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International cooperation and coordination

**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 and the Strategic Approach to International
Chemicals Management**

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note sets out a report on the 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 and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. The report was submitted by the United Nations Environment Programme, which serves as the secretariat of the Special Programme. It is presented as received, without formal editing.

* 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.

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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 a 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 27/12¹, 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 1/5², 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 strengthening³ 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

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

² Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17285/K1402364.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

³ 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.

- (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.
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 established⁴. 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 countries that are serving on the Executive Board during its 2020-2022 term are:
- (a) Ghana representing Africa;
- (b) Jordan representing Asia and Pacific;
- (c) Armenia followed by Georgia representing Central and Eastern Europe;
- (d) Nicaragua followed by Guyana representing Latin America and the Caribbean;
- (e) Angola representing least developed countries.
12. The donor representatives on the Executive Board are the European Union, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States of America.

⁴ The Special Programme was established in September 2015, at the same time as the establishment of the Special Programme Trust Fund.

13. At the fourth teleconference of the Executive Board, held in October 2020, the Board elected Mr Sam Adu-Kumi of Ghana and Mr Reggie Hernaus of the Netherlands as co-chairs for the 2020-2022 term of the Executive Board.

III. Meetings of the Executive Board

A. First meeting of the Executive Board

14. At its first meeting, held from 2 to 3 February 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland⁵, 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.
15. The Executive Board also agreed to launch the first round of applications in April 2016.

B. Second meeting of the Executive Board

16. 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.
17. The second meeting of the Executive Board was held from 11 to 13 October 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand⁶. 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.
18. The main objective of the meeting was to review the 42 eligible and complete applications submitted for the first and pilot round of applications.
19. 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.
20. The Board agreed that the second round of applications would be launched in February 2017.

C. Third meeting of the Executive Board

21. 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.
22. The third meeting of the Executive Board was held from 2 to 3 December 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya⁷. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.

⁵ 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%20ExecutiveBoard_meeting_Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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>.

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

D. Fourth meeting of the Executive Board

27. 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.

28. The fourth meeting of the Executive Board was held from 29 to January 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland⁸. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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.

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

32. 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.

33. In addition, the Executive Board approved the proposed branding and visual identity of the Special Programme, and requested the Secretariat to use them, as appropriate. It was also agreed that relevant slogans will be included alongside the logo to highlight key aspects of the Special Programme, such as institutional strengthening. The Board also emphasised the importance of widely using the approved branding and visual identity of the Special Programme in order to facilitate the Programme's visibility to both donors and recipient countries.

34. 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.

35. Finally, the Board welcomed the proposed activities that will be implemented under Phase II of the communications strategy.

E. Fifth meeting of the Executive Board of the Special Programme, October 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

36. The fifth meeting of the Executive Board of the Special Programme was held from 6 to 7 October 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand, taking place back to back with the third meeting of the SAICM Intersessional Process⁹.

37. 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.

38. 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. The launch was set to take place at a side event scheduled for Friday, 29 November 2019.

39. 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 is expected to take place in January 2020.

⁸ The report of the fourth meeting of the Executive Board is available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27772/SPEB.4.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁹ The report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Board is available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30853/SPEB5.8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

40. 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 representatives 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.

41. 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.

E. Teleconferences of the Executive Board of the Special Programme

42. The second teleconference on the Executive Board took place on 3 February 2020. During the meeting, the Board adopted the report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Board, received an update on the progress with respect to nominations to the Board for 2020-2022, and an update on the operations of the Special Programme, including Secretariat activities and project implementation status. The meeting also discussed the final report of the mid-term evaluation of the Special Programme, the draft outline of a monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy and action plan, and received an update on the procurement process for the implementation of the Special Programme Communications Strategy.

43. An ad hoc extraordinary teleconference was held on 26 March 2020 with the (at the time) eight confirmed members of incoming Executive Board, to discuss the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fourth round of applications for funding. The Executive Board recognized that the pandemic had resulted in the imposition of requirements for social distancing and quarantine guidelines by many countries, which hindered the ability of stakeholders to meet and conduct the necessary inter-sectoral meetings to discuss and validate proposals and seek for letters of support and signatures. The Executive Board therefore unanimously accepted the proposal to extend the application deadline to 4 September 2020 and postponed the sixth meeting of the Executive Board, at which the applications submitted during the fourth round of funding would be submitted for approval, from November 2020 to March 2021.

44. The fourth teleconference of the Executive Board was held online from 27 to 28 October 2020. During the meeting, the Board considered the difficulties it had encountered in finalising its membership for the current term and requested the Secretariat to prepare a report inventorying analogous processes that have been established under similar mechanisms, and in doing so to identify possible solutions to the challenges in constituting the Executive Board.

45. The Board provided guidance to the Secretariat in dealing with requests for extension of projects beyond the normal maximum of 36 months, particularly in light of the delays caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and requested the Secretariat to maintain a list of the extensions granted and the reasons provided for the delays.

46. During the teleconference, the Board also approved the revised proposal submitted by Brazil in response to comments provided by the Board upon its conditional approval of the original proposal under the second round of funding and requested the Secretariat to follow up with the country to finalize the implementation arrangements.

47. The Board also considered the possibility of the one-time extension of the duration of the Special Programme, in the context of paragraph 24 of the Terms of Reference adopted by UNEA resolution 1/5. In light of the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the timing and format of UNEA-5, it was decided to postpone the adoption of the proposed draft recommendation. The Executive Board requested the Secretariat to refine the language of the draft recommendation, taking into account the comments made during the meeting, in order to facilitate discussions at a later stage. The Secretariat was also requested to prepare a brief background document addressing the future added value of the Special Programme.

48. The Executive Board also endorsed the draft monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy and action plan and the related toolkit, which will be accompanied by training to assist countries in its implementation.

49. Finally, the Board considered a request from the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions for project documents for projects approved under the Special Programme to be shared with the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC) of the Basel Convention. The Executive Board expressed its reservations about the request, noting that the Special Programme and the ICC each have their own distinct mandates and responsibilities. In addition, the Board noted that a large amount of information was already available on the Special Programme website in an easily accessible format through the PowerBI knowledge management tool¹⁰. The Board indicated that if more information was needed than is available in the public domain, then it would be more appropriate for the ICC to request the required information directly from the country concerned, and if clarification was required, the Special Programme Secretariat could be asked to provide it.

F. Sixth meeting of the Executive Board

50. Owing to the travel restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and given the heavy agenda, the co-chairs of the Executive Board decided to split the sixth meeting into three separate sessions. The first session of the sixth meeting of the Executive Board was held online from 1 to 5 March 2021¹¹.

51. During the first session, the Board considered 24 eligible and complete applications submitted under the fourth round of funding and decided to approve 15 of them, with a total budget of US \$3,768,824, as outlined in table 4 of the appendix. The Board also endorsed the arrangements for the launch of the fifth round of applications, including the guidance and guideline documents and application forms, subject to some edits. The fifth round launched on 7 April 2021 with a closing date of 7 August 2021.

52. The Board received an update on the operations of the Special Programme, including an update on progress made in specific projects and an update on progress made under the recently concluded contract for implementation of the phase II of the communications strategy. The Board provided guidance to the Secretariat on allowing flexibility with respect to requests to move funds across budget lines of existing projects under the Special Programme in light of the pandemic and endorsed a proposed approach to dealing with protracted delays in finalising implementation arrangements on projects and approved the revised budget for 2021.

53. The sixth meeting of the Executive Board will resume, at its second session, in September 2021, at which time the Board will consider matters such as the recommendation for the extension of duration of the Special Programme. A separate session, comprising a workshop for engagement with the private sector, will be arranged to take place in association with a related in-person meeting in 2022.

IV. Status of the Special Programme Trust Fund

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

55. An update of donor contributions since the establishment of the Special Programme Trust Fund in September 2015 is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Contributions and pledges received 2015 – 2021 (all amounts in US\$ as 18 June 2021)

Donor	Total amount pledged*/contributed
European Union	19 631 656
Sweden	3 415 478
United States	1 640 000
Norway *	1 932 486
Germany *	1 458 507
Finland	224 467

¹⁰ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme/special-programme-projects-database>.

¹¹ The report of the first session of the sixth meeting of the Executive Board is available through the following link: <https://www.unep.org/events/working-group-meeting/sixth-meeting-executive-board-special-programme-support-institutional>

Donor	Total amount pledged*/contributed
The Netherlands	560 550
Austria	193 345
Denmark	32 092
Belgium*	159 272
United Kingdom*	116,454
Total contributions and pledges realized*	29,709,333

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

56. 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

57. The Special Programme has to date completed four rounds of applications for funding bringing the total number of approved projects to 57. Arrangements for implementation of the 15 projects approved under the fourth round as under way. Detailed information on the 42 projects approved under the first three rounds of funding will shortly be supplemented by the information on the 15 newly approved projects, in the Secretariat's PowerBI tool¹², available on its website.

58. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of the projects have experienced delays in their implementation resulting in no-cost time extensions to the projects.

A. First (pilot) round of applications

59. 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.

60. An overview of a selection of projects and updates on their status of implementation and lessons learned is presented below.

Dominican Republic

61. The project addressed issues identified as priorities in the National Profile and the National Implementation Plan, that was developed in 2014. The project was concerned with revising and updating regulations for the transportation of hazardous substances and materials, creating an inter-ministerial exchange of information system for the management of chemicals, preparing guidelines for managing risks related to chemicals and hazardous waste, reviewing the interagency coordination mechanisms to respond to a chemical emergency, and conducting training on the emergency response for chemical substances.

62. The project began in January 2018, with implementation successfully completed in June 2020. The final project report highlighted the following key achievements and lessons learned:

(a) An electronic system for import and registration of chemical substances was established, in coordination with the General Directorate of Customs and other public institutions involved in the management of chemicals;

(b) Regulations for the transport of hazardous substances and for the management of chemical substances and hazardous waste were updated, along with the control list on dangerous chemical substances in the country and two technical standards were developed based on the Globally Harmonised System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS);

(c) A website was designed to promote the exchange of information among stakeholders engaged in chemicals management;

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

(d) A risk management guide was adopted to support the national plan for emergency care for NBQR (nuclear, biological, chemical, radioactive and explosive) substances, a national coordination mechanism was established to respond to emergencies with chemical substances and a related training programme was developed for all levels of command involved in an emergency response.

Iraq

63. This project aims to enhance the institutional capacities for sound and synergistic management of chemicals in Iraq as a contribution to the protection of human health and sustainable development. The project will assess and identify gaps, weakness and needs in current capacity as well as technological, institutional, financial and legislative frameworks; strengthen institutional capacities to plan, undertake, monitor and coordinate the implementation of policies, strategies, and national programmes for the sound management of chemicals and waste; and put in place adequate and sustainable institutional structure dedicated to the promotion of the sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life-cycle.

64. The project began in May 2017 and has experienced some delays in implementation arising from changes in government coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Progress to date under the project includes the following:

(a) National staff have been trained in gap identification and possible solutions for technical, financial, institutional and legal frameworks as well as the Globally Harmonised System GHS;

(b) A template for the national chemicals profile has been developed, and the chemicals profile itself is well under way;

(c) Work is ongoing on the collection and classification of laws and legislation that will underpin an assessment of the legal frameworks in the management of chemicals in the country.

Kyrgyz Republic

65. This project aims to support and strengthen national level implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata conventions and SAICM in Kyrgyzstan. This will be achieved by, among other things, strengthening inter-agency/inter-sectoral coordination, increasing non-governmental stakeholder involvement; and establishing a coordinated national implementation of chemicals and waste related international agreements. It will also focus on training relevant stakeholders on these key issues and the establishment of best practices.

66. The project started in 2017 and has since come to a successful close with the Kyrgyz Republic having reported on its lessons learned and project achievements, which include:

(a) An Action Plan has been developed to strengthen and improve the national legislative framework of the Kyrgyz Republic. The plan proposes actions based on the identified gaps and deficiencies in the national legislation. As a part of implementation of this Action Plan, the following regulatory legal acts have been developed:

(i) Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Irrigation of the Kyrgyz Republic “On approval of the Catalog of pesticides and agrochemicals allowed for use in the Kyrgyz Republic”;

(ii) On amendments to the Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic “On measures aimed at protecting the environment and public health from the adverse effects of certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides” as of July 27, 2001 No. 376.

(b) Mechanisms for exchange of information between the governmental agencies to ensure exchange of information between the ministries and departments in the field of chemicals and waste management, as well as mechanisms for interdepartmental national reporting under the BRS conventions have also been developed and regulated at the level of the national legislation. These mechanisms are included in the “Regulation of interaction in the field of chemicals and waste management in the Kyrgyz Republic”.

(c) During the implementation of the project, a large-scale advocacy campaign was conducted with the involvement of the public and active participation of NGOs. When conducting the information campaign, an important emphasis was placed on publicity of the provisions of the Minamata Convention through a number of communication activities, since the Kyrgyz Republic is not a party to the Minamata Convention.

Tanzania

67. The project aimed to enhance national institutional capacity to develop, monitor and enforce policy and regulatory framework for the sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their lifecycle. The project was implemented through a multi-sectoral partnership involving institutions with a lead role in chemicals and waste management.

68. The project was established in 2017 and has since come to a close. Tanzania has successfully achieved the project objectives and reported on lessons learned. Some of the achievements include:

- (a) Developing and establishing a national strategy on sound management of chemicals and waste;
- (b) Enhanced capacity of pesticides and industrial chemicals inspectors has improved inspection modality of imports for controlled substances under Rotterdam Convention, which has enhanced the control of illegal trafficking of pesticides and chemicals at entry points. In addition, an empty pesticide container collection programme in local agricultural communities was established;
- (c) Establishment of the chemicals and waste information management system which will facilitate enhanced reporting towards obligations under the chemicals and waste related conventions.
- (d) Putting in place Mercury related regulations on the control and management of mercury releases, which will strengthen enforcement mechanism on import of mercury including management of mercury waste. This was supported with the ratification of the Minamata Convention.
- (e) Further developments to contribute to the management of empty containers and hazardous waste, and emerging issues such as nanotechnology, chemicals in products and lead in paint are among the areas that need further intervention to achieve sound management of chemicals and waste.

B. Second round of applications

69. 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.

70. An overview of a selection of projects and updates on their status of implementation and lessons learned is presented below.

China

71. The main objective of the project is to strengthen national institutional capacity for the sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life-cycle, improve the national implementation and enhance the synergy of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions and SAICM. The project will assess regulatory gaps and needs of sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle, and propose national policy recommendations; improve institutional structures and coordination of multi-authorities for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions and SAICM; carry out the feasibility study for synergy and co-benefit of multilateral international agreements related to chemicals and wastes at the national institutional level; develop a plan for an environmental management database for toxic and hazardous chemicals research and establish the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Mechanism on chemicals and waste transboundary movement management; enhance the harmonization among different technical documents of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions and SAICM and transfer them to national technical support institutions; and carry out the training programs to strengthen institutional capacity regarding chemicals and wastes regulated by multilateral international agreements.

72. The project began in May 2018 and has made good progress to date. Key progress and achievements under the project include the following:

- (a) An intra-ministerial coordination mechanism was established within the Ministry of Ecology and Environment for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention and the Minamata Convention. The mechanism, which involves ten departments, holds regular thematic meetings to promote the implementation of the conventions.
- (b) A database of toxic and hazardous chemicals has been established by carrying out a survey on chemical databases of developed countries to realise information sharing and support the risk evaluation of chemicals under the conventions.

(c) Research has been conducted on the course of synergy of multilateral international conventions related to chemicals and waste, with policy recommendations taking into account the current situation and national needs.

(d) Training has been conducted, including a national training on solid waste covering government officials in the environmental protection sector nationwide, to strengthen capacity for convention implementation;

(e) Awareness raising includes the development of training materials targeting the general public, as well as regular updates to the websites on China's implementation of the Stockholm Convention and the Minamata Convention to share relevant information and provide progress updates to the public.

Ecuador

73. The project aims to strengthen and complement the National Control System for Chemical and Waste Management and will contribute to the strengthening of national capacities for the implementation of regulations and effective monitoring system, development of interagency and sectoral coordination, as well as enhancing the synergy of the related multilateral environmental agreements aligned with national targets. The project will diagnose and develop an analysis of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and risks of the current management system; create a database of hazardous materials generated in Ecuador; raise social and professional awareness on the sound management of chemicals through workshops and training; and apply recommended methodologies for the evaluation and promotion of the creation of national infrastructure for the proper management of hazardous materials.

74. The project began in December 2019 and is yet to present its first annual progress report.

Republic of Moldova

75. The project aimed to improve the sustainable institutional and regulatory framework for sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their lifecycle in Moldova. This will be achieved by reinforcing and strengthening the national chemicals and waste coordination mechanism as well as promoting the adoption and enforcement of the waste and chemicals secondary legislation. In addition, training will be carried out for relevant stakeholders with the view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Basel Convention and improving the country's reporting obligation under Basel and Stockholm conventions.

76. This project was initiated in 2018 and has recently completed its activities. Implementation of the project has contributed to the improvement of the overall management of chemicals and waste at national level, in line with obligations towards the key MEAs, including:

(a) At chemicals management level: drafting and entry into force of a framework law on chemicals which promoted several normative documents into law, including the creation of chemicals agency. In addition, through the adoption of PIC regulation a national level the mechanism was created for the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention which will provide more clarity on the import/export of certain hazardous chemicals.

(b) At waste management level: implementation of project activities facilitated the enforcement of waste legislation and its application into practice including increasing the capacity of relevant private sector organizations to implement EPR principles. Project implementation also provided support to the Ministry in its efforts to promote and adopt Regulations on packaging and packaging waste. At the same time the Environmental Agency reported the increased number of authorizations for waste management, issued for 2019-2020.

Uganda

77. The project aims to strengthen Uganda's national institutional capacity to monitor and coordinate the implementation of its regulatory framework for the sound management of chemicals. The project has been underway since August 2018 and is nearing completion. To date the project has achieved several milestones, including:

(a) Established and empowered the Multi-Sectoral Technical Committee on SMC to ensure that there is adequate personnel, cooperation and coordination between the key stakeholders, as well as infrastructures to implement the legal and technical commitments arising from the relevant conventions related to environmentally safe management of chemicals and wastes in Uganda.

(b) Building the capacity of selected key government stakeholders from ministries, departments, agencies and selected local governments by carrying out awareness re-activation on their

roles and responsibilities as well as active involvement in the sound management of chemicals and wastes in their respective areas.

(c) The establishment of the National database which consists of a search engine that facilitates the retrieval of information by different mandated ministries, departments, agencies and selected local governments, with roles and sound strategies in the management of chemicals and wastes.

(d) Having an updated and functional national chemical profile in place.

(e) Development of awareness programmes/campaigns and training of key stakeholders such as industrialists.

C. Third round of applications

78. 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.

79. An overview of a selection of projects and updates on their status of implementation and lessons learned is presented below.

Angola

80. Angola hopes to strengthen its capacity to meet its obligations towards the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions as well as promote the participation of the private sector in relevant areas with the view to facilitating the improved management of chemicals and waste. The project will undertake the following measures to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks for Sound Management of Chemicals:

(a) Establishing a National Chemicals and Waste Management Unit

(b) strengthening the inter-sectoral coordination and building national capacity for implementation of the MEAs and SAICM

(c) Establishing Pilot Private Sector Partnerships and Promote Circular Economy initiatives to strengthen resource mobilization for the implementation of the chemicals and waste management agenda

(d) and undertaking an awareness raising and education campaign to increase the knowledge and skills of a wide range of stakeholders to increase their participation in sound chemicals and wastes management in Angola.

81. The project has been underway since late 2019. While its implementation has been hampered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has, nonetheless made some progress towards implementing its activities, including:

(a) A unit on Chemicals was created under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Environment, this will be combined with the National Agency for Waste Management, which is also under the same Ministry. Furthermore, the statutes for this unit have also been put in place.

(b) A draft of the Gender Action Plan is underway and will focus on a number of key elements, including establishing strategic partnerships and identifying synergies with organisations that focus on women's empowerment, ensuring that project materials and training directly address gender-differentiated issues and ensuring that female technical operators are trained on the techniques for marine plastics management.

(c) A review of present coordination arrangements was assessed and recommendations for improvement reported in the context of strengthening governance structures for chemicals and waste management.

Cambodia

82. The project seeks to remedy gaps in several nationally identified priority areas and to strengthen institutional capacity in Cambodia through ensuring that its obligations under the instruments and implementation activities are met, including the identification of clear roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders, and ensuring that information is publicly accessible and technical knowledge is obtained. In particular, the project will strengthen inter-sectoral coordination for monitoring and facilitating the implementation the conventions and SAICM; develop a national information management and exchange platform, providing sustainable access to resources, inter-

sectoral organization and coordination tools, and outreach materials; and develop a training program including a train-the-trainers' component on national implementation of each of the conventions and SAICM targeting a wide-range of stakeholders, and emerging policy issues as well as developing and implementing an awareness raising and education campaign targeting key institutions, stakeholders, and parliamentarians.

83. The project began in January 2020 and has made the following progress to date:

- (a) Reinforcing existing inter-sectoral coordinating mechanism, through the establishment of an inter-ministerial technical working group, comprising technical representatives from all relevant ministries.
- (b) An assessment of the implementation of national obligations under each of the conventions is in progress, to be completed in the coming months;
- (c) Development of a comprehensive national information management and exchange platform is similarly under way, with testing of the platform expected to commence in April 2021.

El Salvador

84. The project aims to increase inter-institutional coordination for the implementation of all relevant international instruments on chemical products and hazardous wastes ratified by El Salvador, especially the Stockholm, Rotterdam Convention, Basel Convention, Minamata Convention, as well as its relationship with other instruments related to chemical products and wastes. These aspects will allow to increase the national capacities of civil protection in the handling of risks on substances, chemical products and dangerous wastes. In particular, the project will strengthen institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks for El Salvador for the implementation of the Basel, Stockholm, Minamata and Rotterdam conventions and SAICM; strengthening the system of permits and authorizations for transportation, storage, treatment, import, export and final disposal of hazardous waste, considering the activities that use, commercialize and manufacture hazardous chemical substances and generators of hazardous waste; strengthening the national map of environmental risk by hazardous materials and controlling and surveilling the imports and exports for the prevention of traffic and illicit trade in hazardous substances and waste.

85. The project began in March 2020 and, in spite of a series of natural disasters coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has managed to make some progress in implementation including the following:

- (a) Updating the list of pesticides and produced for industrial use regulated by the Stockholm Convention, for publication in the official Gazette;
- (b) Work is ongoing to establish the national registry of industry, commerce and service activities that employ hazardous substances in their manufacturing, transformation and consumption processes.

Kazakhstan

86. The main objective of the project is to support the Republic of Kazakhstan in strengthening the capacity to implement an integrated approach to the management of chemicals at the national level. This would effectively implement the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm, conventions, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and promote the ratification of the Minamata Convention. This will be achieved through coordination among government agencies, improvement of the legislative base for international multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), capacity building and stakeholder information sharing on chemical safety.

87. The project has been underway since late 2019 and has made good progress towards achieving its outputs in spite of the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- (a) Review of existing regulatory framework for the management of chemicals, and the identification of gaps and weaknesses, as well as examining the functions and powers of government agencies. This will feed into the updating of the country's Environmental Code, which will take into account recommendations and proposals for legislation on chemicals management, taking into account the identified deficiencies.
- (b) In order to improve intersectoral collaboration in the area of chemicals management, a process for the establishment of Working Group on Chemicals Management was launched. The creation of the Working Group is being carried out in conjunction with the implementation of the technical regulations of the Eurasian Economic Union "On the safety of chemical products" which is being coordinated by the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development. The Ministry will

incorporate the newly created Working Group into its Road Map which will ensure its sustainable work in the future

(c) The ratification of the Minamata Convention by the Republic of Kazakhstan was included in the strategic document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Long-term plan for concluding international treaties of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2018-2020." The issue of making a decision on ratification is being coordinated with stakeholders.

(d) A draft of an updated National Chemicals Management Profile has been prepared. This document will provide a reference and information source throughout the life cycle of chemicals for a wide range of stakeholders - representatives of industry, government officials, including decision-makers, and academia.

D. Fourth round of applications

88. The Executive Board at its sixth meeting, in March 2021, approved fifteen projects in Armenia, Belarus, Burundi, Georgia, Malawi, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uzbekistan. The Secretariat is engaging with the countries concerned to finalise the implementation arrangements for these projects over the coming months.

89. An overview of the projects will be provided on the Special Programme website¹³ in the coming weeks.

E. Fifth round of applications

90. The fifth round of applications under the Special Programme was launched on 7 April 2021, with a closing date of 7 August 2021.

91. This round of applications has, for the first time, invited applications for regional projects in addition to individual country projects. Revised application guidance, guidelines and application forms were developed by the Special Programme Secretariat,¹⁴ providing detailed information on the scope of the Special Programme and how to complete the application forms.

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

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

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>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>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>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

Country	Project Title
<i>Uganda</i>	Strengthening national institution capacity in sound management of chemicals and waste in Uganda
<i>Viet Nam</i>	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

Table 4
List of projects approved by the Executive Board at its sixth meeting

Country	Project Title
<i>Armenia</i>	Strengthening National Capacity of the Republic of Armenia in Sound Chemicals and Waste Management for Implementation of the Stockholm, Basel, Rotterdam, Minamata conventions and SAICM
<i>Belarus</i>	National capacity strengthening for the sound management of chemicals by sustainable implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals in the Republic of Belarus (GHS)
<i>Burundi</i>	Strengthening chemicals and waste management within a circular economy framework in Burundi
<i>Georgia</i>	Enhancing national capacities, reporting and synergies between Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions and SAICM for the sound management of chemicals and waste in Georgia
<i>Malawi</i>	Strengthening institutional capacity to plan, monitor and coordinate the implementation of policies, strategies and national programmes for the sound management of chemicals and waste
<i>Moldova</i>	Promoting good governance and building platforms on better coordination on sound management of chemicals and waste in the line with SAICM beyond 2020 in Moldova
<i>Mongolia</i>	Improvement of human resource and analytical capacity for enforcement of hazardous waste management legislations in Mongolia
<i>Montenegro</i>	Strengthening synergies between the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions
<i>Morocco</i>	Strengthening institutional national capacities for the sound management of chemicals, especially the pesticides used in hygiene and public health
<i>Peru</i>	Strengthening national capacities for the integral management of chemicals in Peru
<i>Rwanda</i>	Strengthening the institutional capacity for sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes
<i>Sao Tome and Principe</i>	Strengthening São Tomé and Príncipe's National Chemicals and Waste Management Programme by establishing sustainable, integrated, and coherent national structure using plastic waste management pilot to demonstrate private sector and community participation.
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	Institutional strengthening for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste within the framework of Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) in Sierra Leone.
<i>Sudan</i>	Enhancing the institutional capacities for sound and synergistic management of chemicals and waste in Sudan
<i>Uzbekistan</i>	Strengthening the institutional capacity of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the implementation of the Basel and the Stockholm conventions and GHS, as well as facilitate the accession to the Rotterdam and the Minamata conventions