
**10th meeting of the Quick Start Programme
Executive Board**
Teleconference, 20 August 2015

Report of the 10th meeting of the Executive Board of the Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

I. Opening of the meeting

1. The 10th meeting of the Executive Board was held through an online teleconference (webinar platform) on 20 August 2015. The meeting was opened by Mr. Jacob Duer, Principal Coordination Officer, SAICM secretariat, who welcomed Executive Board members.
2. Following welcoming remarks, the secretariat invited the Executive Board to elect the two co-chairs who would preside over the meeting, in accordance with Rule 8 of the rules of procedure. The secretariat notified meeting participants that the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4), which will take place from 28 September to 2 October 2015, would elect new members of the Executive Board. Hence, the secretariat invited the Board to consider maintaining the Netherlands and Albania as co-chairs.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

3. The Board agreed that Ms. Lindita Tafaj (Albania) would serve as the co-chair from the group of Government representatives of the five United Nations regions and Mr. Reginald Hernaus (the Netherlands) would serve as the co-chair from the group of donors.

B. Organization of work

4. The Board agreed to meet from 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Thursday 20 August 2015, bearing in mind that additional time would be made available as needed.

C. Attendance

5. The meeting was attended by the following regional representatives, or their designated replacements or advisors: Ms. Lindita Tafaj (Albania), and Ms. Tatiana Tugui (Moldova, Republic of).

6. The meeting was attended by the following donor representatives: Ms. Simone Irsfeld and Mr. Vassilios Karavezyris (Germany), Mr. Reginald Hernaus (Netherlands), Mr. Mahmood Khwaja (Pakistan), Ms. Younghee Kim (Republic of Korea), Ms. Sara Stenhammar (Sweden), Ms. Gabi Eigenmann (Switzerland), and Mr. Jorge Peydro-Aznar (European Commission, EC).

7. The meeting was attended by the following contributors: Mr. Etienne Gonin (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP), Mr. Jorge Ocaña and Mr. Oliver Wotton (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNITAR), Ms. Vera Boehm (International Council of Chemical Associations, ICCA), and Mr. David Azoulay (The Center for International Environmental Law, CIEL/International POPs Elimination Network, IPEN).

8. The initial agenda items of the meeting were also attended by the expert consultants undertaking the impact evaluation of the QSP: Mr Robert Nurick and Ms. Eloise Touni. The consultants left the meeting at the conclusion of agenda item 4.

D. Adoption of the agenda

9. The participants adopted the following agenda for the meeting on the basis of the provisional agenda set out in documents SAICM/EB.10/1 and SAICM/EB.10/1/Add.1.

1. *Opening of the meeting.*
2. *Organizational matters*
 - (a) *Election of officers;*
 - (b) *Adoption of the agenda;*
 - (c) *Organization of work.*
3. *Adoption of the report of the 9th Executive Board of the Quick Start Programme meeting.*
4. *Considerations on the impact evaluation of the Quick Start Programme draft report.*
5. *Review of the status of the Quick Start Programme and its Trust Fund*
 - (a) *Status of the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund and the QSP Business Plan;*
 - (b) *Non-Trust Fund contributions to the Quick Start Programme;*
 - (c) *Status of projects under the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund.*
6. *ICCM4 expected decisions on the Quick Start Programme.*
7. *Other matters.*
8. *Adoption of the report.*
9. *Next meeting.*
10. *Closure of the meeting.*

III. Adoption of the report of the 9th Executive Board of the Quick Start Programme meeting

10. The meeting had before it document SAICM/EB.10/2 Provisional Report of the 9th meeting of the QSP Executive Board.

11. One participant requested clarifications regarding paragraph 29 of the provisional report. The participant enquired whether a non-chemical alternatives-only round, funded through an earmarked contribution from one donor, had been completed as decided by the Executive Board at its 9th meeting. In addition, the participant reminded the Board that the donor had agreed that any unused funds remaining following this round would be returned to the general Trust Fund and made available to other approved QSP projects. The secretariat agreed to revise the report of the 9th meeting of the QSP Executive Board to better reflect this. The Board members approved the report as presented without any further amendments.

12. The secretariat reported that a 14th round of applications was opened in 2014 for non-chemical alternatives projects only, which were considered by the QSP Trust Fund Implementation Committee (TFIC) at its 17th meeting held in Rome, Italy, on 26 November 2014. The Committee granted approval for one new project and conditional approval for four new projects¹. The secretariat further informed meeting participants that approximately US\$ 20,000 of earmarked funds would remain once these projects were funded, which would be returned to the general Trust Fund.

IV. Considerations on the impact evaluation of the Quick Start Programme draft report

13. The meeting had before it document SAICM/EB.10/5 interim report of the QSP impact evaluation. The secretariat introduced the consultants undertaking the QSP impact evaluation and invited them to present on progress to date and preliminary outcomes.

14. The evaluators outlined that the impact evaluation was being undertaken in five stages, and that the interim report submitted to the Board provided a summary of the outcomes from stages one (inception report) and two (online survey results). The evaluators also outline progress to date on stage 3 (interviews) and stage 4 (case studies), indicating that they had selected a sample of 51 completed projects for interviews that provided adequate coverage of different regions, types of projects and executing agencies. Stage 5 would involve preparation of the final report which would be delivered to the secretariat on 11 September 2015.

15. The evaluators also provided an overview of the draft theory of change that was being used to guide the impact evaluation, as well as some emerging findings from the preliminary stages of the evaluation. Initial findings highlighted that there had been a great degree of progress since the beginning of the Programme, especially in terms of political and technical awareness and understanding of the importance of strategic chemicals management, and many examples of new or revised legislation, action plans, strategies, and roadmaps, as well as follow-up donor projects. However, an implementation gap remains, where internalisation of chemicals management into national plans and budgets remains weak.

16. Executive Board members were invited to discuss the approach and outcomes for the impact evaluation. The co-chair initially invited the evaluators to respond to questions received by email from one regional representative who was unable to participate in the meeting, which related to the process and timeframe for issuance of the final impact evaluation report for ICCM4, as well as some strong statements contained in the interim report.

17. With regard to the strong statements in the interim report, the evaluators clarified that they were drawn from an initial review of project applications which assisted in developing the draft theory of

¹Note that the TFIC decided that four civil society projects that were approved in the 13th round along with one civil society project approved in the 14th round would need to be reconsidered in any future round prior to the allocation of funds. Given no further rounds are to take place, these projects are therefore not included on the waiting list of priority projects. Please refer to SAICM/EB.10/INF/1, Provisional report of the 17th meeting of the QSP TFIC.

change, and as such they were preliminary conclusions. They further informed that, in the final report, such statements would be referenced to the source.

18. Regarding the timeline for finalization of the final report for submission to ICCM4, the secretariat informed the Board that the final draft report will be received by the secretariat on Friday 11 September 2015. The Executive Board agreed that they would receive the report on Monday 14 September for review, with comments due by Friday 18 September 2015. The final report will be uploaded as an information document for ICCM4 on 21 September 2015.

19. The secretariat also informed the Board that any comments on the interim report of the impact evaluation could be submitted to the secretariat in writing until 1 September 2015.

20. One participant commented that the approach for the evaluation was robust and interesting as it was aimed at the beneficiaries of the QSP projects. The impact evaluation report was not a negotiated text, and could be accepted by the Board as an independent, expert evaluation report. The participant further remarked that the provision of adequate resources to the secretariat to administer the Trust Fund was a key consideration, and that their Government had provided support to the secretariat in the form of funding for a P-2 Associate Programme Officer, a database and for the impact evaluation itself. These administrative resources are often underestimated and are vital for the efficient functioning of the QSP and the participant invited the evaluators to consider this issue in their final report. Regarding the interim report, the participant highlighted the need to address the skills and capacity of both workers and unions in the appropriate use of chemicals, as well as considering gender issues including the participation of women in the formal and informal work force.

21. Another participant underscored that the impact evaluation needed to have a stronger link to the overall objective of the QSP, which is related to initial enabling activities. In this regard, the evaluation should be realistic and not overestimate the role of the QSP or expect too much. Clarifications were then sought regarding the rationale behind the identification of the four categories of project activities and three categories of outputs presented in the interim report. The participant indicated that the Board had always tried to broaden the donor base for the QSP Trust Fund, but had been largely unsuccessful in this regard. This could potentially be addressed by requiring that contributions be based on the UN scale. Finally, the participant highlighted that it will be important that the Board has sufficient time to comment on the final report before it is uploaded as an information document for ICCM4 by 21 September 2015.

22. The evaluators advised that they would take note of all the comments and suggestions raised by the Board and incorporate them into the final report. This included more focus on gender issues, lack of capacity in trade unions and the need to ensure that the report does not overestimate the objectives of the QSP, which relate primarily to enabling activities. Regarding the identification of the four categories of project activities and three categories of outputs, the evaluators clarified that the categorization was done using a bottom-up approach. They reviewed project proposals in order to develop 'theories of change' for each project which led to the preparation of the overall theory of change.

23. One participant raised a question regarding the link between the four categories of project activities, three categories of outputs and the different groups of projects outlined in the interim report. Another participant commended the presentation from the evaluators and supported the approach which was targeted at the project-level, and recalled that during the 9th Executive Board meeting, mainstreaming was widely discussed and that progress in that field should be further highlighted in the final report of the QSP impact evaluation. In terms of financial resources, the integrated approach to financing should also receive visibility in the final report. Another participant indicated that it would be interesting to highlight lessons learned vis-a-vis the small number of projects implemented by civil society organizations versus government projects.

24. The secretariat informed meeting participants that information provided in the QSP impact evaluation final report would further highlight project-based assessment instead of the methodology that was the focus of the interim report. The secretariat confirmed that the final report would be submitted to ICCM4 for information only, and that, while the report would be submitted by the Executive Board, the ownership of the report and its findings would rest with the independent evaluators. These findings will be presented by the evaluators at ICCM4.

25. As a conclusion, the co-chair reminded the Board that written comments on the interim report were welcome until 1 September 2015, and thanked the two evaluators for their contribution to the meeting.

26. With regard to the process for finalizing the report for ICCM4, the co-chair asked the Board whether the timeline proposed by the secretariat was acceptable. The timeline was approved by the Board.

V. Review of the status of the Quick Start Programme and its Trust Fund

27. The secretariat made a presentation on the status of the QSP Trust Fund and performance against the Business Plan targets, the status of non-Trust Fund contributions, and the portfolio of approved QSP projects and outcomes of the 17th meeting of the TFIC. In this regard, the meeting had before it documents SAICM/EB.10/3 Report on the status of QSP TF and Business Plan; SAICM/EB.10/4, Report on projects funded under the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund; SAICM/EB.10/INF/4, Non-Trust Fund contributions to the Quick Start Programme; SAICM/EB.10/INF/5 SAICM Quick Start Programme Business Plan; SAICM/EB.10 INF/1 Provisional report of the 17th meeting of the QSP Trust Fund Implementation Committee; and SAICM/EB.10/INF/6 Priority list of non-funded projects.

28. The secretariat advised that the QSP project portfolio currently stands at 184 projects approved across 14 application rounds, with projects spanning 108 countries, including 54 least developed countries (LDCs) and/or small island developing states (SIDS). The majority of these were government projects (163), while a total of 21 projects were implemented by civil society organisations. In terms of the Business Plan, targets had been reached regarding coverage of developing countries, funding for civil society projects, and sectoral coverage, while the target for LDCs/SIDS was almost reached.

29. The secretariat further advised that total funds mobilized by the QSP Trust Fund reached approximately US\$46.8 million, comprising US\$37 million in cash contributions and \$9.8 million in additional funds leveraged at the project level. Two ~~new~~ pledges had been received for 2015 from Germany and the European Union. However, the targets in the Business Plan relating to funding and expansion of the donor base had not been met, and it was unlikely that all remaining approved projects on the waiting list would be funded.

30. With regard to non-Trust Fund contributions, the secretariat advised that five new declarations had been received in 2015, bringing the total reported contributions to US\$74.1 million.

31. The secretariat reported the outcomes from the 17th meeting of the TFIC, and the status of the current QSP project portfolio. As at the end of June 2015, 70 projects had been completed and were considered closed; 45 projects had completed activities but were yet to submit final satisfactory reports or be officially verified and closed by the secretariat; 59 projects were underway, had requested an extension, or were awaiting a new funding agreement; and 10 projects had been suspended from earlier rounds. The secretariat was focusing its efforts on progressing funding agreements for the remaining 20 projects as resources and funds permit, and in the order agreed by the TFIC.

32. The secretariat concluded their presentation by previewing some new info graphics that were under development for ICCM4 which aim to highlight and communicate the achievements of the QSP.

33. The co-chair reminded the Board that the information presented by the secretariat was mainly for information purposes, and indicated that the info graphics were very relevant and provided useful and interesting communication and outreach tools.

34. One participant reminded the Board that, during its previous meeting, the Board had decided that there would not be any additional general rounds of project applications and that priority would be given to the finalization of approved projects awaiting funding. However, the Board had decided to open one new round specifically related to non-chemical alternatives projects up to the value of funds provided by a donor for this purpose. The participant sought clarification as to whether any projects had been approved in the 14th application round that were not related to non-chemical alternatives. Regarding the Business Plan, the participant mentioned that the business plan is a living document and

that, considering that contributions will be closed by ICCM4, the Board should consider adjusting the Business Plan so that priority be given to closure of QSP projects and the Trust Fund. In addition, the participant highlighted that the Business Plan should be updated to reflect additional contributions made to the secretariat in 2015. Finally, considering the decision taken during the 9th meeting of the QSP Executive Board regarding the return of unspent funds, the participant requested updates on actions taken by the secretariat in this regard.

35. The secretariat clarified that the last round of project applications (round 14) was open to proposals for non-chemical alternatives projects only. The TFIC granted approval for one project and conditional approval for four additional projects. However, based on the earmarked funds available, only three project were approved and funded, while one additional project was added to the end of the priority list of projects from the 13th round that were still awaiting funding². In addition, the secretariat informed the Board that it was working closely with project implementers in order to close projects and arrange for unspent funds to be returned.

36. One participant sought clarification regarding pledges and deposited contributions received for 2015, and sought updates on the status of two pending projects from the 12th round of project applications³.

37. The secretariat informed the Board that, as at August 2015, pledges had been received for 2015 from two donors, however these were yet to be recorded as deposited contributions. Regarding the two projects from the 12th round of project applications, the secretariat informed meeting participants that it originally contacted project implementers in March 2015 however it experienced difficulties in locating appropriate project contacts and changed project circumstances given that the projects had been approved in 2012. The secretariat indicated that a decision may be required by the Executive Board and the TFIC on how to proceed with such projects from the 12th round where satisfactory progress in concluding a funding agreement was not being made. This was important given the waiting list of approved projects currently awaiting funding, that it seemed unlikely that sufficient funding would be available for all projects, and the need to set a date for final closure of the Trust Fund.

38. The co-chair invited the Board to think on possible options to address the issue of older projects approved in the 12th round and the allocation of funding for the remaining projects.

39. One participant indicated that it does not seem feasible to raise any additional funds within the short period until the closure of the Trust Fund to contributions at ICCM4, and expressed the possibility that some or all of the remaining projects may be funded if other projects were cancelled. However, it may be the case that some projects may not be funded, as has occurred in other programmes in the past.

40. Another participant reacted that it is important not only to think about availability of funding but also about whether projects, if funded, would then have sufficient time to be completed. It is essential to consider time constraints and to ensure project implementers have adequate time before making any final decision on the funding of the projects.

41. One participant expressed the view that the TFIC was responsible for recommending projects and defining the priority list, but that it was the prerogative of the Executive Board to approve projects. The Executive Board had thus decided during its 9th meeting that projects should be approved only within available funds.

42. The secretariat made a proposal to the Board that they consider setting a deadline for completion of funding agreements for older projects approved in the 12th round where unsatisfactory progress had been made towards finalising the project funding agreement. Where such progress could not be demonstrated by the deadline, the secretariat would propose to the TFIC that these projects be cancelled. The secretariat would then proceed with securing funding agreements for the remaining approved projects in the order determined by the TFIC.

²Note that the TFIC decided that the additional civil society project would need to be reconsidered again prior to the allocation of funds. Please refer to SAICM/EB.10/INF/1, Provisional report of the 17th meeting of the QSP TFIC.

³ The referred projects are Project QSPTF/12/12/GOV/08 "An Assessment on the Cost of Inaction: Mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Vietnam" and Project QSPTF/12/12/GOV/17 "Environmental sound management of e-wastes from electrical and electronic equipment in Central America (Honduras and Nicaragua)"

43. Several participants indicated their support for this proposal, but stressed that sufficient time should be given to project implementers so that they could deal with any potential issues and update the secretariat accordingly.

44. The Executive Board decided that a reasonable deadline would be set by the secretariat for remaining projects from the 12th round of applications that had been approved but unfunded. This deadline was to be communicated to project implementers for these remaining projects and, if satisfactory progress had not been made towards finalising the project funding agreement by the deadline, the projects would be cancelled, pending approval of the TFIC.

VI. ICCM4 expected decisions on the Quick Start Programme

45. The meeting had before it document SAICM/EB.10/6 ICCM4 expected decisions on the QSP.

46. The secretariat briefed the Board on its proposal for the date for final closure of the QSP Trust Fund. In determining this date, the secretariat had considered the need to ensure sufficient time for finalizing the current portfolio of QSP projects, as well as adequate time for UNEP to undertake the administrative processes required to close the Trust Fund. Based on this, the secretariat proposed the date of 31 July 2019 for the final closure of the Trust Fund.

47. One participant supported the proposed date for final closure of the QSP Trust Fund, but mentioned that the 9th meeting of the Executive Board had considered a deadline in 2018, and enquired whether there would be any cost-implications of this longer timeframe.

48. The secretariat clarified that there would be no cost-implications if all projects were closed a few months in advance of the final closure of the QSP Trust Fund.

49. The co-chair, in closing this agenda item, reminded meeting participants that new Executive Board members were to be nominated at ICCM4.

VII. Other matters

50. There were no requests from meeting participants to discuss other items of business.

VIII. Adoption of the report

51. The meeting agreed to entrust the finalisation of the report to the secretariat in consultation with the co-chairs. According to customary practice, the report would be formally adopted at the next meeting of the Board.

IX. Next meeting

52. The Board agreed that, in due course, the newly nominated Executive Board members would be informed by the secretariat of the date and venue for the next Executive Board meeting to be held in 2016.

X. Closure of the meeting

53. The co-chairs Ms. Lindita Tafaj (Albania) and Mr. Reginald Hernaus (Netherlands) closed the meeting at 3.30 p.m. on Thursday 20 August 2015.