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First meeting of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund
8-9 April 2024, International Environment House, Geneva, Switzerland (Hybrid)

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK ON CHEMICALS FUND

1. Opening and welcome

The President of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, Mr. Zaigham Abbas (Pakistan) welcomed the Board members to the first meeting of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund.

The President recalled that the silence procedure to adopt the decision on the *ad interim* composition of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund was circulated on 24 January 2024. The silence procedure was broken on 12 February 2024, with the request for clarification on the role of the donors and other contributors in the Executive Board, in line with the text of the ICCM5 resolution V/3 on Financial considerations, and to clarify the text on the adoption of the terms of reference at the first meeting of the Executive Board. The President added that a revised draft decision under a silence procedure was submitted again on 6 March 2024 and adopted on 28 March 2024.

The President stated that the main purpose of the Executive Board meeting was to discuss the next steps towards operationalizing the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund to make sure the continuation of planned activities mandated at ICCM5 until the first International Conference takes place in 2026.

He further added that the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund is a subsidiary body of the International Conference, hence, the rules of procedure of the International Conference apply *mutatis mutandis* to the proceedings of the current meeting, unless otherwise decided by the International Conference at its next session.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The President introduced the provisional agenda (document GFCF/EB.1/1) that was circulated on 3 April 2024. No additional points were raised under Any Other Business and the agenda was adopted.

3. Organizational matters and elections of officers

(a) *Election of the chair or co-chairs*

The President recalled rule 16.4 of the rules of procedure of the International Conference that stipulate that in the exercise of his functions, the President remains at all times under the authority of the International Conference. The secretariat highlighted Section 9, rule 23 of the rules of procedure on subsidiary bodies, referring to rule 23.2.

The President requested the Executive Board members to present their candidates for Chair or Cochair of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund.

The representative of the Western Europe and Others region proposed Mr. Ivo de Zwaan (The Netherlands) as Co-chair. Mr. Santos Virgilio (Angola) was proposed as Co-chair from the African region. The two candidates received support from the participants and the President congratulated them as the two new Co-chairs of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund.

The two newly elected Co-chairs thanked the Executive Board members for their trust and informed participants on the schedule planned for the meeting.

4. Rules of procedure of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund

The secretariat listed potential issues and gaps that the Executive Board members might wish to consider for discussion on the effective operationalization of the Board: representation, participation (including observers); duration of terms; conduct of business; further guidance by the Board: operational guidelines (including decision making processes); mandate; officers and roles; adoption of decisions; and public and private meetings.

The secretariat provided clarification on the definitions of “donors” and “contributors” (definitions presented in a document shared by the secretariat with the Executive Board members during the meeting) extracted from the Quick Start Programme as follows:

***Definition of donors (ref. Quick Start Programme):** “Bilateral and multilateral donors or other entities that have made or pledged to make a financial contribution to the Quick Start Programme during the period between the most recent and next session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. Each such donor or entity shall be represented by a representative, whose name shall be submitted to the secretariat before the meeting. The Board shall, before its next meeting, determine whether new contributions qualify as contributions to the Quick Start Programme according to the objective of the Programme set out in resolution I/4 adopted by the conference at its first session.”*

***Definition of Contributors (ref. Quick Start Programme):** “Entities that have made or plan to make in-kind or other contributions to the Quick Start Programme during the period between the most recent and next session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. Each contributor or grouping of contributors shall be represented by a representative, whose name shall be submitted to the secretariat before the meeting. The Board shall, before its next meeting, determine whether new contributions qualify as contributions to the Quick Start Programme according to the objective of the Programme set out in resolution I/4 adopted by the Conference at its first session.”*

The Co-chair explained that the intention was to take views after which the secretariat will draft a text to be discussed and adopted at the next meeting.

Among the issues raised was that of the criteria to identify donors, including a possible minimum threshold for contributions. It was noted, however, that having a minimum threshold might deter contributions.

Another issue raised was the desired number of donors to participate in the Executive Board meetings and the importance of guaranteeing a balance in representation among sectors and geographical regions to avoid a disproportionate ratio between donors and contributors, and recipients at the meetings. It is for the Board to decide on representation according to and in line with resolution ICCM V/3. The Board, however, identifies a system to nominate representatives that guarantees a

balance in representation between those eligible for funding and those who are not. The secretariat advised on the need to be practical and avoid too large a membership.

It was suggested by some members that a donation or contribution should count as long as it is valid for spending by the Board. For the same time, the donor or contributor should be able to be represented in the Board as a full member.

It was observed that putting in place a system that allows participation but no right to vote could help maintain regional balance and stakeholders in the Executive Board. It was also noted that participation open to everyone with limitations on the right to vote would not have to diminish the influence of members.

There was broad support for soliciting private sector financial contributions and it was proposed that the secretariat identify potential options and present them to the Executive Board at its next meeting. There was also some support expressed but no agreement reached yet for limiting participation of donors who could also have their influence by deciding the recipient of their donation.

Regarding the role of contributors, it was suggested that contributors could have a different way to contribute to the process and to the Framework without having a role/representation in the Executive Board.

Following a request for examples of boards with in-kind contributors and private sector representatives, the secretariat explained the functioning of the boards of the Special Programme and of the Specific International Programme. It was suggested that in-kind contributors should have the possibility to influence in the Executive Board and that intergovernmental organizations with experience in the multistakeholder and multisectoral fields could fall into the group of in-kind contributors. This approach would guarantee the consideration of projects in all sectors, including health.

On whether the secondment of staff by intergovernmental organizations are considered equally as a contribution by those organizations receiving funds to implement projects, the secretariat clarified that this would be an in-kind contribution and might have a different status to those that contribute financially to the Fund. It was suggested that there should be mechanisms in place to preserve the ethics of members and that through defining in-kind contributors, the Board might consider guaranteeing their influence in the Board without these contributors participating in it.

A drafting group was set up to provide some input into defining donors and contributors and the number of people required to participate in the decision-making process of the Executive Board.

One suggestion was to have an Executive Board composed as follows: 10 government representatives – 6 donor representatives – no contributors. Another was an Executive Board composed of twenty members: 10 government representatives – 5 donors representatives nominated by donors – 5 contributors representatives nominated by contributors to the Fund.

The number of government representatives on the Executive Board was decided by the International Conference. The secretariat clarified that a member could not participate both as a donor and a recipient. Additionally, the secretariat said that in the Special Programme and the Specific International Programme observers cannot be involved in decision making.

More time was requested to look at the draft paper and to read further on the roles of contributors and donors, noting that, according to the current proposal, with 10 government representatives, the numbers would be unbalanced. It was observed that the structure of the 10 donors works well in the Special Programme and, additionally, that contributors were included in it.

By following the rules of procedure of the International Conference, observers and contributors should be considered as observers and contributors to the Fund and not to the Framework. It was proposed that everyone interested could listen to the Executive Board meetings. Where a recipient country is represented on the Executive Board and involved in a project submitted for decision by the Board, the country should be excused from decision making by the Board as is the case in the Special Programme.

The secretariat explained the numbers ratio of 10/5/5 for the Executive Board composition and the relation with the Bureau regional members and the donors. It was suggested that donors (five or less) and contributors (two or less) should not be permanent members of the Executive Board.

It was decided that the Executive Board members provide comments on the paper to the secretariat by 30 April 2024. An informal consultation could be held during the first half of May to provide guidance to the secretariat to finalize a related document and to issue invitations to the meeting proposed to take place on 13 and 14 June 2024¹.

The secretariat, referred to the operational guidelines, and informed the meeting that the arrangements for national representatives were already fixed until the next International Conference under ICCM5 resolution V/3, whereas conduct of business, observers and alternates were not in the terms of reference or rules of procedures and would have to be discussed at the meeting. The secretariat added that the Board would need to decide on co-funding, might need to endorse procedures, provide advice on other matters, and identify the Co-chairs functions in the interim period between the two meetings to facilitate the decision-making process. Additionally, strategic priorities and eligibility criteria for selecting projects had not yet been defined and any prioritization should be decided by the Board.

The Co-chair indicated that it might be helpful to develop a strategy instead of trying to “duplicate” the Special Programme and the Quick Start Programme. There was agreement on the need to have guidance avoiding copying the Quick Start Programme, but it was also suggested to consider the Guidelines from the Quick Start Programme and to adapt them to the Framework although concern was expressed on the implementation of the rules from the terms of reference of the Quick Start Programme.

A resource mobilization strategy will be proposed at the next International Conference at the end of 2026, therefore, together with scaling up measurability and targets, it will be discussed at a later stage. The secretariat added that it will be responsible for looking for funding strategies and resource mobilization, and that all stakeholders will be involved in these activities at the next iteration of the Fund. The secretariat will liaise with stakeholders and undertake fundraising and resource mobilization at different events/workshops. The need for more resources for the Fund to help in solving problems and avoid competition with fundraising for other entities was stressed.

Citing activities under other boards could be useful. It was noted that the mandate of the Board need not be limited to evaluating projects only but to look at the Special Programme or the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, where a mapping of the strategic objectives has been done.

The secretariat listed a few activities that the Board might consider for discussion: eligibility and priority, workplan, institutional arrangements, sustainability of the funding, and impact and visibility. It was also explained that at the time of the meeting decisions were related only to “process”.

The secretariat explained that donors could indicate what kind of project they would prefer to finance. Donors and contributors would be able to ear-mark the year by when their financing should be used.

5. Workplan of the Executive Board of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund

a) Its effective operationalization, including through sharing initial views on the planning of the applications process and any other relevant issues such as, appraisal, communication, reporting, effectiveness evaluation and resources mobilization etc.

The secretariat presented the list of relevant issues which included the planning of the applications process, effective operationalization of the Board, appraisal, communication process, reporting, effectiveness evaluation and resource mobilization. The secretariat also said that the Fund will be operational until 31 December 2030 and that at the International Conference, scheduled for 2026, there will be an assessment of how to deal with the remaining funds. Concepts/potential areas that the Board members might wish to discuss were presented and it was proposed whether to include them or not in the workplan until the next International Conference.

¹ The second meeting of the Executive Board will take place from 12 to 14 June 2024.

The list of priorities was agreed, as follows:

1. Project cycle: eligibility criteria, priority settings, assessments, monitoring and evaluation, gender aspects;
2. Institutional arrangements for the operations of the Executive Board;
3. Cross-cutting Activities: communication, resource mobilization, joint efforts with other funds (joint assessments/participation);
4. Sustainability considerations and reporting to the Open-Ended Working Group and the International Conference.

It was noted that “joint efforts with other funds” should not be an obligation for the Executive Board members and rather a task for the secretariat who would inform the Board on other boards experiences.

The Board requested additional information on whether the workplan will be linked to Issues of Concern and Emerging Policy Issues, the timeline, the prioritization process that was considered key, and mapping of Emerging Policy Issues along with synergies with other frameworks such as biodiversity.

The secretariat was encouraged to complete the framing of the project cycle (defining parameters such as formats, eligibility, priorities) between the current Executive Board meeting and the next one in June 2024. The secretariat will finish preparing documents by the end of June and a first round of projects submission may be considered in the fourth quarter of 2024. It was also said that three months are usually necessary for the assessment of projects and that two sets of applications could be organized before the next International Conference, with one set of applications per year.

While it was suggested that launching a “call for projects” at a different time from the Special Programme could be beneficial for some countries to increase their chances of being selected by a fund, it was also argued that submitting to different funds could be too demanding for the countries with lesser capacities. Additionally, projects meeting the criteria for the Special Programme fund may not be eligible for the Framework Fund and, for that reason, the secretariat stressed the importance of alignment and programmatic thinking.

b) The budget and staffing of the Global Framework on Chemicals were adopted at ICCM5 prior to the establishment of the Fund. The staffing necessary to operationalize the Fund is therefore not included in the initially adopted staffing table for the Global Framework on Chemicals.

While regret was expressed with regard to difficulties in accessing funding for the secretariat, it was emphasized that the funds provided be used for developing countries projects.

The secretariat provided general information on funding, staffing and programme support costs. The secretariat also added that some donor countries had clarified whether their pledge was for implementation projects supported by the Fund or for the secretariat.

It was suggested that financing staff could be considered if specifically related to working on implementation of projects and noted that in the Special Programme, based on how much money is in the pot, a certain amount is allocated for the secretariat and the rest is for the projects. One solution might be sharing staff. One other participant asked if pledges from the European Union would go to the secretariat directly and the secretariat said that the intention was to proceed in the same way as done in the Special Programme.

The secretariat noted that while unspent funds remain from the Quick Start Programme (just under two and a half million US\$) those who provided those funds were not considered to be donors to the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund. The secretariat will send a proposal to discuss priorities, criteria and workplan with deadline to submit comments for consideration at the second meeting of the Executive Board.

The secretariat orally presented the budget for covering Fund activities within the secretariat, noting that the budgeted 26 million US\$ covered three years. It was proposed to have one P4; one P2

(financed by Germany); and one G4 staff as well as costs and projects in 2024, 2025 and 2026 and further described the roles of those three positions. The secretariat will also compare the current figures with the ones given at ICCM5 and provide that information at the next meeting.

6. Criteria for appraisal of projects

The secretariat shared ideas on the criteria for appraisal of projects to guarantee a successful use of money from the Fund. These parameters included number of projects, typology of projects, “sustainable changes,” game changers, relation to targets and cross-cutting areas.

The secretariat emphasized that the Board needs to identify a systematic way of addressing priorities, and ultimately how the selection process is done.

It was underlined that, as terms of reference, priorities should be considered as national priorities and that both robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are necessary within the project. While there needs to be a link to objectives and targets, projects should also be evaluated based on how these are fulfilled.

Another consideration was whether projects should be at a regional or national scale, such as creating a chemical registry in different countries, to seek broader success. It was also suggested that at each round they could consider having five projects guaranteeing that all sectors are represented, and proposed involving different stakeholders who, with different ideas, could make a project successful.

It was reiterated that objectives and targets need to be those agreed at ICCM5 and that different sectors, such as health, labour, and chemicals management should be addressed in the project proposals. The importance of prioritizing and avoiding similar projects to those financed through other funds was stressed. It was proposed that multiple benefits could be aligned with the general objective of the Framework including interlinkages with other frameworks (e.g. biodiversity and climate change).

It was noted that the guiding principles of the Framework motivated countries to prepare projects and to submit them to the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund instead of others. It is then very important to state clearly what the Fund will finance. It was stressed by some members that the Fund should not exclude anyone, and attention was drawn to issues of concern such as highly hazardous pesticides, pollution legacy, artisanal gold mining, the need to define criteria that address such problems, and that project implementation goes beyond mobilization of funds and staff.

The secretariat said it was essential to identify how projects address targets (e.g., national institutional capacities), include sectors and “make the difference”. A project that considers all these aspects and has a holistic approach will have higher priority. The secretariat added that only countries will be accepted to submit projects and that the Board has the task of defining criteria. Emphasis was placed on the need to help countries in making best use of the Fund and where its financial resources are going to make a difference. It could mean that not all countries would be eligible. There is a need to determine if a project will be impactful over the long term.

It was suggested that the “call for proposals” should be an open call. It was also proposed to prepare a pool of ideas for projects, including country topics and the effect of the implementation of the Framework.

Reflecting on how to set priorities and how to look at the terms of reference from ICCM5 from a legal perspective, a suggestion was made that projects that have the highest impact and are the most sustainable ones, should be favoured. The secretariat responded that co-finance usually indicates how sustainable a project is and that it would be possible to avoid contradicting the terms of reference.

It was noted that if the direction of a project is correct and falls well under a specific programme, every project would probably be eligible. The secretariat noted that projects should be country driven given each country knows its needs, and for this reason criteria should indicate how to approach a thematic area instead of indicating on which one to focus.

The secretariat presented the criteria of the Special Programme to further stimulate the discussion. A suggestion was made to group and list the criteria and that it would be beneficial to have a percentage

of the co-financing to address sustainability. Note was made that some countries will have a more competitive advantage in receiving funding, and they may consider asking different percentages of cofinancing based on the requesting country and considering that developing countries may have more problems in implementation.

It was mentioned that twenty-five percent of co-financing might be high for some countries at least. On the other hand, it might be low for others, i.e., high-income countries as classified by the World Bank. It was pointed out that in-kind contributions would not be only monetary contributions but could also be staff designated on a project. Concern was raised about a potential subjective selection process of countries. Further it was urged that there must be trust in the success of a project that goes beyond its completion.

The secretariat added that another point for consideration may be the link between the amount of cofinancing and the length of a project. Innovation and a cross-cutting approach might be good requirements for a project.

On setting minimum and maximum amounts for a project, there were mixed views although there were suggestions that there should not be a minimum or maximum amount. An indicative proposal was US\$200,000 as a minimum and US\$500,000 as a maximum. Minimum and maximum are factors depending on the ability of a country to maximize the fund and the impact of a project could affect the evaluation of the request for funding. It was stressed that the preparation of a project proposal requires a lot of capacity, and the chemicals agenda is quite expensive. Developing countries would try to be part of the process if the minimum is low enough. One proposal was to have a two-step approach in the selection process based on the number of projects submitted and use the criteria for the selection only in accordance with the number of submitted projects. One observation was that sometimes regional projects may have a higher impact. The impact of a project should be evaluated when the project is completed.

7. Next meetings of the Executive Board

The secretariat said that the next meeting will be important for defining criteria and priorities and suggested that the next meeting could be held back-to-back with the meeting of the Bureau of the Framework tentatively scheduled for 15 June 2024 in Geneva, as a majority of the current Executive Board members would be at that meeting. It was agreed that the next Executive Board meeting will be held on 13 and 14 June 2024¹ in Geneva.

8. Any other business

No other business was raised.

9. Closure of the meeting

The meeting was closed on Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 15:30 CEST.

Annex

Participants

Bureau Members: Mr. Santos Virgilio (Angola, Africa), Mr. Zaigham Abbas (Pakistan, Asia-Pacific, President), Ms. Magdalena Frydrych (Poland, Central and Eastern Europe), Ms. Vanesa Aliaga (Peru, Latin America and the Caribbean), and Mr. Audun Heggelund (Norway, Western Europe and Others).

Regional Focal Points: Ms. Itsuki Kuroda (Japan for Asia-Pacific), Ms. Suzana Andonova (North Macedonia for Central and Eastern Europe), Mr. Napoleon Garcia (El Salvador for Latin America and the Caribbean), and Mr. Ivo de Zwaan (The Netherlands for Western Europe and Other Groups)

Donors/Governments representatives: Mr. Matthias Wolf (Germany), Ms. Angeles Jimenez Redondo (Spain, European Union), Mr. Matt Lovatt (United Kingdom), Ms. Chrysanthi Sofokleous (International Council of Chemical Associations, industry), Ms. Maria Ruiz-Cuevas (International Council of Chemical Associations, industry).
