on the Specific International Programme to
Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. In paragraph 5 of article 13, on financial resources and the financial mechanism, the Minamata Convention on Mercury defines a mechanism for the provision of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources to support developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. According to the Convention, the mechanism includes the Global Environment Facility trust fund and a specific international programme to support capacity-building and technical assistance. The present note sets out the secretariat's overall report on the second component of the financial mechanism,¹ namely the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting.

2. In decision MC-1/6, on the Specific International Programme, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention decided that the hosting institution referred to in paragraph 9 of article 13 of the Convention² was to be provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and approved the necessary hosting arrangements and guidance on the operations and duration of the programme and the terms of reference of the programme, as set out in the annexes to the decision. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Director of UNEP to establish a trust fund for the Specific International Programme and to implement the governance arrangements set out in the annexes to the decision.

* The resumed fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury is to convene in person in Bali, Indonesia, and is tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

** UNEP/MC/COP.4/1.

¹ UNEP/MC/COP.4/9 outlines matters relating to the first entity of the financial mechanism, namely the Global Environment Facility trust fund.

² Article 13, paragraph 9, of the Convention reads: "For the purposes of this Convention, the Programme referred to in paragraph 6 (b) will be operated under the guidance of and be accountable to the Conference of the Parties. The Conference of the Parties shall, at its first meeting, decide on the hosting institution for the Programme, which shall be an existing entity, and provide guidance to it, including on its duration. All Parties and other relevant stakeholders are invited to provide financial resources to the Programme, on a voluntary basis."

3. At its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties noted the rules of procedure agreed to by the Governing Board and agreed that only parties could apply for funding from the Specific International Programme and that the Governing Board was to consist of 10 members from parties.^{3, 4}

4. The present note on the Specific International Programme sets out the secretariat's overall report on all activities and outcomes under the programme following the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Section II describes the support provided by the secretariat to the Specific International Programme; section III outlines the work of the Governing Board since the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties; section IV gives an overview of the third round of applications to the Specific International Programme; and section V contains information on the status of the Specific Trust Fund and the implementation of projects funded in the first and second rounds of applications.

5. The present note is to be read in conjunction with document UNEP/MC/COP.4/11/Add.1,⁵ which has two annexes, the first containing the reports of the fifth and sixth meetings of the Governing Board and the second listing the project proposals received, considered and approved during the third round of applications, in 2021. The Governing Board is to meet from 9 to 13 August 2021 to decide on the projects to be funded in the third round.

II. Support provided by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention to the Specific International Programme

6. The secretariat of the Minamata Convention administers the Specific International Programme through the following ongoing activities:

(a) Support for the operations of the Governing Board: The secretariat prepares all the documentation for the Governing Board meetings, including an annual progress and financial report covering project implementation status for each project supported by the Specific International Programme and the operations and status of the Specific Trust Fund. Because new Board members are confirmed every two years, the secretariat works to ensure that all Board members have a thorough understanding of the programme's scope and requirements and of their own roles. In November 2020, this took the form of a digital "master class" for Board members. More information on the work of the Governing Board is set out in section III.

(b) Launch of the application rounds of the Specific International Programme: This activity entails working with the Governing Board to establish a timeline and launch the round, producing the guidelines, providing outreach and explanations to applicants during the submission process, screening all applications received by the mandatory deadline, convening the cross-secretariat task team, providing technical comments to enable application revision and resubmission and preparing appraisals of eligible applications for the Governing Board's consideration. In preparing for the launch of the third round of applications, the secretariat analysed and summarized for the Board the lessons learned from the first two rounds so that the guidelines, forms and operational procedures for the third round could be fine-tuned, and then revised the guidelines and forms accordingly. The secretariat held webinars for prospective applicants in three languages and the application guidelines were made available on the Convention website in three languages, along with application forms, the webinar recordings and presentations and the timeline for the application round. The secretariat, with the approval of the Board, added a technical review phase designed to provide more immediate yet targeted feedback to applicant Governments, to allow for resubmissions of applications from applicants who wish to address technical review comments from the secretariat, with a view to shortening the post-approval work phase and allowing for more efficient implementation. To this task, the secretariat brings its technical expertise, project management expertise and substantive input, as well as such expertise from a cross-secretariat task team, as described in section IV, below.

(c) Administration of the Specific Trust Fund: The secretariat administers the contributions to the Specific Trust Fund and their disbursement in accordance with UNEP procedures. This entails creating documentation for all grant agreements, amendments, reports and disbursements in the Umoja system and maintaining communications with project partners.

(d) Implementation support for approved projects: The secretariat delivers programmatic support for the finalization of project documentation in preparation for the signature of the legal

³ See document UNEP/MC/COP.2/19, para. 103.

⁴ The rules of procedure of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme are available at: http://mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/publications/SIP_Rules_Procedure.pdf.

⁵ Document UNEP/MC/COP.4/11/Add.1 presents the report of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

agreements and any amendments thereto, including addressing all comments from the Governing Board and all needs with respect to sound results-based management and budgeting. The secretariat supports and monitors implementation, including review of progress and expenditure reports; review of final project reports and financial audits; and closure and evaluation of completed projects. In 2020, in addition to ongoing communications with individual project focal points, the secretariat initiated regular group communications with project partners through virtual “SIP Coffees” that provided an opportunity for partners to share experiences, successes, concerns and questions, especially with regard to the reports to be submitted to the secretariat.

(e) Resource mobilization for the Specific Trust Fund: While a range of sources, including Governments, the private sector, foundations, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academia and civil society actors, are encouraged to contribute to the trust fund for the Specific International Programme, thus far all contributions have come from Governments. The secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the following Governments for supporting the programme: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. To raise awareness of the Specific International Programme, the secretariat draws attention to the work of the programme in all of its relevant engagements, webinars and meetings. Furthermore, to raise awareness of the work enabled at the national level through the Specific International Programme and the impact of the programme overall on the ability of parties to meet their obligations under the Convention, the secretariat launched a regular newsletter, called Focus on the Specific International Programme, in November 2020. Three editions of the newsletter have been published to date.⁶

(f) Donor recognition and reporting: The secretariat manages the receipt of contributions to the Specific Trust Fund while meeting individual donor requirements for documentation and reporting. Donors are highlighted on the Convention website and in relevant publications. The most recent Focus newsletter specifically focused on the donor contributions that enable the work of the programme. The secretariat has also developed a visualization infographic to provide an easy overview of the status of contributions to the Specific Trust Fund and in particular to showcase contributions to the third round.⁷

(g) Communications and outreach: The secretariat produced overviews of each of the first-round projects in cooperation with the project focal points, indicating the project objective, project summary and expected project results, as well as details on the project budgets, duration and project management, including the contacts at the national level for each project. The overviews are available on the Convention website for all projects from the first round and are being developed for all projects from the second round.⁸ The secretariat will continue engaging virtually with project managers through the periodic SIP Coffees digital sessions, to connect and lend support in an informal setting, check in on progress made under the projects, address any challenges faced and exchange information. The secretariat will also share additional online training and awareness-raising materials with project partners as they engage stakeholders and take active steps to ensure safety in their project implementation in terms of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The FOCUS newsletter, thus far issued in November 2020, January 2021 and July 2021, is distributed to national focal points and a range of partners and stakeholders.

7. The secretariat has continued to refine and enhance the efficiency of the Specific International Programme operations in order to effectively manage the growing number of funded projects and the strong interest of programme applicants while maintaining high standards of fiduciary responsibility, in line with UNEP procedures. Furthermore, the secretariat has examined all its operations to address near-term challenges in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the resilience of the programme.

⁶ See www.mercuryconvention.org/Implementation/SpecificInternationalProgramme/NewsletterFOCUS/tabid/8768/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

⁷ See www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/SIP/Visualization-Contributions-Special-Trust-Fund-June2021.pdf for the visualization of the contributions to the Specific Trust Fund.

⁸ See www.mercuryconvention.org/Implementation/SpecificInternationalProgramme/tabid/6334/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

III. Work of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme since the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties

8. Decision MC-1/6 provides for the establishment of a governing board of the Specific International Programme to oversee and implement the guidance of the Conference of the Parties, including decision-making on projects and project management, with the functioning of the Governing Board covered by the terms of reference of the Specific International Programme set out in an annex to the decision.

9. The Conference of the Parties, at its third meeting, confirmed the current members of the Governing Board, as follows:

(a) For the African States: Mr. Olubunmi Olusanya (Nigeria) and Ms. Aïta Sarr Seck (Senegal);

(b) For the Asia-Pacific States: Mr. Prasert Tapaneeyangkul (Thailand) and Mr. Mohsen Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran);

(c) For the Central and Eastern European States: Mr. Kaupo Heinma (Estonia) and Ms. Anahit Aleksandryan (Armenia);

(d) For the Latin American and Caribbean States: Ms. Gina Griffith (Suriname) and Mr. Pedro Piacesi de Souza;

(e) For the Western European and other States: Mr. Reginald Hernaus (the Netherlands) and Mr. Atle Fretheim (Norway).

10. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of rule 3 of the Board's rules of procedure, Mr. Helges Bandeira (Brazil) replaced Mr. Pedro Piacesi de Souza (Brazil) for the remainder of his term, effective 1 January 2021.

11. Pursuant to the terms of reference of the Specific International Programme, the Governing Board consists of 10 members. Each of the five United Nations regions nominates two members through their respective Bureau representatives. The terms of reference further provided for the first members of the Governing Board to serve until the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with members nominated by the United Nations regional groups every two years thereafter and their membership confirmed by the Conference of the Parties. At its third meeting, the Conference of the Parties confirmed the members for the second term based on the nominations received from the United Nations regional groups. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties is expected to confirm the members for the next term based on the nominations received from the regions, which are set forth in document MC/COP.4/1/Add.2. According to the rules of procedure of the Governing Board, no member may serve on the Governing Board for more than two consecutive terms.

12. The Governing Board held its fifth meeting online on 24 and 25 November 2020. In accordance with the rules of procedure, which call for the Board to elect two co-chairs from among the members, the Board elected Mr. Reginald Hernaus (Netherlands) and Mr. Prasert Tapaneeyangkul (Thailand) as the co-chairs for the current term. The meeting was preceded by a master class given by the secretariat, designed to give new Board members a good understanding of the Specific International Programme and to update all Board members on the progress achieved in implementing the projects selected in the first two rounds of applications.

13. At its fifth meeting, the Governing Board received and discussed the annual report 2020 of the secretariat to the Board on operations of the Specific International Programme, including an update on the funds and pledges received by and expenditures of the Specific Trust Fund as at 15 November 2020. The Governing Board deliberated on issues concerning the review of the financial mechanism, in the light of the request by the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting for the secretariat to draft terms of reference for the second review of the financial mechanism. Noting that the Conference of the Parties, at its third meeting,⁹ had encouraged the Executive Director, in consultation with the Governing Board, to assess possible options for enhancing the Specific International Programme and its operations and had invited the Executive Director to present a report on the matter for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting,¹⁰ the Board discussed considerations relevant to the report.

⁹ As noted in document UNEP/MC/COP.3/23, para. 109.

¹⁰ UNEP/MC/COP.4/13.

14. Based on the funds and pledges received, the Board decided to launch the third round of applications to the programme.

15. The Board held its sixth meeting in an online format to consider the applications received for the third round and decide which projects to approve against the funding available, based on the appraisals prepared by the secretariat and according to the agreed criteria of prioritization. The Board also received the annual report 2021 of the secretariat to the Governing Board on the operations of the Specific International Programme, including an update on the funds and pledges received by and the expenditures of the Specific Trust Fund, and discussed relevant items to be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting. The details of the Board's deliberations are found in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/11/Add.1.¹¹

IV. Third round of applications to the Specific International Programme

16. The third round of applications was launched on 15 December 2020 with a mandatory deadline for submissions of 18 March 2021, allowing 94 days for the preparation of submissions.

17. The announcement of the launch was prominently placed on the Minamata Convention website and remained there for the duration of the submission period. Prospective applicants were able to download the following guidelines and forms:

- (a) Application guidelines for the third round of applications, in English, French and Spanish;¹²
- (b) Form A – Project application;
- (c) Form B – Project budget;
- (d) Form C – Letter of transmittal.

18. The launch of the third round of applications was also widely publicized through an email sent by the secretariat to the national focal points for the Minamata Convention, among others, as well as through the various regional UNEP officers handling the chemicals agenda. On 19 and 20 January 2021, the secretariat hosted webinar sessions on the application guidelines in English, French and Spanish. In total, 58 participants from more than 27 countries attended. All materials shared at the sessions (recordings and presentations) were made available on the Convention website for reference, including for parties who were unable to attend.

19. In February 2021, the webinars were followed up with an invitation to all prospective applicants to book a one-on-one clinic session with the secretariat to address any questions that may have arisen during the preparation of the application. Nine parties made use of this opportunity. From the secretariat's perspective, these clinics were especially insightful, as a large number of the prospective applicants were open to discussing details of their applications at the sessions. Over the submission period, the secretariat also engaged electronically with many prospective applicants to provide explanations and clarifications in support of their applications.

20. By 18 March 2021, the mandatory deadline set by the Governing Board, 24 applications had been received. Eleven applications were received from the African region, 8 from the Asia-Pacific region, 1 from the Central and Eastern European region and 4 from the Latin America and Caribbean region. Three of the 24 applications were from small island developing States and 8 were from least developed countries.

21. The secretariat acknowledged and screened the applications as they were received. Following that step, the secretariat began the technical review of the applications. On 19 April 2021, the secretariat hosted a cross-secretariat task team online meeting with representatives from the Global Environment Facility, 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, and the Global Mercury Partnership, along with secretariat staff, to provide input to the technical review of applications. The secretariat provided technical review comments to each applicant by 30 April 2021,

¹¹ The reports of the Governing Board meetings are available on the Convention website, at www.mercuryconvention.org/Implementation/SpecificInternationalProgramme/tabid/6334/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

¹² The guidelines are available on the Convention website (www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/SIP/SIP_Third_Round_Application_Guidelines_Dec_15.pdf) and in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/9.

with a resubmission deadline of 31 May 2021. Almost all applicants availed themselves of the opportunity to resubmit their applications, revised based on comments received.

22. Thereafter, the secretariat prepared the appraisals, again with the involvement of the cross-secretariat task team, for the Governing Board's consideration at its meeting in August 2021.

V. Status of the Specific Trust Fund and of project implementation

A. Status of the Specific Trust Fund

23. As at 31 May 2021, contributions and pledges for the third round of applications to the Specific International Programme amounted to \$2,233,328. Contributions or pledges were received from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, as set out in the following table.

Contributions and pledges received for 2020–2021, as at 31 May 2021

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Total amount pledged/contributed</i>
Austria	239 854
Denmark	62 542
France	110 011
Germany	263 268
Netherlands*	71 344
Norway	1 088 591
Sweden	148 217
Switzerland	101 492
United States	148 008
Total contributions and pledges	2 233 328

* The Netherlands has pledged an additional €30,000 for 2022.

24. Contributions to the Specific Trust Fund primarily fund grants for country-led projects selected and approved by the Governing Board. They must also cover costs associated with the meetings and work of the Governing Board and the operation of the Specific International Programme, as established in decision MC-1/6.

B. Status of implementation of projects approved in the first round (2018) and second round (2019) of applications

25. In the first round of applications (2018), the Governing Board approved five projects with an overall budget of \$961,663 (\$1,086,679 including 13 per cent programme support costs). The approved projects are:

(a) Argentina: Capacity-building programme for the implementation of the Minamata Convention (\$250,000);

(b) Armenia: Strengthening capacity to promote phasing out of mercury-added products (lamps) in Armenia (\$162,000);

(c) Benin: Improvement of the management framework for mercury-containing products and wastes (\$249,113);

(d) Iran (Islamic Republic of): Implementing of Minamata Convention on Mercury management in chlor-alkali plants in the petrochemical industry (\$100,000);

(e) Lesotho: Strengthening institutional capacity in the development of a phase-out and phase-down strategy for mercury-added products in Lesotho (\$200,550).

26. In the second round of applications (2019), the Governing Board approved 10 projects with an overall budget of \$1,977,564 (\$2,234,647 including 13 per cent programme support cost). The approved projects are:

- (a) Antigua and Barbuda: Facilitating capacity-building with technical assistance and technology transfer for managing mercury in the Caribbean (\$210,000);
- (b) Ecuador: Project to strengthen capacities in the implementation of the Minamata Convention in Ecuador (\$250,000);
- (c) Ghana: Strengthening Ghana's health sector for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (\$250,000);
- (d) Indonesia: Improving health risk control of mercury exposure in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and surrounding areas by developing the participatory approach model (\$143,340);
- (e) Iran (Islamic Republic of): Capacity-building for effective implementation of the Minamata Convention focusing on mercury inventory (\$149,800);
- (f) Nigeria: Capacity strengthening for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Nigeria (\$250,000);
- (g) Peru: Strengthening capacities to control emissions and releases of mercury in Peru (\$126,000);
- (h) Republic of Moldova: Support to post-ratification of the Minamata Convention of the Republic of Moldova by building phase-down capacities and reducing risks associated with mercury (\$219,765);
- (i) Sri Lanka: Strengthening national capacity for phasing out mercury-added products and environmentally sound mercury-containing waste management in Sri Lanka (\$178,659);
- (j) Zambia: To strengthen the institutional capacity for Zambia to implement the obligations of the Minamata Convention by reducing the presence of mercury in vulnerable populations as provided for under articles 16 and 18 (\$200,000).

27. The secretariat worked with each Government to finalize implementation matters and prepare legal agreements for signature so that disbursement of funds could begin. By July 2021, all the legal documents for the first and second rounds had been signed and implementation of those projects was fully under way. Despite limited implementation delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation has remained consistent with the project milestones established for the projects and partners have provided periodic progress and expenditure reports as required. The secretariat has engaged directly with project focal points and held virtual informal exchanges that brought project focal points together to share experiences, results and questions.
