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Items 4 (a), 4 (b), 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda*

Policy issues: state of the environment policy issues

Policy issues: emerging policy issues

**Follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable
Development: contribution of the United Nations Environment
Programme to the forthcoming session of the Commission on
Sustainable Development**

**Implementation of the programme of
work of the United Nations Environment Programme and the
relevant decisions of the Governing Council**

Chemicals management

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to Governing Council decision 23/9 on chemicals management and decision SS.IX/1 on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. The document provides background information to support the Governing Council's deliberations and is divided into four chapters, corresponding to the four parts of decision 23/9, relating to: cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other organizations; the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; lead and cadmium; and the mercury programme.

Attention is drawn to the following associated documents, which provide additional information relevant to the present document:

- UNEP/GC/24/INF/15 – Initial activities and planning in support of Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management implementation activities by the United Nations Environment Programme;
- UNEP/GC/24/INF/16 – Key findings of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium;
- UNEP/GC/24/INF/17 – Status report on partnerships as one approach to reducing the risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds into the environment.
- UNEP/GC/24/INF/21 – Outcome of the regional meetings on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

* UNEP/GC/24/1.

I. Decision 23/9 I: Cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme, relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other organizations

1. In its decision 23/9 I, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to strengthen support, within available resources, for 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. It further requested the Executive Director to promote cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of those conventions and with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics and the World Customs Organization, through various means. Since the adoption of the decision, several developments have occurred.

1. Outcomes of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention

2. At its first meeting, held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 2 to 6 May 2005, the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention adopted decision SC-1/18, in which it welcomed the proposal by the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention¹ for there to be a joint head of the secretariats of both the Stockholm and the Rotterdam conventions.² In addition, it requested its secretariat to prepare, in consultation with the secretariats of the Basel and Rotterdam conventions and with UNEP, a study on how cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of the three conventions and other relevant programmes could be improved to ensure maximum coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in the field of chemicals and wastes, including consideration of the role common structures might play. The Conference also decided to consider the results of the study at its second meeting.

2. Outcomes of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Rotterdam Convention

3. At its second meeting, held in Rome from 27 to 30 September 2005, the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, in its decision RC-2/6, welcomed the decision to prepare the study and invited UNEP, in consultation with the secretariats of the conventions, to prepare a supplementary analysis of the financial and administrative arrangements that would be needed to implement any changes which the three convention secretariats and UNEP might propose in the study. In addition, the Conference of the Parties invited UNEP to make the supplementary analysis available for consideration at the next meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Stockholm and Basel conventions.

3. Actions arising from the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention

4. At its second meeting, held in Geneva from 1 to 5 May 2006, the Conference of Parties of the Stockholm Convention considered the study on improving cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (UNEP/POPS/COP.2/INF/12), the supplementary analysis of the financial and administrative arrangements that would be needed to implement any changes to enhance synergies between the secretariats of the chemicals and waste conventions (UNEP/POPS/COP.2/INF/18) and a document on recommendations to improve cooperation and synergies provided by the secretariat of the Basel Convention (UNEP/POPS/COP.2/INF/19).³ The Conference adopted decision SC-2/15 on synergies, in which it requested the President of the Conference, supported by the secretariat and in consultation with the presidents and secretariats of the Basel and Rotterdam conventions, to ensure the preparation of a

¹ See decision RC-1/17 of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, adopted at its first meeting, held in Geneva from 20 to 24 September 2004.

² Secretariat functions for the Rotterdam Convention are jointly performed by the Executive Director of UNEP and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The proposal for there to be joint head of secretariats for the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions would apply, in the case of the Rotterdam Convention, to the part of the secretariat provided by UNEP.

³ At its fifth meeting, in April 2006, the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention adopted decision OEWG-V/6, in which it requested its secretariat to send this information to the secretariats of both the Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions and to invite them to make the document available as an information paper to their respective Conferences of the Parties and to the Executive Director of UNEP.

supplementary report exploring specific areas in which cooperation and coordination among the three conventions at the programmatic level would be to the mutual advantage of all three conventions. In the decision, the Conference of the Parties suggested the establishment of an ad hoc joint working group, consisting of 15 representatives of Parties to each of the three conventions, which would consider the supplementary report and prepare joint recommendations on enhanced cooperation and coordination among the three conventions at the administrative and programmatic levels, to be forwarded to the next meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to each convention.

5. On 25 September 2006, the President of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention submitted the supplementary report on cooperation and coordination between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions to the secretariat of the Stockholm Convention. The secretariat distributed the report to Parties to the Convention and observers with an invitation to provide any views on the report by 31 January 2007. It also submitted the report to secretariats of the Basel and Rotterdam conventions.

4. Outcomes of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Rotterdam Convention

6. At its third meeting, held in Geneva from 9 to 13 October 2006, the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, in its decision RC-3/8, agreed to participate in the process specified in decision SC-2/15, including the establishment of an ad hoc joint working group, and requested its secretariat to invite Parties to the Convention and observers to submit their views on the supplementary report through the secretariat to the ad hoc joint working group by 31 January 2007. Parties were also invited to nominate, by 31 January 2007, through their respective bureaux, members to participate in the ad hoc working group.

5. Considerations in other forums

7. Cooperation and synergies will be discussed at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, to be held in Nairobi from 27 November to 1 December 2006. If the Conference agrees to participate in the process specified in decision SC-2/15, the ad hoc joint working group could be established.

8. The Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics continues to cooperate closely with the secretariats of the chemicals and waste conventions, in particular with a view to providing necessary technical support.

II. Decision 23/9 II: Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

9. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management provides a policy framework for efforts to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that, by 2020, chemicals must be used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. It addresses all relevant sectors, including agriculture, environment, health, industry and labour, and seeks to mainstream chemical safety as a cross-cutting sustainable development issue. The Strategic Approach engages stakeholders from Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

1. Adoption and endorsement of the Strategic Approach

10. As envisaged in decision 23/9 II, the development of the Strategic Approach was successfully concluded at the third session of the Preparatory Committee, held in Vienna from 19 to 24 September 2005, and the first session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, held in Dubai from 4 to 6 February 2006. The Conference finalized and adopted the Strategic Approach, which was then endorsed on 9 February 2006 by the Governing Council at its ninth special session, in its decision SS.IX/1. The Strategic Approach was also endorsed by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in April 2006 and formally noted by the World Health Assembly in May 2006. It will be considered by the governing and subsidiary bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in November 2006 and the Governing Council of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in May 2007. This illustrates the cross-sectoral character of the Strategic Approach, which is key to its success. All the members of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of

Chemicals must work actively within their field of competence in order to implement the Strategic Approach effectively.

2. UNEP activities to support implementation of the Strategic Approach

11. In its decision 23/9 II, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director, as a matter of high priority, to make appropriate provision for the implementation of the responsibilities of UNEP under the Strategic Approach and to make provision for activities to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing the strategic approach to international chemicals management, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, the effective implementation of which is a matter of high priority. In response to that request, an interdivisional working group was established to develop a dual approach to supporting Strategic Approach implementation activities for the 2006–2007 biennium, involving:

(a) A series of initial activities, which have been planned for 2006–2007 to support key objectives of the Strategic Approach, commencing with a symposium on illegal traffic in hazardous chemicals to be held in the Czech Republic in November 2006 with financial support from the Government of Germany;

(b) A comprehensive plan for supporting implementation of the Strategic Approach during the period 2008–2020, which has been drawn up with reference to the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach.

12. Details of the above plans are provided in document UNEP/GC/24/INF/15. Other organizations are undertaking similar planning with a view to integrating the Strategic Approach into their work programmes for the benefit of the sectors they serve. The proposed implementation activities are being coordinated through the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

3. Establishment of the Strategic Approach secretariat and initial secretariat activities

13. In its decision SS.IX/1, the Governing Council responded to requests by the International Conference on Chemicals Management for UNEP to provide secretariat, trustee and other services for the Conference and its intersessional work. The Governing Council thus requested the Executive Director to convene future sessions of the Conference back-to-back with meetings of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations, where appropriate; requested him to establish and assume overall administrative authority for the Strategic Approach secretariat; and authorized him to establish and manage the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund to support initial implementation of the Strategic Approach.

14. In fulfilment of decision SS.IX/1, discussions are under way between UNEP and the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning the possibility of holding the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management in conjunction with the meeting of the World Health Assembly in May 2009. The Strategic Approach secretariat has started operations in accordance with its mandated functions, as set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach, with an initial emphasis on facilitating intersessional regional meetings and the launch of the Quick Start Programme. An African regional meeting to catalyse implementation of the Strategic Approach was held in Cairo from 11 to 14 September 2006, followed by meetings for the European Union and non-European Union members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 20–22 November 2006 and for the Central and Eastern Europe region on 4–6 December 2006. These will be followed by meetings for the Asia-Pacific and the Latin America and Caribbean regions and the Arab subregion in early 2007. The outcomes of these regional meetings are described in document UNEP/GC/24/INF/21. In its first year, the secretariat secured budget and staff resources at approximately half the indicative annual levels approved by the International Conference and will progressively expand its services as further resources become available. The secretariat's 2006 budget has been supported by the Environment Fund and pledges by the Governments of Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. The establishment of the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund has been timed to follow the first project approvals of the Trust Fund Implementation Committee in October 2006. As at 1 December 2006, the Trust Fund had received pledges of approximately \$5 million from the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, India, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, of which the Implementation Committee allocated approximately \$2 million for eight projects, benefiting 20 countries.

III. Decision 23/9 III: Lead and cadmium

15. The Governing Council, in its decision 23/9 III, requested UNEP to undertake a review of scientific information on lead and cadmium, focusing especially on long-range environmental transport, to inform future discussions on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium. In addition, it requested UNEP to report on implementation of the decision as it relates to lead and cadmium to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session. The information set out below is provided in accordance with that request.

1. Activities on lead

16. In 2001, at its twenty-first session, the Governing Council adopted decision 21/6, which called upon Governments that had not yet done so to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline. In 2003, at its twenty-second session, after having considered progress in achieving its goal to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline, the Governing Council adopted decision 22/4 III, again calling upon Governments that had not yet done so to act urgently to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline and to act urgently on the commitment of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to phase out lead in lead-based paint and other sources of human exposure, to prevent exposure to lead, in particular children's exposure to lead, and to strengthen monitoring and surveillance as well as the treatment of lead poisoning. In addition, it appealed to Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society to participate actively in assisting national Governments in their efforts to prevent and phase out sources of human exposure to lead, in particular the use of lead in gasoline, and to strengthen monitoring and surveillance efforts as well as treatment of lead poisoning, by making available information, technical assistance, capacity-building, and funding to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In 2003, at its twenty-third session, the Governing Council adopted decision 23/9 III, in which it reaffirmed its decision 22/4 III.

17. Since the adoption of decision 21/6, UNEP has played a key role in phasing out leaded gasoline worldwide; for example, it is the clearing house of the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles which was founded at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The UNEP Urban Environment Unit, together with Governments, the private sector and other international and civil society organizations, has been a main actor in implementing the Dakar Declaration, an action plan for the phase-out of leaded gasoline in sub-Saharan Africa which was adopted at a regional conference on the issue held in Dakar in June 2001.

2. Development of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium

18. In decision 23/9 III, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to undertake a review of scientific information, focusing especially on long-range environmental transport, to inform future discussions on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium.

19. As part of the implementation of that decision, UNEP established the Lead and Cadmium Working Group to assist it in its work. In May 2005, it circulated a workplan and timetable and, with a view to ensuring that the process remained open, transparent and inclusive, invited Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to submit information relevant to the reviews of scientific information and to nominate members to participate in the work of the Working Group, first by providing comments on the draft reviews by correspondence and then at a meeting, at which the draft reviews would be finalized to the extent possible.

20. The Lead and Cadmium Working Group met in Geneva from 18 to 22 September 2006 to consider the draft texts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium and, on the basis of the information in the scientific reviews, especially the information on long-range environmental transport, prepare a technical summary of the key findings of each review, including identification of possible gaps in the available information and possible conclusions regarding whether there is evidence of any significant adverse impacts on health and the environment of global concern arising from the release of lead and cadmium into the environment. The report of the meeting is available on the lead and cadmium activities webpage at: http://www.chem.unep.ch/Pb_and_Cd/WG/Working_Group.htm.

21. During the meeting, the Working Group considered the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium and finalized the texts to the extent possible. In addition, it identified some key findings. Subsequent to the meeting, UNEP made the necessary changes to the reviews on the basis of the comments made during the meeting. The text of the reviews, which are available in English only, in

addition to further details of the Working Group's discussions and the technical summaries of the key findings, are provided in document UNEP/GC/24/INF/16.

3. Funding for the implementation of the decision

22. In decision 23/9 III, the Governing Council encouraged Governments and other stakeholders to increase contributions in order to facilitate the timely implementation of the work required by the decision.

23. On 29 May 2001, UNEP established a general trust fund in support of the preparation of a global assessment of mercury and its compounds. In 2005, that trust fund became the general trust fund in support of activities on mercury and other metals, in line with decision 23/9 III and IV, in which Governments were requested to provide financial contributions to support the activities of UNEP relating to both mercury and lead and cadmium, and decision 22/23, in which the Executive Director was requested to reduce the number of trust funds in support of the UNEP work programme in order to improve the efficiency of UNEP.

24. The status of the trust fund is outlined in chapter IV below, on the mercury programme. Of the pledges and contributions received for the trust fund in 2005–2006, a total of approximately \$701,000, from the Governments of Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, was earmarked for heavy metals and lead and cadmium activities. Any remaining earmarked funds, once the costs of the current activities are covered, might be used for further work, subject to the approval of the donors.

25. The increased Environment Fund staffing of the programme on mercury and other metals, as described in chapter IV below, will increase the staff capacity of the programme and will allow for increased delivery of the activities called for in decision 22/4 III.

4. Call for further action

26. The review of scientific information shows that the challenges posed by lead and cadmium have a significant international dimension. Both lead and cadmium are transported on local, national, regional and intercontinental scales, with this transport being influenced by a number of factors. Local emissions may result in significant exposure in developing countries, where local sources are likely to be subject to less stringent controls. For lead, the most significant health effects are neurodevelopmental, with children and pregnant women being the populations of greatest concern. Cadmium exposure can have effects on the kidneys, and inhalation has associated carcinogenic effects. Global efforts are needed to address these challenges efficiently, especially in developing countries. This need was further highlighted during discussions at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, held in Budapest from 25 to 29 September 2006. In the Budapest Statement on Mercury, Lead and Cadmium, the Forum called for further global, regional, national and local actions as appropriate. In addition, it invited the Governing Council to initiate and strengthen voluntary actions, including partnerships and other activities, and to give high priority to considering measures, as appropriate, on lead and cadmium. The Governing Council should therefore consider the need for further action.

IV. Decision 23/9 IV: Mercury programme

27. In decision 23/9 IV, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to present a report on progress in the implementation of the decision as it relates to mercury and decided to assess, at its twenty-fourth session, on the basis of the progress report, the need for further action on mercury, considering a full range of options, including the possibility of a legally binding instrument, partnerships and other actions.

28. The UNEP mercury programme was established in 2003, as result of decision 22/4 V. The long-term objective of the programme is to facilitate national, regional and global actions to reduce or eliminate as far as possible anthropogenic uses and releases of mercury and mercury compounds, thereby significantly reducing the global adverse impacts on health and the environment from these compounds. The immediate objective has been to encourage all countries to adopt goals and take national actions, as appropriate, with the objective of identifying at-risk populations and ecosystems, and reducing anthropogenic mercury releases that have an impact on human health and the environment.

29. In May 2005, UNEP circulated to Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations a workplan and timetable setting out the activities planned in response to

decision 23/9 IV. In addition, it invited them to support, both financially and technically, implementation of the decision. The sections below report on progress of implementation of the various activities covered in the workplan, as called for in the decision.

1. Capacity-building and technical assistance activities

30. As called for by the Governing Council, UNEP is promoting the development of inventories of mercury uses and releases. A key training and guidance document that supports the efforts of countries to take action on mercury is the toolkit for identification and quantification of mercury releases. A pilot version of the toolkit was finalized in November 2005 and is publicly available in English on the mercury programme webpage, at <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/support.htm>. Currently, the toolkit is being translated into the other official languages of the United Nations. The translated versions are expected to be finalized towards the end of 2006 and will be made available on the webpage.

31. As a first step, UNEP is developing a process to run a pilot test project for mercury inventories in five countries in Asia. The project will provide the participating countries and the region with a start in identifying and quantifying their use and release of mercury. UNEP plans to host one regional workshop to launch the project for the pilot countries, tentatively scheduled for November 2006. Participating countries will then be expected, in 2007, to develop a mercury interim inventory, which will support the prioritization of further work within each pilot country. UNEP will use the pilot test project to obtain feedback on the toolkit, in order to be able to tailor it to the needs and circumstances of developing countries, and will apply lessons learned in the pilot test project in further inventory development projects. Further initiatives on inventory development will be considered as the toolkit becomes available in other languages.

32. A number of additional risk communication materials, guidance materials, toolkits and training materials are under development or have already been prepared. For example, materials summarizing possible approaches for reducing major uses and releases of mercury from various sources are now available on the mercury programme webpage and will be available for use in awareness-raising workshops and training sessions at the national and regional levels. A toolkit for community awareness-raising is under development in cooperation with a non-governmental organization.

33. In response to decision 23/9 IV, in which the Governing Council encouraged Governments to promote and improve evaluation and risk communication methods, based on, among other things, guidance from WHO and FAO, which would enable citizens to make health-protective dietary choices, UNEP has been working on a guidance document on certain aspects of identifying populations at risk due to exposures to mercury. UNEP has also participated in work under way at WHO to develop guidance on balancing the risks and benefits of fish consumption, including practical risk communication considerations for target groups, such as pregnant women. The finalization of both documents has been on hold, pending the outcome of the sixty-seventh meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives, which was held in Rome from 20 to 29 June 2006. At its sixty-first meeting, held in 2003, the Expert Committee changed the provisional tolerable weekly intake level for methyl mercury to 1.6 µg/kg body weight, in order to protect the developing foetus, the most sensitive subgroup of the human population. At its sixty-seventh meeting, held in 2006, the Committee provided additional guidance relating to other population subgroups, which will be of use for countries deciding on risk management options appropriate to their conditions. UNEP and WHO will coordinate finalization of the abovementioned guidance documents, to ensure that the documents complement each other.

2. Implementation of partnerships between Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector

34. The Governing Council, when continuing its discussions on the need for further measures to address the global adverse impacts of mercury pollution at its twenty-third session, urged Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector to develop and implement partnerships, in a clear, transparent and accountable manner, as one approach to reducing the risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds into the environment and thereby achieving the objectives set forth in the annex to decision 22/4 V. UNEP was requested to facilitate work between its mercury programme and Governments, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and partnerships, as appropriate, in order to: improve global understanding of international mercury emission sources, fate and transport; promote the development of inventories of mercury uses and releases; promote the development of environmentally sound disposal and remediation practices; and increase awareness of environmentally sound recycling practices.

35. The paragraphs of decision 23/9 IV relevant to partnerships, namely paragraphs 28–33, set out a number of activities expected of UNEP to facilitate implementation of partnerships. A separate meeting document (UNEP/GC/24/INF/17) provides further details on these activities, including the report prepared in accordance with the decision on the progress of the implementation of the partnerships established pursuant to decision 23/9 IV, on the basis of information submitted by Governments and other stakeholders.

3. Promoting technical and financial assistance activities

36. In decision 23/9 IV, the Governing Council encouraged Governments and stakeholders, especially in developed countries, and relevant international organizations with their respective mandates, to mobilize technical and financial resources to work towards successful partnerships, which could include, among other things, identification of best practices and transfer of appropriate technology. Accordingly, Governments, international organizations and other partners have been asked to provide technical assistance, including expertise and knowledge on relevant issues. Examples of such assistance include the provision of resource persons for workshops and training activities and assistance in the development of guidance materials.

37. UNEP has initiated fundraising activities to encourage all countries to consider making voluntary contributions to support the planned activities of the mercury programme. In its decision 23/9 IV, the Governing Council recognized the importance of technical and financial resources to support successful implementation of the partnerships established as a result of its decision. Governments and stakeholders, especially in developed countries, and relevant international organizations within their respective mandates, were encouraged to mobilize technical and financial resources to work towards successful partnerships.

38. As a result of these activities, substantial funding has been raised for the general trust fund in support of activities on mercury and other metals. Funding is now available to support a number of partnership activities and the implementation of country-based projects at the national or regional levels, aimed at assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition in understanding the nature and magnitude of the mercury problem and in developing tools and strategies to mitigate mercury pollution. In addition, although UNEP may not be in a position to provide funding directly, the programme may be of assistance to countries seeking funding from other donors who are interested in supporting projects to address mercury pollution.

39. To facilitate requests from countries for financial support for country-based activities, UNEP has developed a simplified project proposal format and guidance on priorities, which is now available on the mercury programme webpage. Among the identified priorities for potential projects are:

- (a) Promoting the development of national inventories of mercury uses and releases;
- (b) Developing strategies for enhanced outreach and risk communication activities to reach at-risk populations, including sensitive populations;
- (c) Increasing public awareness and promotion of mercury-free products, technologies and processes, using environmentally friendly alternatives;
- (d) Promoting application and sharing of information on best available techniques and measures to reduce mercury emissions from point sources;
- (e) Promoting reduction of risk of exposure related to mercury in products such as batteries, cosmetics and thermometers and to production processes such as chlor-alkali production and small-scale artisanal mining using mercury through, for example, when warranted, introduction of bans or restrictions on uses;
- (f) Increasing awareness of environmentally sound recycling practices and promoting the development of environmentally sound waste management, disposal and remediation practices;
- (g) Developing national implementation plans to reduce mercury uses and releases;
- (h) Conducting training and workshops on various sectoral or regionally relevant topics;
- (i) Improving global understanding of international mercury emission sources, fate and transport.

40. The project proposal format is intended to assist the proponent in providing an overview of the planned project, including its objectives, intended outcomes and estimated costs. Interested Governments and other stakeholders are welcome to submit project proposals for consideration,

accompanied by a letter, which should be signed by the proponent. The fund will support capacity-building projects aimed at assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The maximum amount per project is \$100,000; however, projects under \$50,000 may be given preference, as may projects with an element of co-funding from other sources or substantial in-kind contributions. The approval of projects will take considerations of geographic and sectoral balance into account.

4. Support for partnerships and country-based projects

41. Both through the partnership activities and in response to the regional awareness-raising workshops organized by UNEP in 2004–2005, a number of countries have approached UNEP requesting financial and technical assistance for country-based activities to address mercury pollution.

42. As of October 2006, 20 countries (five from the Asia-Pacific region, seven from Africa, seven from Latin America and the Caribbean and one from the Central and Eastern Europe region) and one non-governmental organization have submitted proposals for country-based projects. Proposals are expected from four additional countries. Those proposals underline the need, among other things, for technical assistance and capacity-building relating to inventories (identification and quantification of releases); training, awareness-raising and information exchange; measures to reduce or eliminate releases from wastes; best available techniques and best environmental practices; and research, policy development and regulatory controls. UNEP is currently working with these countries to define their needs more clearly and to formulate the necessary project documents setting out short, medium and long-term goals and objectives. Well-developed project proposals falling within the defined priorities and guidelines will be funded, as appropriate and within available resources, and UNEP will support countries to the extent possible in the implementation and follow-up of the projects.

43. So far, projects in Burkina Faso and Suriname have been approved for funding, and a further 18 are under consideration. Project documents for the various approved projects will be made available on the mercury webpage, together with final reports and outcomes, once available.

44. The new Quick-Start Programme under the recently adopted Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management will provide additional opportunities for countries to seek funding for mercury and metals activities and partnerships. The mercury programme will follow developments closely, to help countries draw on these possibilities in the future.

5. Further programme activities

45. In its decision 23/9 IV, the Governing Council requested UNEP to develop further the mercury programme by initiating, preparing and making public a report summarizing supply, trade and demand information for mercury, including in artisanal and small-scale gold mining, and, based on a consideration of the life-cycle approach, to submit a document forming a basis for consideration of possible further actions in those areas for the consideration of the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session. The annex to document UNEP/GC/24/INF/17 sets out the process to develop the requested report and provides an executive summary of its main findings.

6. Funding for the programme

46. On 29 May 2001, UNEP established a general trust fund in support of the preparation of a global assessment of mercury and its compounds. In 2005, that trust fund became the general trust fund in support of activities on mercury and other metals, in line with decision 23/9 III and IV, in which Governments were requested to provide financial contributions to support the activities of UNEP relating to both mercury and lead and cadmium, and decision 22/23, in which the Executive Director was requested to reduce the number of trust funds in support of the UNEP work programme in order to improve the efficiency of UNEP.

47. As at the end of 2004, financial pledges and contributions to the trust fund had been received from the Governments of Burkina Faso, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, amounting to approximately \$2,254,400.

48. In 2005, pledges and contributions to the trust fund were received from the Governments of Canada, European Union, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America, amounting to approximately \$1,562,300. Of that total, \$370,761 was earmarked for lead and cadmium activities. In addition to the UNEP in-kind contribution in the form of programme staff, UNEP contributed approximately \$360,000 from the 2005 Environment Fund budget, which was used to cover the cost of a number of mercury awareness-raising workshops in 2004–2005.

49. As at the end of September 2006, pledges and contributions had been received for 2006 from the Governments of Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United States of America, amounting to approximately \$1,336,550. Of that total, \$194,000 was earmarked for lead and cadmium activities. The Government of the United States of America has decided to make an additional financial contribution in 2006–2007, in order to enable UNEP to hire an additional staff member to support the mercury programme activities, in particular the partnership activities.

50. As a result of decisions 22/4 and 23/9, the Environment Fund staffing of the mercury and other metals programme was increased from one to three programme staff in 2006. The recruitment process for the two new programme staff is nearly finalized and it is expected that the two posts will be filled towards the third quarter of 2006. In expectation of the outcome of this recruitment process, two one-year temporary programme posts were approved in 2005 and two staff came on board in mid-March 2006. These developments will substantially increase the staff capacity of the programme and will ensure increased delivery of planned activities in the future.

51. As at October 2006, approximately \$2,035,380 had been allocated from the trust fund for further activities in 2007–2008, including partnership activities, the small grants programme and staffing costs.

7. Issues for consideration by the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session relating to the mercury programme

52. The Governing Council may wish to consider further, on the basis of the present report on progress in the implementation of decision 23/9 as it relates to mercury, as well as the statement issued by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety regarding mercury, lead and cadmium, the need for further action on mercury, considering a full range of options, including the possibility of a legally-binding instrument, partnerships and other actions.
