Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The period 2020–2021 marks the second biennium of work for the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. In its decision MC-2/12, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, recalling decision MC-1/15, requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a budget for the biennium 2020–2021, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting, in 2019, explaining the key principles, assumptions and programmatic strategy on which the budget was based and presenting expenditures for that biennium in a programmatic format and broken down by budget activities, with each activity supported by a budget activity fact sheet. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary, in preparing the budget and programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021, to present two scenarios, one maintaining the operational budget at the 2019 level in nominal terms and one reflecting required changes to that scenario to meet the projected needs and costs or savings related to it.

2. Accordingly, the present note describes the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021. Section II on implementation gives an overview of the proposal, followed by a presentation of the programme budget for the two requested scenarios, setting out the differences between the Executive Secretary’s scenario and the zero nominal growth scenario. Section III presents the relevant suggested action by the Conference of the Parties. Annex I to the present note sets out a draft decision on the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021 and annex II provides a list of proposed activities included in the programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021.

3. The present note should be read in conjunction with the report on the main activities of the secretariat in the intersessional period (UNEP/MC/COP.3/19), the budget activity fact sheets setting out the details of the budgets proposed for 2020–2021 (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/9), the information on financial matters (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/10) and the proposed operational budgets for the two funding scenarios (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/11).
II. Implementation

A. Overview of the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021

4. Pursuant to decision MC-1/15, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme established three trust funds supporting the work of the Convention:

   (a) The general trust fund, to provide financial support for the work of the Convention secretariat, with an expiry date of 31 December 2035;

   (b) The special trust fund, to support the capacity-building and technical assistance activities of the secretariat in accordance with article 14, with an expiry date of 31 December 2035;

   (c) The Specific Trust Fund, for the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance established in accordance with article 13. As the Specific International Programme is time-limited, this trust fund’s expiry date is set as 31 December 2028.

5. In its decision MC-2/12, the Conference of the Parties approved the updated budget for the general trust fund of $4,080,374 for 2019 and authorized the Executive Secretary to draw down from the available surplus of the general trust fund the amount of $237,300 in 2019. It also adopted the indicative scale of assessment of the apportionment of expenses for 2019 as set out in the decision and authorized the Executive Secretary to adjust the scale to include all parties for which the Convention was in force by 1 January 2019. It further requested parties and invited non-parties to the Convention and others in a position to do so to contribute to the special trust fund to support the capacity-building and technical assistance activities of the secretariat in accordance with article 14 and the Specific Trust Fund to support capacity-building and technical assistance activities in accordance with article 13 of the Convention.

6. As is mentioned in paragraph 2 of the present note, in the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to present two scenarios in preparing the budgets and programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021.

7. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to take into account, in the preparation of the programme of work and budget for 2020–2021, relevant service-sharing arrangements and operative proposals made by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme in the capacity of performing secretariat services for the Minamata Convention, prepared together with the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention and with the support of the Executive Secretary of the Basel and Stockholm conventions and the United Nations Environment Programme part of the Rotterdam Convention, on a stable framework for sharing of relevant services pursuant to paragraph 2 of decision MC-2/7.

8. Information document UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/9 sets out budget activity fact sheets and provides additional information on the proposed programme of work, along with information on relevant meeting documents, mandates and the particulars of each activity, including background and rationale, expected outcomes, indicators of achievement, means of verification, partners, resources approved for 2018–2019 and resources required for 2020–2021.

B. Presentation of the programme budgets for the two scenarios

9. According to the United Nations financial management system, the activities that form the programme of work serve as the basis for budgeting. The proposed programme of work and the related budget for the Minamata Convention are therefore organized into 15 proposed activities under the seven functional headings (see annex II of the present note).

10. In accordance with decision MC-2/12, paragraph 14, the secretariat has prepared two budget scenarios, one at zero nominal growth and one reflecting required changes to that scenario to meet the projected needs associated with executing the work programme and fulfilling the mandate of the secretariat. The two budgetary scenarios are introduced below. Details can be found in the budget activity fact sheets (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/9) and in the information document on the proposed operational budgets for the two funding scenarios (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/11).

11. The figures provided in this section are net of programme support costs, which usually represent 13 per cent of the budgeted expenditures.
1. **Executive Secretary’s scenario**

12. The Executive Secretary’s scenario has been developed with a view to budgeting for essential elements of the work programme to comply with the mandated activities under the articles of the Convention. This constitutes elements at the 2018–2019 level, plus additional proposed core activities based on the existing mandates and the needs of the parties to be financed from the general trust fund. With the additional proposed core activities, the total budget for 2020–2021 before programme support costs is $8,665,706, $1,798,806 higher than the approved budget for the 2018–2019 biennium.

13. The Executive Secretary’s scenario, introduced to meet the projected needs, does not result in any savings compared to the zero nominal growth scenario. The most significant changes are as follows:

**Increases relative to the zero nominal growth scenario**

14. The increases are as follows:

   (a) **Activity 1**: An additional $55,000 has been allocated to include a high-level segment for the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention.

   (b) **Activity 6**: To support the Conference of the Parties in evaluating the effectiveness of the Convention pursuant to article 22 and in line with the framework proposed by the ad-hoc technical expert group, an additional $582,000 has been allocated to move activities funded by the special trust fund in the zero nominal growth scenario to the core budget, to allow for the development of an emissions and releases report, a supply, demand and trade report and a waste report.

   (c) **Activity 7**: The secretariat has assessed a need for $95,000 in the biennium to develop an online electronic national reporting system for the first full reporting to be submitted by parties by 31 December 2021, including the necessary training and tools, and to undertake an assessment of the parties’ submissions under article 21. This amount was cut to $60,000 to arrive at the zero nominal growth scenario, which entailed a corresponding reduction in the scope and outputs of the relevant activities. As a result, the Executive Secretary’s scenario entails an additional cost of $35,000 for this activity to meet the projected needs.

   (d) **Activity 8**: In the area of publications, an additional $65,000 is needed to include translation of publications in the core budget rather than under voluntary funding.

   (e) **Activity 10**: To be able to deliver the work programme of the secretariat for the 2020–2021 biennium, an additional $815,283 is needed in the area of executive direction and management for a P-4 Programme Officer to support the work of the Specific International Programme, including providing secretariat services to its Governing Board, managing its application and appraisal processes, managing the administrative and substantive implementation of approved projects, providing donor reports and overseeing the Programme’s evaluation, monitoring and auditing requirements. Furthermore, under this area it is proposed that the current P-3 Communications/Knowledge Management Officer post be split into two distinct functional areas of expertise, that is, a P-3 Communications Officer and a P-3 Knowledge Management Officer. This split in functions is deemed necessary on the basis of the experience gained over the past 18 months indicating the need for specific expertise in each area of work and greater capacity to manage the communications tasks and knowledge management tasks to be performed. The increase also includes an additional $20,000 for staff travel to bring the budgeted amount back to the 2018–2019 level, which had to be reduced in order to arrive at zero nominal growth in the zero nominal growth scenario.

   (f) **Activity 13**: In terms of legal and policy activities, an estimated $234,000 is needed for the 2020–2021 biennium to work on Sustainable Development Goals and gender strategies, including case studies and workshops. In the Executive Secretary’s scenario, this amount is included in core funding rather than under voluntary funding.

   (g) **Activity 14**: The budget for the Executive Secretary’s scenario is $9,524 higher than the budget for the zero nominal growth scenario. It corresponds to the secretariat’s projected needs in the area of office maintenance and services, while in the zero nominal growth scenario, the budget was reduced by that amount in the areas of communication supplies and office equipment in order to achieve zero nominal growth.

   (h) **Activity 15**: Similarly to the situation for activity 14, the $3,000 higher budget for information technology equipment and software in the Executive Secretary’s scenario corresponds to the actual estimated cost of the secretariat’s projected needs in the area of information technology services.

15. The Executive Secretary’s scenario represents both decreases and increases relative to the 2018–2019 approved budget, as follows:
Decreases relative to the 2018–2019 approved budget

16. The decreases are as follows:

(a) Activity 1: A decrease of $610,000 is estimated in connection with the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, mainly due to the fact that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties will be moving to a two-year cycle rather than an annual cycle. As the Minamata Convention secretariat does not have the staffing level to fully service the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, however, the resulting savings would be partially offset by the need to cover surge capacity requirements for the meetings, which are proposed to be shared and provided for by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. Furthermore, the Executive Secretary’s scenario includes the addition of a high-level segment of the meeting.

(b) Activity 3: Compared to the previous biennium, $7,000 less is budgeted for one three-day meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, as agreed by the committee at its meeting of June 2019, instead of two two-day meetings as per the 2018–2019 approved budget, and to reflect the actual costs of such a meeting.

(c) Activity 14: The office maintenance budget shows a decrease of $65,000 compared to the previous biennium, reflecting the fact that certain services, such as procurement, would be provided in-house, as well as the lower cost of items such as the purchase of office equipment, as all staff in the positions approved by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting have been equipped with furniture. The reduced costs are partly offset by the Umoja licence costs that the United Nations started charging all entities in 2019.

(d) Activity 15: There is a decrease of $7,000 in information technology services compared to the previous biennium, mainly due to a decrease in the purchase of new equipment, partly offset by the increase in costs for software licences.

Increases relative to the 2018–2019 approved budget

17. The increases are as follows:

(a) Activity 2: An additional $2,000 is budgeted for two meetings of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to align the budget with the actual costs of the meetings.

(b) Activity 6: For effectiveness evaluation, which was not provided for in the budget for the previous biennium, $810,000 is budgeted to develop a monitoring and modelling report as proposed by the ad-hoc technical expert group (subject to the decision of the Conference of the Parties on this matter), involving face-to-face meetings of experts, compilation and assessment of party submissions and convening of electronic discussions by the effectiveness evaluation committee to ensure an integrated report. The proposed budget also covers the development of an emissions and releases report, a supply, demand and trade report and a waste report.

(c) Activity 7: The secretariat estimates that $95,000 is needed during the biennium to develop an online electronic national reporting system for the first full reporting to be submitted by 31 December 2021, including the necessary training tools, and to undertake an assessment of the parties’ submissions under article 21. This estimate corresponds to an increase of $35,000 compared to the previous biennium.

(d) Activity 8: In the area of publications, an additional $50,000 is needed for the design, translation and printing in languages of the most important guidance documents adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

(e) Activity 9: An increase of $5,000 compared to the previous biennium is proposed for communication, outreach and public awareness, which includes licences for specific tools necessary for strategic communication.

(f) Activity 10: Under executive direction and management, there is an estimated need for an additional $1,351,806 compared to the 2018–2019 biennium to be able to deliver the work programme of the secretariat for the 2020–2021 biennium. Four additional positions are proposed. A P-3 Programme Officer is needed to deal with reporting, effectiveness evaluation and capacity-building, along with a G-6 Administrative Assistant to take over important functions in procurement, human resources and project administration. Some of these functions are currently provided by various United Nations entities, in most cases free of charge, which is neither stable nor sustainable in the long term. Furthermore, the introduction of Umoja Extension 2 in 2019, starting with the implementing partner module, has further increased the workload of concluding agreements with implementing partners. In addition to the P-3 and

1 Umoja is the United Nations Secretariat-wide enterprise resource planning system, introduced in 2015.
G-6 positions, a P-4 Programme Officer is needed to support the Specific International Programme, including providing secretariat services to the Governing Board, managing the application and appraisal process, managing the administrative and substantive implementation of approved projects, providing the substantive portion of donor reports and overseeing evaluation, monitoring and auditing requirements for the programme. Finally, it is proposed that the current P-3 Communications/Knowledge Management Officer post be split into two distinct functional areas of expertise, that is, a P-3 Communications Officer and a P-3 Knowledge Management Officer. This split in functions is deemed necessary based on the experience gained over the past 18 months of the need for specific expertise in each area of work and greater capacity to manage the communications and knowledge management tasks to be performed.

(g) Activity 13: In terms of legal and policy activities, an estimated $234,000 is needed for the 2020–2021 biennium to work on Sustainable Development Goals and gender strategies, including case studies and workshops. In the Executive Secretary’s scenario, this amount is included in core funding, rather than under voluntary funding as in the zero nominal growth scenario.

2. Zero nominal growth scenario

18. The zero nominal growth scenario for the 2020–2021 biennium calls for a total budget of $6,866,900 before programme support costs, the same amount as the overall operational budget approved for the 2018–2019 biennium. This scenario requires $1,798,807 less from the general trust fund than the Executive Secretary’s scenario. It also means, however, that important elements of the work programme would either need to be only partially undertaken or shifted to voluntary funding (meaning the special trust fund), making them subject to the availability of funds, which would have a significant impact on the functions, support and services provided by the secretariat.

19. For the zero nominal growth scenario, the most significant decreases and increases in the operational budget for core activities funded through the general trust fund compared to the 2018–2019 approved budget are as follows:

Decreases compared to the 2018–2019 approved budget

(a) Activity 1: A decrease of $665,000 is estimated in connection with the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, mainly due to the fact that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties will be moving to a two-year rather than an annual cycle. As the Minamata Convention secretariat does not have the staffing level to fully service the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the resulting savings would be partially offset by the need to cover surge capacity requirements for the meetings, which are proposed to be shared and provided for by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

(b) Activity 3: Compared to the previous biennium, $7,000 less is budgeted for one three-day meeting of the implementation and compliance committee, as agreed by the committee at its meeting of June 2019, instead of two two-day meetings as per the 2018–2019 approved budget, and to reflect the actual costs of such a meeting.

(c) Activity 8: The publications budget is $15,000 lower than for the 2018–2019 biennium, mainly in order to produce a zero nominal growth scenario. The budget covers the design and printing of the most important guidance documents adopted by the Conference of the Parties but precludes their translation (which is why the translation is provided for under voluntary funding in the zero nominal growth scenario).

(d) Activity 14: The office maintenance budget shows a decrease of $74,524 compared to the previous biennium, reflecting the fact that certain services, such as procurement, would be provided in-house, as well as the lower cost of items such as the purchase of office equipment, as all staff in the positions approved by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting have been equipped with furniture. The reduced costs are partly offset by the Umoja licence costs that the United Nations started charging all entities in 2019.

(e) Activity 15: There is a decrease of $10,000 in information technology services compared to the previous biennium, mainly due to a decrease in the purchase of new equipment, partly offset by the increase in costs for software licences.

Increases compared to 2018–2019 approved budget

(f) Activity 2: An additional $2,000 is budgeted for two meetings of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to align the budget with the actual costs of the meetings.
(g) Activity 6: For the effectiveness evaluation, which was not provided for in the previous biennium, $228,000 is budgeted to develop a monitoring and modelling report as proposed by the ad-hoc technical expert group (subject to the decision of the Conference of the Parties on this matter), involving face-to-face meetings of experts, compilation and assessment of party submissions and convening of electronic discussions by the effectiveness evaluation committee to ensure an integrated report.

(h) Activity 9: The budget for communication, outreach and public awareness shows an increase of $5,000 compared to the previous biennium, which includes licences for specific tools necessary for strategic communication.

(i) Activity 10: Under executive direction and management, there is an increase of $536,524 compared to the 2018–2019 biennium to ensure the minimum staffing level required to fulfil the secretariat functions. In addition to the staffing level approved by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting, a P-3 Programme Officer would be added to deal with reporting, effectiveness evaluation and capacity-building and a G-6 Administrative Assistant to take over important functions in procurement, human resources and project administration. Some of these functions are currently provided by various United Nations entities, in most cases free of charge, which is neither stable nor sustainable in the long term. Furthermore, the introduction of Umoja Extension 2 in 2019, starting with the implementing partner module, has further increased the workload involved in concluding agreements with implementing partners.

III. Suggested action

20. In the light of decisions MC-2/12 and MC-2/7, after considering the information set out in the present note and the budget activity fact sheets (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/9), the information on financial matters (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/10) and the proposed operational budgets for the two funding scenarios (UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/11), the Conference of the Parties may wish to consider a decision along the lines of the text set out in annex I to the present note.
Annex I

Draft decision MC-3[--]: Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling its decision MC-1/15 on the programme of work of the secretariat and proposed budget for the biennium 2018–2019,

Recalling also its decision MC-2/12 on the update on the budget for 2019,

Welcoming the effort undertaken by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme in preparing an operative proposal, as requested in paragraph 1 of decision MC-2/7, to maximize the effective and efficient use of resources of the Minamata Convention,

Welcoming also the annual contribution by Switzerland, the host country of the secretariat, of 1 million Swiss francs, apportioned 60 per cent to the general trust fund and 40 per cent to the special trust fund to be prioritized for the purpose of supporting the participation of representatives from developing countries in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties,

Taking note of the contributions paid by the parties to the general trust fund,

Noting that the Convention’s full working capital reserve in the general trust fund was established in 2018,

Recognizing with appreciation the contributions and pledges made by Austria, the European Union, Finland, France, Japan, Norway, the Philippines, Sweden and Switzerland to the special trust fund in the biennium 2018–2019,

Recognizing also, with appreciation, the contributions and pledges made by Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the Specific Trust Fund in the biennium 2018–2019,

Recalling its request to the Executive Secretary to prepare a budget for the biennium 2020–2021, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting, in 2019, explaining the key principles, assumptions and programmatic strategy on which the budget is based and presenting expenditures for that biennium in a programmatic format and broken down by budget activities, with each activity to be supported by a budget activity fact sheet,

Recalling also its request to the Executive Secretary, in preparing the budgets and programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021, to present two scenarios:

(a) One maintaining the operational budget at the 2019 level in nominal terms;

(b) One reflecting required changes to the above-mentioned scenario to meet the projected needs and costs or savings related thereto,

Recalling further its request to the Executive Secretary to take into account the operative proposal on a stable framework for sharing of relevant services submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, including relevant options, in the preparation of the programme of work and budget for 2020–2021, pursuant to paragraph 2 of decision MC-2/7,
I

General trust fund for the Minamata Convention on Mercury

1. Takes note of the report provided by the Executive Secretary on the main activities of the secretariat in the intersessional period,1 as well as the report on expenditures for the biennium 2018–2019 provided in the information on financial matters;2

2. Also takes note of the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021,3 as well as the additional information on financial matters,4 the proposed operational budgets for the two funding scenarios5 and the budget activity fact sheets;6

3. Approves the budget for the general trust fund for the biennium 2020–2021 of [--] United States dollars;

4. Authorizes the Executive Secretary to draw down from the estimated available surplus of the general trust fund the amount of [--] United States dollars;

5. Adopts the indicative scale of assessment for the apportionment of expenses for 2020–2021 as set out in table [--] of the present decision and authorizes the Executive Secretary, consistent with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, to adjust the scale to include all parties for which the Convention is in force by 1 January 2020;

6. Recalls that contributions to the general trust fund are due by 1 January of the year for which those contributions have been budgeted and at the latest by 31 December of that year, and requests parties to pay their contributions as soon as possible to enable the secretariat to carry out its work;

II

Special trust fund for the Minamata Convention on Mercury

7. Takes note of the update provided by the Executive Secretary on the activities of 2019 and the expenditures for 2018–2019 through the special trust fund as contained in the information on financial matters,7 as well as the report on the main activities of the secretariat in the intersessional period;8

8. Takes note also of the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021,9 as well as the additional information on financial matters,10 the proposed operational budgets for the two funding scenarios11 and the budget activity fact sheets;12

9. Agrees to the estimates for the special trust fund for the 2020–2021 biennium of [--] United States dollars;

10. Notes that implementation of the planned activities is subject to the availability of resources contributed to the special trust fund;

11. Requests parties to the Convention, and invites non-parties to the Convention and others in a position to do so, to contribute to the special trust fund to support the capacity-building and technical assistance activities of the secretariat of the Minamata Convention in accordance with article 14 of the Convention;

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1 UNEP/MC/COP.3/19.
5 UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/11.
8 UNEP/MC/COP.3/19.
11 UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/11.
12. *Invites* parties and non-parties to the Convention and others in a position to do so to contribute to the special trust fund to support the participation of representatives of parties from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;

### III

**Specific Trust Fund for the Minamata Convention on Mercury**

13. *Takes note* of the overall report on the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance and the Specific Trust Fund established for those activities;\(^{13}\)

14. *Invites* parties and non-parties to the Convention and others in a position to do so to contribute to the Specific Trust Fund to support capacity-building and technical assistance activities in accordance with article 13 of the Convention;

### IV

**Preparations for the biennium 2022–2023**

15. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to prepare a budget for the biennium 2022–2023 for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting, in 2021, explaining the key principles, assumptions and programmatic strategy on which the budget is based and presenting expenditures for that biennium in a programmatic format and broken down by budget activities, with each activity to be supported by a budget activity fact sheet;

16. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary, in preparing the budget and programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023, to present two scenarios:

   (a) One maintaining the operational budget at the 2020–2021 level in nominal terms;

   (b) One reflecting required changes to the above-mentioned scenario to meet the projected needs and costs or savings related thereto.

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\(^{13}\) UNEP/MC/COP.3/10.
Annex II

List of proposed activities included in the programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021

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