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**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

**Intergovernmental negotiating committee
to prepare a global legally binding instrument
on mercury
Seventh session**

Dead Sea, Jordan, 10–15 March 2016
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

**Work to prepare for the entry into force of the Minamata
Convention on Mercury and for the first meeting of the
Conference of the Parties to the Convention: matters
required by the Convention to be decided upon by the
Conference of the Parties at its first meeting**

**Analysis of offers to host the permanent secretariat of the
Minamata Convention on Mercury**

Note by the secretariat

1. As its sixth session, the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury requested the interim secretariat to invite offers by Governments interested in hosting the permanent secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and to compile and analyse any such offers for consideration by the committee at its seventh session.
2. Accordingly, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on 5 December 2014, sent a letter to all Governments, through the official contact points of UNEP, inviting the submission of offers to physically host the secretariat of the Minamata Convention. The letter included, as an attachment, the categories of information that may form part of a proposal from a Government interested in physically hosting the secretariat of the Minamata Convention. In the letter from the Executive Director, the deadline for the submission of offers was 30 June 2015. At its meeting, held in Moscow on 1 and 2 July 2015, the Bureau of the committee decided to extend the deadline for all submissions requested by the committee until 31 August 2015, and also agreed that the Bureau would encourage further submissions, particularly from additional regions. Subsequently, on 10 July 2015, the interim secretariat circulated an e-mail to Governments in that regard.
3. Within the deadline of 30 June 2015 set by the Executive Director of UNEP, one offer to physically host the secretariat of the Minamata Convention was received, from the Government of Switzerland. No further offers were received between 1 July and 31 August 2015.
4. The offer from the Government of Switzerland is presented as received for consideration by the Committee in the note by the secretariat on the offer by the Government of Switzerland to host the permanent secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Geneva (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF/5).

* UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/1.

5. As requested by the committee at its sixth session, the interim secretariat has also analysed the offer of the Government of Switzerland (annex).
6. The committee may wish to consider the offer from the Government of Switzerland and the associated analysis as part of its deliberations on the physical hosting of the permanent secretariat for the Minamata Convention, and to forward the results of this consideration to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its first meeting.

Annex

Category of information as circulated¹

Analysis of the information provided in the offer from the Government of Switzerland

Legal framework

1. Privileges and immunities that would be conferred on the secretariat and its staff members, as well as Government representatives and other persons engaged in official business of the Convention.
2. Legal framework for ensuring equal treatment of premises and staff of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.
3. Rules, including any restrictions, applicable to the employment of dependants of staff members.
4. Nature of the host Government agreement (e.g., stand-alone agreement, incorporated into another existing agreement).

As these arrangements are already in place with Geneva, being a United Nations headquarters duty station, no further negotiation of these privileges and immunities would be required.

No new agreement would be required for the secretariat of the Minamata Convention.

Standard provisions extended to United Nations entities established in Geneva.

The secretariat of the Minamata Convention would benefit from the overarching agreement in place between Switzerland and the United Nations in Geneva.

Features of the office site and related financial issues

5. Main features of the building to house the secretariat, including office space and scope for its expansion, facilities for conferences and availability of general services (security, maintenance, etc.).
6. Basis for placing the office facilities at the disposal of the secretariat, such as:
 - (a) Ownership by the secretariat (through donation or purchase);
 - (b) Ownership by the host Government without rent;
 - (c) Host Government ownership with rent, and amount of such rent.
7. Responsibility for:
 - (a) Major maintenance and repairs to the office facilities;
 - (a) Normal maintenance and repair;
 - (b) Utilities, including communication facilities.
8. The extent to which the office facilities would be furnished and equipped by the host Government.
9. Duration of the arrangements regarding office space.

The office facilities are considered suitable in location and structure for, and currently host a large number of, United Nations entities and convention secretariats.

Standard provisions extended to secretariats established in Geneva.

The applicable fees for maintenance and repairs, which are calculated per square metre, would be similar to those paid by other United Nations entities and convention secretariats located in International Environment House.

The provisions in the offer are considered sufficient for establishment.

The stability of a permanent arrangement is beneficial.

¹ The categories listed here are presented as provided in the attachment to the letter from the Executive Director of UNEP, dated 5 December 2014.

Local facilities and conditions

10. Description of the following facilities and conditions:
- (a) Diplomatic representation in the host city;
 - (b) Presence of international organizations;
 - (c) Determinants of synergies of chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements and agencies in the proposed location;
 - (d) Availability of international conference facilities and the conditions for their use (free of charge, rental, etc.);
 - (e) Access to qualified conference servicing staff, e.g., interpreters, translators, editors and meeting coordinators familiar with United Nations conferences and practices;
 - (f) International transport facilities;
 - (g) Local transport facilities and their proximity to the office facilities at the disposal of the secretariat;
 - (h) Local availability of trained personnel for possible employment in the secretariat, taking account of language and other skills;
 - (i) Health facilities and access to them by staff members of the secretariat;
 - (j) Availability of suitable housing, including information on prices and vacancy rate and the proximity of this housing to the office facilities at the disposal of the secretariat;
 - (k) Availability of schools at all levels, including those providing classes in languages other than the local language;
 - (l) Facilities for the transfer of funds to and from foreign countries for the secretariat and its staff members;
 - (m) The time needed for processing entry requirements and ability to ensure that participants in meetings organized by the secretariat in the territory of the host Government are granted visa entry permits, where necessary, in expeditious manner.
- (a) The permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva have experience in working on issues related to chemicals and waste, including the Minamata Convention, and have a high level of experience and knowledge on the subject matter;
- (b), (c) The Geneva location facilitates close working relationships with other Geneva-based international organizations and convention secretariats, including in the chemicals and waste cluster;
- (d) Conference facilities at CIGC, which require advance booking, are rent-free. Charges apply for equipment hire, security, overtime for facility staff using a single provider arrangement in place at CIGC. This requires an exemption from the United Nations procurement rules from United Nations Headquarters on a meeting-by-meeting basis. Booking at the Palais des Nations and in facilities of other organizations based in Geneva may be available free-of-charge and is subject to availability and priorities set by the United Nations Office at Geneva;
- (e) In relation to conference services staff, it is noted that the United Nations is, over time, moving to a globally coordinated network with the aim of providing the most cost-effective services;
- (f) As the offer presents flight routes with a connection in Zurich within the category of direct flights, the number of direct international flights to Geneva has not been assessed separately as some of the direct flights indicated in the offer may require a connection in Zurich;
- (g), (h), (i), (j) No comment;
- (k) Private and public schools for primary, secondary and tertiary education are available. The availability of places in childcare and early educational programmes is not described;
- (l) No comment;
- (m) Good arrangements are in place to facilitate entry to Switzerland for meeting participants, coordinated between the UNEP Operational Services Centre and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland in Geneva.

*Category of information as circulated¹**Analysis of the information provided in the offer from the Government of Switzerland***Other relevant information**

11. Any additional contributions to be made by the host Government to meet the operating costs of the secretariat or to defray conference-servicing expenses. These contributions must be divided into contributions that:

- (a) Are not earmarked (i.e., are provided to the secretariat without any restrictions placed on their expenditure by the host Government);
- (b) Are earmarked for certain purposes, together with an explanation of the nature of the restrictions.

For an integrated secretariat of the Minamata Convention with the joint secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, an annual financial contribution of CHF 2,500,000 will be provided by the Government of Switzerland. This includes the assessed contribution of Switzerland as a member to the Minamata Convention.

For other options for delivering the secretariat in Geneva, the Government of Switzerland will provide its assessed contribution to the Minamata convention.

Of the CHF 2,500,000, the offer describes CHF 2,000,000 as “non-earmarked funds”, specifying, however, that these are to be used to support the overall functioning of the secretariat, to facilitate the implementation of the Convention and for holding meetings in Geneva. It is not specified whether the full amount of non-earmarked funds would be paid should the Bureau or the Conference of the Parties decide to hold meetings outside Geneva. The portion of the “non-earmarked funds” to be paid towards the core budget (made up of assessed voluntary contributions) versus that which would be paid towards the anticipated voluntary trust fund of the Convention is not specified.

The remaining CHF 500,000 are “earmarked funds” for financing a staff position to support the integration of the secretariat and, subsequently, joint activities of the Minamata, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

12. Information on potential synergies from cooperation and coordination with other international chemical management organizations in proposed locations.

The opportunities for cooperation between the secretariat and other organizations is well described.

13. Any other information that the potential host Government may deem relevant.

No comment.