



Distr.: General

22 October

Original: English

**United Nations
Environment
Programme****Conference of the Parties to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Second meeting**

Geneva, 19–23 November 2018

Item 5 (k) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the
Conference of the Parties: secretariat****Progress report on the main activities of the secretariat in the
intersessional period****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The present report summarizes the major activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in the intersessional period since the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention held in Geneva in September 2017. The report covers the work undertaken to prepare for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, support provided to the Bureau, intersessional work requested by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting, work in support of the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention, and various other activities.

**II. Preparations for the second meeting of the Conference of the
Parties****A. Organization and other arrangements**

2. The secretariat is in the process of organizing the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, to be held in Geneva from 19 to 23 November 2018. The work to date includes engaging in the procurement processes relating to the conference venue, its preparation and logistics. The secretariat is also planning and preparing all the substantive working documents and information documents for the meeting; dealing with the processing, editing and translation of those documents by the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; setting up the online registration system; preparing and sending out invitation letters, and, following the nomination of registered, eligible participants, drafting and sending out confirmation letters, as well as visa support letters upon request; reviewing the credentials of Parties' delegates; organizing the travel and daily subsistence allowance for the eligible nominated participants, and preparing the list of participants; responding to requests for admission as observers; organizing the participation of the eligible nominated delegates; reviewing requests for and, where appropriate, organizing side events and preparing relevant information to be sent out to potential organizers of side events; liaising with those organizers on the actual organization of the events; preparing information for participants and

* UNEP/MC/COP.2/1.

observers; disseminating information about the meeting through the Minamata Convention website in English, French and Spanish, as well as through briefings to various audiences; raising funds, including to support the participation of representatives from countries that are eligible for such support; providing support for the activities of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties; liaising on logistical arrangements for the meeting with the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and on security measures with the Security and Safety Section of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

3. The secretariat has undertaken the preparation of a significant body of technical material for the meeting, in particular the working and information documents, consulting with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Chemicals and Health Branch of the Economy Division of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

4. Logistical activities for the organization of the meeting have been undertaken with the support of staff members of the Chemicals and Health Branch on the basis of reciprocity. During the meeting the Branch will provide logistical support, on-site registration and the distribution of daily subsistence allowances, also on the basis of reciprocity. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions has provided input for relevant documents and will lend information technology equipment to the Minamata Convention secretariat during the meeting. Services to support the organization of funded travel for eligible participants from three United Nations regions have been purchased from the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, which will also provide support, on a reimbursable basis, with on-site registration and the distribution of daily subsistence allowances during the meeting. The Chemicals and Health Branch and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions will also, on the basis of reciprocity, provide substantive support to the secretariat of the Minamata Convention to facilitate the running of the meeting, in particular in relation to contact groups. The Law Division of UNEP will provide similar support as well as support for the coordination of in-session documentation. As the posts of Communications Officer and Communications Assistant of the Minamata Convention secretariat have not yet been filled, support for communications and outreach activities for the meeting have been and will continue to be provided by the UNEP Europe Office and the Law Division.

B. Bureau of the Conference of the Parties

5. The secretariat has provided support to the Presidency of the Conference of the Parties in all substantive matters related to the Convention since the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and has facilitated the organizational arrangements (including invitations, agendas, documents, reports, logistical arrangements and venue preparation, as necessary) for two meetings of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, held via teleconference on 20 December 2017 and 27 April 2018, respectively, as well as a face-to-face meeting of the Bureau in Geneva on 13 and 14 September 2018. The main objectives of those meetings were to take stock of the outcome of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties with a view to ensuring adequate planning for its second meeting, to consider the issues on the agenda of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and to discuss strategic and policy matters and develop logistical plans for the second meeting. The reports of the meetings of the Bureau are available on the Convention website.¹ The secretariat has implemented and followed up on, as appropriate, all the decisions of the Bureau.

C. Regional meetings

6. In preparation for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, the secretariat has organized a series of regional consultations for the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, with voluntary contributions from Austria, Japan, Sweden and Switzerland. The consultations, the main aim of which is to facilitate the regions' preparation and consolidation of positions for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, have been organized as follows:

- (a) For Africa, in Lusaka on 9 and 10 October 2018;
- (b) For Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in Chisinau on 16 and 17 October 2018;
- (c) For Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok on 23 and 24 October 2018;
- (d) For Latin America and the Caribbean, in Lima on 30 and 31 October 2018.

¹ <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Meetings/COPBureau/tabid/6328/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

7. The regional consultations will include the presentation by the secretariat of the documents for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, followed by discussions among Governments and the possible development of regional positions on the issues on the agenda of the second meeting. The provisional agenda for each of the regional consultations was developed in cooperation with the members representing the relevant region in the Bureau.

8. The secretariat is organizing the regional consultations in cooperation with various other entities, including, for logistical arrangements and participants' travel, the following Basel and Stockholm Convention regional and coordinating centres: for the Africa region, the Africa Institute for the Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous and Other Wastes, in Pretoria; for the Central and Eastern European region, the Research Centre for Toxic Compounds in the Environment, in Brno, Czechia; for the Latin American and Caribbean region, the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Montevideo; and for the Asia-Pacific region, the Basel and Stockholm Regional Centre for South-East Asia, in Jakarta.

9. The regional consultations are being held back-to-back with information sessions focusing on the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (half-day session) and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (half-day session) in an effort to maximize information sharing and cooperation and collaboration within the chemicals and wastes cluster.

III. Intersessional work requested by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting

10. The secretariat was requested by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting to seek input from Governments and a range of other interested stakeholders on a number of issues as set out in the decisions adopted at that meeting. The secretariat has coordinated the work of expert groups on interim storage, mercury waste and contaminated sites, and prepared relevant meeting documents. The meeting documents and related submissions received by the secretariat are available on the Minamata Convention website. The secretariat has also provided scientific and technical advice to Parties and potential Parties upon their request.

11. Following the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, at the invitation of the Government of Canada, the secretariat organized a meeting of the ad hoc expert group on effectiveness evaluation in Ottawa from 5 to 9 March 2018. The expert group produced a draft report, which they completed following the meeting by electronic means with facilitation by the secretariat. The secretariat also collated additional input and comments on effectiveness evaluation for inclusion in the documentation of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

12. The secretariat organized the first meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee held in Geneva on 29 and 30 May 2018, including making all the necessary logistical arrangements, preparing the meeting documents and providing support to the Chair and Vice-Chair during the Committee's deliberations. The secretariat also provided support to the Vice-Chair who serves as rapporteur in drafting the report of the first meeting. The meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee was preceded by an information-sharing session on experiences from implementation and compliance mechanisms under other multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), the Basel Convention and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, as well as from former members of relevant compliance committees. The secretariat organized and hosted the meeting and identified and invited the speakers. The report on the Committee's first meeting is available in document UNEP/MC/COP.2/11.

IV. Support for the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention

13. In addition to its work in support of the Conference of the Parties and in preparation for the second meeting, the secretariat has supported activities at the national and regional levels to facilitate the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention and initiated consultations with relevant partners, including the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), to identify possible cross-cutting activities.

14. During the first half of 2018, the secretariat worked on securing funding to produce and publish more “user accessible” versions of existing tools approved by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting. The new funding will also enable the secretariat to develop additional training materials related to priority areas of capacity development.

15. Also during the first half of 2018, the secretariat worked on fundraising for the delivery of the technical assistance and capacity development activities of the programme of work of the Convention, resulting in the development by the secretariat of a successful project concept for funding by the European Union. With respect to specific capacity development activities, the project concept provides for the secretariat to initially focus primarily on the trade in mercury and mercury emissions. Those two issues have been identified as priorities at the subregional and regional levels. The secretariat is currently engaged in completing the administrative aspects of the approved project concept so as to initiate activities as early as feasible in the latter part of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. While the activities supported by the European Union project focus on the tools and methodologies as well as the specific capacity development activities, the funding will also enable the secretariat during the course of the biennium to deliver regional and/or subregional training workshops, develop training materials, implement national pilot projects, disseminate information on lessons learned and conduct a preliminary overview of a needs assessment.

16. The secretariat has already conducted one training webinar, on the mercury trade and the Minamata Convention in the Latin American and Caribbean region, held on 27 June 2018, in partnership with the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch and the Global Mercury Partnership. A further webinar on trade in mercury is planned for the Asia-Pacific region. In response to questions posed by participating countries following the first webinar, a set of answers was prepared in support of Parties’ implementation of the Convention and delivered to Parties through the UNEP regional office. The set of questions and answers will be made available, along with additional questions and answers, on the website of the Minamata Convention.

17. In the Asia-Pacific region, the secretariat will continue to coordinate with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific regarding a multi-year project implemented by the regional office and funded by Japan from 2019, aiming to contribute to the early implementation of the Minamata Convention. The project will offer participating countries a comprehensive capacity-building programme and mobilize knowledge and experience, especially in information exchange (article 17), public information, awareness and education (article 18), and research, development and monitoring (article 19). The project is intended to establish a regional network of laboratories with mercury monitoring capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region to help the countries of that region in meeting international standards.

18. The secretariat is also liaising with UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions regarding the development of an online reporting tool for the Minamata Convention, which is to be ready for use by the Parties for the first biennial short report, due by 31 December 2019.

19. The secretariat has updated the Minamata Convention text booklets in the six official languages of the United Nations, which are currently being printed, and aims to reprint the guidance on developing a national action plan to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The secretariat also aims to initiate the design of guidance on best environmental practices in relation to emissions of mercury from point sources falling within the source categories listed in Annex D to the Convention, for printing and dissemination in 2019.

V. Other activities undertaken by the secretariat

20. The secretariat has been engaging closely with the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its constituencies in order to remain abreast of policy directions and, where necessary, contribute to discussions, especially with regard to impact programming.

21. The secretariat has taken part in a number of processes together with the Chemicals and Health Branch, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, including in the review of projects submitted under 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. The secretariat has updated the bureaux of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on progress in the implementation of the Minamata Convention, at the invitation of the bureaux.

22. The secretariat participates in the regular briefing sessions to the Geneva permanent missions facilitated by the Geneva Environmental Network and participates in two UNEP task forces for greater cooperation within the chemicals and wastes cluster, namely as a member of the post-2020 Strategic Approach task force and as co-chair and member of the task force for the Chemicals and Health Branch, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention secretariat. The latter task force deals with various areas of programmatic cooperative work between the three entities.

23. The secretariat is also part of the GEF chemicals task force, which provides a framework for cooperation across the chemicals and wastes cluster among the GEF implementing agencies. The secretariat has been invited to take part in IOMC as an observer and participates in its mercury group, which focuses on cooperation specific to mercury among the IOMC members and works closely with the partners of the Global Mercury Partnership.

24. The secretariat participated in the twenty-second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, in particular the panel presentations and round-table discussions of the thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums, held in Geneva on 21 June 2018. The Executive Secretary also participated in the technical briefing on health, environment and climate change during the seventy-first World Health Assembly in May 2018. The secretariat continues to work closely and collaboratively on programmatic matters with the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as supporting WHO efforts at the regional level.

25. In relation to financial resources and the financial mechanism, the secretariat has been engaging closely with the GEF secretariat on matters related to GEF providing part of the financial mechanism of the Convention. The Executive Secretary attended the fifty-fourth meeting of the GEF Council and sixth GEF Assembly in Viet Nam in June 2018, engaging with delegates, participating in various panels and addressing the Council and the Assembly. The Executive Secretary also took part in events related to the GEF Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector (GOLD) programme.

26. As part of its support to the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, the secretariat prepared documentation, draft application forms and draft application guidelines, and organized and supported the first meeting of the Governing Board of the Programme in Geneva on 15 and 16 May 2018. Following the meeting, the secretariat completed all the necessary documentation and guidance for the first call for applications, which was launched on 5 June 2018. After the closure of the first call on 31 August 2018, the secretariat reviewed, for completion, the applications received, undertook a first appraisal against the criteria adopted by the Governing Board at its first meeting, and prepared the relevant documentation for the second meeting of the Governing Board, organized by the secretariat and held in Oslo on 2 and 3 October 2018 at the invitation of the Government of Norway.

VI. Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties

27. The Conference of the Parties may wish to take note of the main activities of the secretariat in the intersessional period since the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties.