EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
 THE MULTILATERAL FUND FOR THE
 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL
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**REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
MULTI-YEAR AGREEMENT TABLES**

1.   This report provides information to the Executive Committee regarding the establishment and current status of reporting tables for projects, based on a performance-based, for multi-tranche agreement between the Executive Committee and a country; these tables are called multi-year agreement tables (MYA tables). The related projects will be called phase-out plans for the purpose of this document.

Background

2.   The Executive Committee had requested through decision 49/6 that the Secretariat develop an appropriate reporting format for the tracking of cumulative progress achieved in the annual work programmes of phase-out plans, summarizing in standardized overview tables certain information requested in decision 47/50, with a view to simplifying and rationalizing the overall reporting requirements. In decision 50/9, the Executive Committee requested the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer to initiate work on standardisation of annual work programmes, progress and verification reports on phase-out plans. As part of decision 51/13 the Executive Committee adopted on an interim basis a new format for MYA tables and noted, in decision 53/8, the new format on reporting on phase-out plans, including the terminal phase-out management plans.

3.   The Executive Committee had defined a number of criteria for MYA tables in its decision 49/6. According to this decision, the MYA tables "should contain a comparison of what had been planned in the previous annual tranche and what had been achieved. The disbursement information should be provided cumulatively and data concerning actual or planned commitments could also be provided, as appropriate. The information should also specify how the relevant flexibility clause in the agreement was implemented and/or how to allocate unused funds from previous tranches".

Development

4.   The former Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer had, in consultation with staff of the Secretariat, developed first a spreadsheet, using Microsoft Excel software, depicting a variety of information, to be filled out by bilateral and implementing agencies. The spreadsheet was presented to the Executive Committee in a preliminary and an improved version to the 51st and 53rd Meetings.

5.   Using an Excel spreadsheet proved to be difficult, since the user in an agency could not be guided as to which information was exactly required in each individual case. Also, the information supplied by the Secretariat, such as country programme data, etc., is updated often based on countries' submissions without a possibility to automatically keep spreadsheets up-to-date. This is closely linked to the problem of version control, i.e. the likeliness that agencies would use outdated versions of the spreadsheet for submission or re-submission, leading to inconsistencies, need for double checking a large amount of data and time consuming efforts of consolidation. Consequently and as a result of decision 53/8, the concept was transferred onto the internet, where a database could be used to manage the data both from the Secretariat's as well as from the bilateral and implementing agencies' side. This web-page started with a close resemblance to the original design of the Excel table and developed subsequently further.

6.   As the use of the data increased, the demand on the agencies to use the MYA tables was increasing as well. The development of the system continued, and the formats for data entry and data display became different. The data entry form was improved and led the agencies through the data entry process, allowing context-specific menus and data entry options. Several tools for data entry, such as short introductions into the MYA tables and more detailed user guidelines have been developed to support new users. The Secretariat has been operating a help-desk for over a year to both support agencies in filling out the MYA tables, and to collect feedback for use in the continuous improvement of the data entry process. At several meetings of the Executive Committee the Secretariat presented the progress to the agencies and discussed with them their specific needs, interests and problems.

7.   The difficulties for the bilateral and implementing agencies were considerable in adapting to the MYA tables. The main reason was the phase-out plans and the reporting requirements were not set-up for MYA tables when the projects were approved. Moreover, MYA tables require for each calendar year to plan activities and to report about the implementation, while previously agencies had the flexibility to deliver any activity at any time before the finalisation of the project. This is particularly important for MYAs with several years of implementation. However, phase-out plans were not set-up for annual planning and reporting and it took great effort on the part of the bilateral and implementing agencies, to adjust to the MYA tables, in several cases with significant support from the Secretariat's help desk. However, as the data entry became increasingly more user friendly, there was a greater appreciation of the tables, and since the 58th Meeting the - unsolicited - feedback from users has been very positive.

8.   The process has led to a number of changes in other databases in the Secretariat to achieve full data compatibility. For example, in the case of approval of two tranches in one meeting for phase-out plans which experienced a delay, these used to be approved jointly; now the tranches are approved and recorded separately, even if approved at the same meeting. The work towards full compatibility of the different databases is ongoing.

9.   Data availability in the Secretariat, and data provided by the agencies, allows a number of cross checks to be carried out. Some of them have been performed manually before, others were too complex to be undertaken in the short time for project review before the development of the on-line MYA tables. The current version of the MYA tables based on the on-line database employs a complex probability check which, immediately before submission, performs a number of control calculations. Mandatory data entry not provided by an agency will simply disable the submission, leading as a consequence to actual submissions which are completely filled out. A number of additional checks advises if data does not seem to correlate, and allows the agency concerned either to change that data, or to provide a comment as to why the seemingly inconsistent data is in actual fact consistent. These features have been positively embraced by the agencies.

Present status and future developments

10.   The MYA tables, in their current form of an on-line database are used for all submissions of CFC phase-out plans, both national phase-out plans (NPPs) as well as terminal phase-out management plans (TPMPs). The database is functioning sufficiently in terms of data entry, and has been fully accepted by the bilateral and implementing agencies. It standardizes the data requirements for reporting under phase-out plans and increases their transparency significantly, by allowing comparisons between planned activities and actual ones, which were previously difficult due to different planning and reporting time periods used by the agencies; and also by comparing achievements and time elapsed with the objectives. The MYA tables provide significant additional insights for the Secretariat, and significantly reduce the issue of inconsistent data between agencies' submissions and Secretariat's data.

11.   Nevertheless, the MYA tables still need a substantial amount of further improvements to be able to provide the benefits envisioned without creating additional efforts for the Secretariat or the agencies. The interface for data entry for the agencies is advanced, but not yet sufficiently user friendly to minimise the errors and misunderstandings during data entry. Support for data entry which provides help related to specific data entry points through pop-up windows is also at an early stage of development. The growing database is presently co-hosted with a number of other applications on an existing server in the Secretariat. This status is not sustainable with the envisioned larger use and increasing amount of data. A new server with the related software will have to be purchased. A number of the complex probability checks have been developed and implemented, but more need to be defined and programmed.

12.   At this point in time, the tools to actually use the data are not fully developed. The Executive Committee members might have noticed the new project cover sheets, e.g. page 2 of document UNEP/OzL.Pro/ExCom/59/45, which are generated automatically from the database. It is also

possible to display the original spreadsheet version of the MYA tables, and to make some simple comparisons. There are significant additional possibilities which, once developed, could help the Secretariat to continue providing adequate information to the Executive Committee despite the significantly increased complexity of long-term, multi-phase plans as compared to one-off projects. However, these possibilities require significant additional work, from definition of the interfaces and data needs to the implementation and programming. Additional possible spin-offs include a feedback to the programme management of bilateral and implementing agencies, agency-specific submission-schedule lists.

13.   One of the less encouraging experiences with the MYA tables was that they started when the majority of the phase-out plans with several tranches had already been approved, and only a few tranches remained un-approved. The possibilities to assess progress and review the projects and the current status was severely limited for these projects since the necessary data had not been collected in the first years of the project. However this need not be the case for HCFC phase-out management plans (HPMPs) that are currently under development if the current MYA on-line database is modified in time to accommodate HPMPs.   The transfer of the MYA tables to HPMPs is the main challenge in the near future. This will require a number of conceptual changes, such as to incorporate co-funding in the tables, climate-impact related information, and a number of the further improvements outlined above. On the other hand, the availability of an already tested and largely optimised system will enable the bilateral and implementing agencies to use the system from the outset of their projects, which will greatly reduce the amount of work needed by the agencies to provide the information required, and increase the benefits of the MYA tables.

14.   The Executive Committee might wish to consider whether:

(a)   To take note of the report on progress on the development of multi-year agreement tables contained in document UNEP/OzL.Pro/ExCom/59/9;

(b)   To request the Secretariat to:

(i)   Carry out the work necessary to use the MYA tables through an online database for HPMPs, with the aim to enable online submissions of MYA tables for new HPMPs not later than April 2010 and to enable submissions of subsequent tranches for HPMPs not later than September 2010;

(ii)   Further improve the usability of the software for the bilateral and implementing agencies as well as the Secretariat through improvements in data entry, compatibility, assessment and output formats; and

(iii)   Report to the Executive Committee at the 63rd Meeting on the progress achieved; and

(c)   To provide a budget of US $60,000 for this task for the purchase of hardware and software, programming of the database and related work to accomplish the tasks indicated in sub-paragraph (b) above.

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