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

Online, 1–5 November 2021\*

Item 4 (j) of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Matters for consideration or action by the  
Conference of the Parties: secretariat****Report on the implementation of decision MC-3/11 on enhanced  
cooperation between the secretariat of the Minamata  
Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and  
Stockholm conventions****Note by the secretariat**

1. In paragraph 4 of article 24, on the secretariat, the Minamata Convention specifies that the Conference of the Parties, in consultation with appropriate international bodies, may provide for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the secretariat and the secretariats of other chemicals and wastes conventions.
2. At its third meeting, held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention considered matters pertaining to a stable framework for the sharing of secretariat services between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, taking into account the operative proposal prepared and submitted to the meeting by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (UNEP/MC/COP.3/16). At the same meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision MC-3/11 on enhanced cooperation between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.
3. In decision MC-3/11, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention requested the Executive Director of UNEP, in the performance of secretariat functions for the Minamata Convention and mindful of the legal autonomy of the respective secretariats, to support the secretariat of the Minamata Convention in its efforts to enhance cooperation with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, including through the regular use of the task force on programmatic cooperation comprising the two secretariats and the Chemicals and Health Branch of UNEP as a stable framework of cooperation and sharing of relevant secretariat services.
4. In the same decision, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention was requested to establish, with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and under the overall steering of the task force on programmatic cooperation, inter-secretariat working groups, as appropriate, to cooperate on relevant administrative, programmatic, technical assistance and technical matters in accordance with the programme of work and budget. Furthermore, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention was requested to continue the purchase of relevant services from the

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

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

secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on a cost-recovery basis, as appropriate and in accordance with the programme of work and budget for each biennium.

5. In accordance with that mandate, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention requested secretariat support from the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, on a cost-recovery basis, for the organization of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention. In July 2021, the two secretariats signed a cooperation agreement that specified the services to be provided, which were similar to those provided for the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with the related budget.

6. Pursuant to decision MC-3/11, the executive secretaries of the two secretariats and the Head of the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch started consultations to discuss the implementation of the decision and to provide guidance to the task force on programmatic cooperation comprising the three entities. In line with that guidance, the co-chairs of the task force finalized an initial list of areas of cooperation, on the basis of which the two executive secretaries were to establish inter-secretariat working groups on administrative matters, programmatic matters, scientific and technical matters and technical assistance matters, and identified lead officers in the respective entities for the various areas of cooperation on which the proposed working groups would focus. The task force produced a report, which was drafted by the co-chairs in December 2020 and endorsed by the heads of the entities in March 2021, describing the joint framework for future collaboration that had been agreed between the three entities in the context of the implementation of decision MC-3/11. The report is set out in the annex to the present note.

7. The two executive secretaries also agreed to prepare a joint report on cooperation and coordination between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, providing additional information on the cooperation on several programmatic issues. These include mercury wastes and their environmentally sound management; the provision of technical assistance, including through regional centres; financial resources; compliance; legal issues and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Minamata Convention; organizational issues, in particular with regard to the organization and servicing of meetings, including joint regional preparatory meetings; outreach and awareness-raising efforts; and knowledge and information management. The joint report is set out in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/17.

8. It should be noted that, in preparation for the 2021 meetings of the conferences of the Parties to 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, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions prepared a note on cooperation and coordination with the Minamata Convention that proposed the adoption by each Conference of the Parties of a decision mirroring decision MC-3/11.<sup>1</sup> The report by the joint task force forms part of the documentation for submission to the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions at the resumed meetings of their conferences of the Parties, to be held in June 2022.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties**

9. The Conference of the Parties is invited to consider the present note.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP/CHW.15/20–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.10/16–UNEP/POPS/COP.10/20.

<sup>2</sup> UNEP/CHW.15/INF/67–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.10/INF/46–UNEP/POPS/COP.10/INF/43.

## Annex

### Report of the joint task force on programmatic cooperation and inter-secretariat working groups established pursuant to decision MC-3/11

1. The UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention, as the chemicals and waste hub in Geneva, are working together to strengthen their interaction and programmatic cooperation with the overall objective of increasing the impact of their individual and combined work at the international level and in the countries served.

#### Objectives

2. The objectives of the joint task force comprising the three entities are to enhance programmatic cooperation, delivery and efficiency in the respective programmes of work and to explore links to broader agendas.

#### 1. Short narrative timeline of cooperation to date

3. Following the establishment of the secretariat of the Minamata Convention in 2018, the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention met in July 2018 to revitalize the joint task force on chemicals and waste<sup>3</sup> to enhance cooperation and cooperation among the three entities, with the objective of increasing the impact of the respective work of the entities and the overall impact of the chemicals and waste cluster. Three co-chairs of the joint task force were appointed and, under the leadership of the heads of the entities, the terms of reference for the joint task force were finalized in August 2018. The work of the joint task force formally began on 28 August 2018, with a meeting of all staff from the three entities. During the remainder of 2018, as part of the work of the joint task force, common areas of work were identified and mapped out; ideas for forging a closer community of colleagues were collected; opportunities for reaching out together to broader audiences were identified; and discussion and information-sharing were initiated on cooperation in areas where mandates coincided, including implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. A subgroup of the joint task force thus worked between September and November 2018 to consider issues related to the science–policy interface to enable the respective entities to contribute to the various processes under way in relation to the work of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. Joint technical and programmatic work was already taking place among the entities, particularly in the area of mercury waste.

4. In 2019, specific focus was placed on seizing opportunities to reach out together to broader audiences. The three entities worked together on the “Make the invisible visible” campaign, which saw a commonly conceptualized, branded and executed interactive display on chemicals and waste exhibited at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, March 2019), the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Montevideo, April 2019) and the meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (Geneva, April–May 2019). During the year, in addition to further exchanges of information and the sharing of approaches, the three entities also worked together to prepare for the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 and to consider linkages between the chemicals and waste cluster and the future post-2020 biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity. In November 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention convened and adopted decision MC-3/11 on enhanced cooperation between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, to provide more guidance thereon. Active and close technical and programmatic work among the entities specific to mercury waste was ongoing throughout the year.

5. The year 2020 was due to see the finalization of the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 and of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. Owing to the coronavirus

<sup>3</sup> The task force was originally established in 2014 to enhance cooperation between the UNEP Chemicals and Waste Branch and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. The secretariat of the Minamata Convention formally came into being in early 2018.

disease (COVID-19) pandemic, however, these larger processes had to extend their deliberation periods, and they are now set to conclude only in 2021 and beyond. Throughout 2020, the three entities continued their engagement with one another and, at a heads of entity meeting in August 2020, affirmed their commitment to strengthening further programmatic cooperation, and specifically to supporting the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention with regard to the request of the Conference of the Parties in decision MC-3/11. The co-chairs of the joint task force worked further to map and develop specific areas of programmatic cooperation among the tripartite working groups and inter-secretariat working groups and to identify lead officers in the respective entities for the different areas of cooperation covered by these working groups. Beyond the continuing cooperation on issues of common interest, such as mercury wastes, two new areas of joint programmatic cooperation between the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention were the conduct of an exploratory study on the interlinkages between biodiversity and chemicals and a further study on the interlinkages between chemicals and climate change. Both studies are for the consideration of the respective conferences of the parties. The two secretariats also contributed to the substantive reports of the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session.

## 2. Areas of cooperation

6. The co-chairs identified the following, initial list of areas of cooperation for the respective working groups, including those requested in decision MC-3/11, with the understanding that the list may evolve over time:

*Overview of areas of cooperation for the working groups, including those called for in decision MC-3/11*

<i>Area specified in decision MC-3/11</i>	<i>Areas of cooperation</i>	<i>Suggested scope of the working group</i>
Administrative matters	Administration and finance management	Inter-secretariat
	Conference services <sup>4</sup> management	Inter-secretariat
	Information technology management	Inter-secretariat
Programmatic matters	Outreach and communication	Tripartite
	Financial resources	Tripartite
	Implementation and compliance	Inter-secretariat
	Joint exploratory studies on biodiversity and climate	Officers from the two secretariats
	Gender	Tripartite
Scientific and technical matters	Mercury wastes	Tripartite
	Effectiveness evaluation	Tripartite
Technical assistance matters	Knowledge and information management, including data management and the clearing-house mechanism	Tripartite
	Training	Tripartite
	Basel and Stockholm convention regional centres	Tripartite

Note: "Inter-secretariat" comprises the secretariats of the Minamata Convention and of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, and "tripartite" comprises the two secretariats and the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch.

7. The role of the working groups is to address each of the areas identified in decision MC-3/11 and to build on areas of cooperation already ongoing among the entities. A working group that is identified as "inter-secretariat" brings together the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention for specific areas of work pursuant to decision MC-3/11. It is understood that such an inter-secretariat working group may be extended to

<sup>4</sup> In subparagraph 5 (b) of decision MC-3/11, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to continue to implement shared services and the purchase of relevant services from the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on a cost-recovery basis. This will be addressed at the level of the Executive Secretary, in consultation with relevant staff.

also include the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch as and when required in order to contribute to the overall implementation of the work of the two secretariats.

8. The working groups are set up jointly by the respective heads of the entities, under the steering of the joint task force co-chairs. They function according to the overall direction provided by the programme of work of each entity and the decisions of their respective governing bodies.

9. The working groups identified by the joint task force are understood to:

(a) Employ a range of working modalities, from existing formalized groupings to more informal groups or ad hoc consultations, as may be required by the topic and work at hand;

(b) Be established following identification of areas of cooperation by relevant officers working in those domains, on the basis of activities in the respective programmes of work or in decisions of the conferences of the parties and the United Nations Environment Assembly as relevant;

(c) Be flexible and decentralized and not to place an additional burden on the officers undertaking the cooperative work;

(d) Aim to share information on relevant mandates and planned activities to contribute to one another's activities and to undertake joint activities as relevant;

(e) Report, on the cooperation undertaken, to the respective governing bodies through the usual reporting by each of the entities.

10. The joint task force is to serve as the repository for the reports.

11. In addition to facilitating the exchange of information on possible areas of cooperation among the entities, the joint task force will keep under review the list of working groups and identify the possible need to set up new groups.

### **3. Road map**

12. Important meetings of the chemicals and waste cluster in 2021 and 2022 include the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in February 2021 and February 2022; the meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, in July 2021 and June 2022; the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention in November 2021 and early 2022 (to be confirmed); and the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and related meetings from 2022 onwards.

13. The joint task force will report on its activities to the governing bodies of the three entities, including at the above-mentioned meetings, through joint reporting.

14. This report was drafted by the co-chairs of the joint task force in December 2020 and endorsed by the heads of the entities in March 2021.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> More information is available in the reports presented, to date, by the entities to the various conferences of the parties and related meetings and to the United Nations Environment Assembly, on work supportive of one another's mandates. The reports can be found on the websites of the secretariats of the Minamata Convention and of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the United Nations Environment Assembly.