



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

Online, 1–5 November 2021*

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

**Matters for consideration or action by the
Conference of the Parties: financial resources
and mechanism: Global Environment Facility****Update on matters related to the Global Environment Facility****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. In paragraph 5 of article 13, on financial resources and mechanism, the Minamata Convention on Mercury defines a mechanism for the provision of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources to support developing country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. Paragraph 6 of the same article states that the mechanism is to include the Global Environment Facility (GEF) trust fund and a specific international programme to support capacity-building and technical assistance.
2. The present note provides information relevant to the first entity of the financial mechanism,¹ namely the GEF trust fund, and is to be considered in conjunction with document UNEP/MC/COP.4/9/Add.1, which sets out the executive summary of the report of the GEF Council to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention at its fourth meeting. The full report of the GEF Council is set out in the annex to document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/7.
3. The elements of the report of the GEF Council to the Conference of the Parties are set forth in a memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties and the GEF that was adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting and subsequently approved by the GEF Council, thereby taking effect. The memorandum of understanding stipulates that the Conference of the Parties may raise with the Council any matter arising from the reports received from the Council and seek GEF clarification and explanation.
4. In its role as one of the entities entrusted with operationalizing the financial mechanism of the Convention, GEF operates under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties regarding overall strategies, policies, programme priorities and eligibility for access to and utilization of financial resources. The guidance was adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting and is set forth in decision MC-1/5.

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

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

¹ Documents UNEP/MC/COP.4/11 and UNEP/MC/COP.4/11/Add.1 set out information relevant to the second entity of the financial mechanism, namely the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance.

II. Global Environment Facility programming on mercury

5. The report of the GEF Council to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting provides an account of GEF support provided to the Minamata Convention during the reporting period 1 July 2019–30 June 2021. With 2021 marking the thirtieth anniversary of the GEF, Minamata Convention activities represent an important evolution of the GEF portfolio. During the reporting period, GEF committed \$136.3 million for programming to support the implementation of the Minamata Convention,² bringing total Convention programming in the seventh replenishment of the GEF trust fund (GEF-7) to \$158.9 million.

6. Donors pledged a total of \$4.1 billion for GEF-7. The four-year investment cycle started in July 2018 and will conclude in June 2022. A total of \$599 million was indicatively allocated to the chemicals and waste focal area, representing approximately 15 per cent of the total GEF-7 resource envelope. Of that amount, \$206 million was indicatively allocated to the implementation of the Minamata Convention, significantly more than the \$141 million dollars allocated in the sixth GEF replenishment, which covered the period 1 July 2014–30 June 2018.

7. Funding for the Convention during GEF-7, per its chemicals and wastes programming strategy, comprises support both for enabling activities and for implementation projects and programmes.

8. By June 2021, GEF had provided support to enable a total of 117 countries to develop their Minamata Initial Assessments (MIAs), 59 of which had been submitted to the secretariat. A small number of countries have completed MIAs that have not been submitted to the secretariat. The secretariat expects GEF agencies to submit finalized and validated MIAs to the secretariat, for which country approval is required. Pursuant to notifications by the relevant countries that artisanal and small-scale gold mining using mercury was more than insignificant in their territory, as per article 7 of the Convention, GEF support has enabled 43 countries to prepare their artisanal and small-scale gold mining national action plans, 14 of which have been completed to date and submitted to the secretariat. Additional details regarding the MIAs and national action plans received by the secretariat are provided in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/2.

9. As part of GEF-7, in June 2020, the GEF Council, at its fifty-eighth meeting, approved a major expansion of the “Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining Sector” programme, known as “GEF GOLD”, currently being implemented in eight countries under the name “planetGOLD”. In the expanded version, known as “GOLD+”, eight new countries were added,³ with a focus on formalization, access to finance and markets and access to mercury free technology, along with a global knowledge component. The GEF Council also approved a full-sized project to support Mexico’s phase-out of mercury in the chlor-alkali sector; a full-sized project on life cycle management of mercury and persistent organic pollutants in Vietnam; and a full-sized project to deploy green chemistry approaches for mercury, persistent organic pollutants and microplastics in six countries.

10. At its fifty-ninth meeting, in December 2020, the GEF Council approved full-sized projects to address mercury in health-care products in five countries; advance environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes containing persistent organic pollutants and mercury in Panama; advance environmentally sound management of polychlorinated biphenyls, mercury and other toxic chemicals in Peru; and address persistent organic pollutants and mercury in waste management in Paraguay.

11. Projects approved by the sixtieth GEF Council meeting, in June 2021, provide for expansion of the GOLD+ programme to seven additional countries in Latin America and Africa, expansion of the “Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States” programme to three additional small island developing States and improved healthcare waste management in the Philippines.

12. In addition, several medium-sized mercury projects, including enabling activities, have been approved during this reporting period, as have 19 GEF Small Grants Programme projects. While all the GEF Council meetings in this reporting cycle took place virtually, it is notable that the work programmes approved were not markedly slowed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. To address the significant challenges faced by partner countries and GEF agencies in implementing

² Excluding agency fees and project preparation grants.

³ Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Congo, Ghana, Honduras, Madagascar, Nigeria, Suriname, Uganda.

individual projects, the GEF secretariat and GEF agencies are examining COVID-19 risks and management approaches in each of their projects.

III. Responsiveness to guidance

13. Consistent with the memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties and GEF, the secretariat reviews each mercury project submitted to the GEF, looking at responsiveness to the Conference of the Parties' guidance to the GEF, consistency with Convention obligations, the technical merits of the approach and the expected results. GEF agencies provide written responses to the secretariat's comments. The GEF secretariat has enabled secretariat access to its projects submission portal to facilitate this review process. To date, the secretariat has not considered any of the projects to be inconsistent with the guidance or with Convention obligations. Mercury reductions of nearly 2,000 metric tons are expected of GEF projects funded just within GEF-7 to date, not counting significant reductions in mercury-containing products and wastes.

IV. Monitoring and evaluation

14. The Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF undertook two mercury-specific evaluations during GEF-7, one on GEF interventions in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector and the other on chemicals and waste focal area evolution in response to the Minamata Convention. In addition, it began a broad evaluation of enabling activity projects across conventions. The secretariat provided information and insights for these reviews and comments on the draft reports.

V. Cooperation between the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention

15. The GEF secretariat and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention have strengthened their cooperation during the reporting period. A delegation from the GEF secretariat attended the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention and the secretariats have continued to work closely together since that meeting.

16. Along with executive secretaries of other multilateral environmental agreements for which the GEF trust fund serves as a financial mechanism, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention attended and addressed the fifty-ninth and sixtieth meetings of the GEF Council, which took place in an online format, from 7 to 10 December 2020 and from 15 to 18 June 2021, respectively. The Executive Secretary also met with the GEF Chief Executive Officer on the margins of a GEF chemicals and waste coordination retreat in Washington, D.C., held from 10 to 14 February 2020, in which two additional secretariat staff participated. Parts of this meeting were held jointly with the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management, and implementing agencies. The Executive Secretary also met virtually with the new GEF Chief Executive Officer, who assumed the position in July 2020, shortly after his arrival. They continued their productive dialogue during a chemicals and waste retreat held virtually from 8 to 10 March 2021. The Executive Secretary also contributed to the GEF thirtieth anniversary publication with an article and an audio message. On 30 June 2021, the Executive Secretary met with members of the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group to discuss mutual interests in the strong involvement of indigenous peoples in the design and implementation of Convention-related activities.

17. In February 2021, the Executive Secretary addressed the Technical Advisory Group meeting for the eighth GEF replenishment negotiations. A key point of her address was that GEF mercury investments were valuable in achieving global environmental benefits, not only in terms of mercury use and emissions reductions but also in terms of advancing the overall GEF portfolio, given the strong interlinkages with biodiversity, land degradation, international waters and climate. To illustrate the point, she cited the implications of artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector activities for indigenous peoples, vulnerable populations, gender equality, health, biodiversity, deforestation, transboundary fresh water, food security, fisheries and supply chain management. Following the Technical Advisory Group meeting, the secretariat provided comments on the draft GEF strategic positioning and programming directions document and attended the first meeting of the replenishment negotiations.

18. The secretariat participated actively in GEF Chemicals and Waste Task Force meetings held in January and May 2020, and in January and May 2021. Because such meetings include GEF agencies and other secretariats, they provide an opportunity to discuss projects under development and parties' ongoing needs. The secretariat also engages with GEF agencies as they plan and implement mercury

projects and as they implement the knowledge management and gender components of relevant GEF projects and programmes. For example, the planetGOLD programme has a visible gender component whose information-sharing and knowledge management activities have been useful to a wide audience.

19. The secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the GEF secretariat continue to work closely together to make information publicly available on all GEF-funded projects for the implementation of the Minamata Convention. Together with the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management, the Minamata Convention secretariat and the GEF secretariat have initiated monthly meetings on communications and knowledge management, with a view to strengthening visibility and improving public awareness of the technical approaches and results of GEF investments in the chemicals and waste focal area and the needs for future replenishment cycles. The secretariat of the Minamata Convention is also working towards improving the public interface with the projects database, with a view to enabling analysis through data visualization. Submitted MIAs and national action plans are also posted on the Convention website.⁴

20. A further area of cooperation between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the GEF secretariat is the technical review and appraisal of applications to the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance. A representative of the GEF secretariat contributed to the technical reviews and appraisals for the third round (2020–2021) of applications prepared by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention. The appraisals were provided to the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme. The positive collaboration between the two secretariats has been essential to ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication of funding allotment with GEF, in accordance with the guidance on the operation of the Specific International Programme.

VI. Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties

21. The Conference of the Parties may wish to take note of the information set forth in this note and in the report of the GEF Council.

⁴ <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Countries>.