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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
THE MULTILATERAL FUND FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL
Ninety-second Meeting
Montreal, 29 May to 2 June 2023
Item 9(c) of the provisional agenda¹

PROJECT PROPOSAL: PANAMA

This document consists of the comments and recommendation of the Secretariat on the following project proposal:

Phase-out

- HCFC phase-out management plan (stage III, second tranche) UNDP

¹ UNEP/OzL.Pro/ExCom/92/1

PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET – MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS

Panama

(I) PROJECT TITLE	AGENCY	MEETING APPROVED	CONTROL MEASURE
HCFC phase-out plan (stage III)	UNDP (lead)	86 th	100% phase-out by 2030

(II) LATEST ARTICLE 7 DATA (Annex C Group I)	Year: 2022	10.11 ODP tonnes
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(III) LATEST COUNTRY PROGRAMME SECTORAL DATA (ODP tonnes)							Year: 2022		
Chemical	Aerosol	Foam	Fire-fighting	Refrigeration		Solvent	Process agent	Lab use	Total sector consumption
				Manufacturing	Servicing				
HCFC-22					10.11				10.11

(IV) CONSUMPTION DATA (ODP tonnes)			
2009-2010 baseline:	24.78	Starting point for sustained aggregate reductions:	27.28
CONSUMPTION ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING			
Already approved:	27.28	Remaining:	0.0

(V) ENDORSED BUSINESS PLAN		2023	2024	2025	Total
UNDP	ODS phase-out (ODP tonnes)	5.15	0.0	0.0	5.15
	Funding (US \$)	532,445	0	0	532,445

(VI) PROJECT DATA			2020	2021 2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Montreal Protocol consumption limits (ODP tonnes)			16.11	16.11	16.11	16.11	8.05	8.05	8.05	8.05	8.05	0.0	n/a
Maximum allowable consumption (ODP tonnes)			16.11	16.11	16.11	16.11	8.05	8.05	8.05	0.62	0.62	0.0	n/a
Funding agreed in principle (US \$)	UNDP	Project costs	206,800	0	497,612	0	0	458,838	0	0	129,250	0	1,292,500
		Support costs	14,476	0	34,833	0	0	32,119	0	0	9,047	0	90,475
Funds approved by ExCom (US \$)		Project costs	206,800	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	206,800
		Support costs	14,476	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,476
Total funds recommended for approval at this meeting (US \$)		Project costs			497,612								497,612
		Support costs			34,833								

Secretariat's recommendation:	Blanket approval
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. On behalf of the Government of Panama, UNDP as the designated implementing agency has submitted a request for funding for the second tranche of stage III of the HCFC phase-out management plan (HPMP), in the amount of US \$497,612, plus agency support costs of US \$34,833.² The submission includes a progress report on the implementation of the first tranche and the tranche implementation plan for 2023 to 2026.

Report on HCFC consumption

2. The Government of Panama reported a consumption of 10.11 ODP tonnes of HCFC in 2022, which is 59 per cent below the HCFC baseline for compliance. The 2018-2022 HCFC consumption is shown in table 1.

Table 1. HCFC consumption in Panama (2018-2022 Article 7 data)

HCFC	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Baseline
Metric tonnes (mt)						
HCFC-22	297.10	261.16	205.48	196.16	183.81	404.32
HCFC-123	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	2.37
HCFC-124	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.45
HCFC-141b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	20.87
HCFC-142b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	2.72
Total (mt)	297.10	261.16	205.46	196.16	183.81	430.66
HCFC-141b in imported pre-blended polyols*	52.81	70.73	0.0	0.0	0.0	**22.72
ODP tonnes						
HCFC-22	16.34	14.36	11.30	10.79	10.11	22.24
HCFC-123	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.05
HCFC-124	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.01
HCFC-141b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.30
HCFC-142b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.18
Total (ODP tonnes)	16.34	14.36	11.30	10.79	10.11	24.78
HCFC-141b in imported pre-blended polyols*	5.81	7.78	0.0	0.0	0.0	**2.50

* Country programme data

** Average consumption between 2007 and 2009.

3. Since 2018, HCFC consumption has continued to decrease steadily due to the measures introduced to control imports of ozone-depleting substances (ODS), including the HCFC quota system and additional regulations banning imports of HCFC-141b and pre-blended polyols. In addition, technical assistance and training in the refrigeration servicing sector has contributed to sustained reductions in HCFC consumption. Additional phase-out of HCFCs is due to the introduction of non-HCFC-based equipment in the local market. The temporary increase in the consumption of HCFC-141b contained in pre-blended polyols recorded in 2019 was due to enterprises stockpiling the substance before its import was banned as of 1 January 2020.

Country programme implementation report

4. The Government of Panama reported HCFC sector consumption data under the 2022 country programme implementation report that is consistent with the data reported under Article 7 of the Montreal Protocol.

² As per the letter of 17 March 2023 from the Ministry of Health of Panama to UNDP.

Verification report

5. The verification of HCFC consumption is still being conducted, and at the time of issuance of the present document, the report had not been submitted. However, UNDP expects that the verification report will be submitted by mid-May 2023 and no later than 12 weeks prior to the 93rd meeting.

Status of completion of stage II of the HCFC phase-out management plan

6. Decision 86/87(c) stipulates that the second tranche of stage III of the HPMP would be considered only upon completion of stage II of the HPMP and submission of the project completion report. Stage II of the HPMP was operationally closed in December 2021 as planned and the project completion report was submitted to the Secretariat of the Multilateral Fund on 6 April 2023. The main achievements of stage II are as follows:

- (a) Bans were imposed on the imports of HCFC-141b in pure form, on new HCFC-22-based air-conditioning installations, and on using HCFC-22 for flushing refrigeration systems; 372 customs officers (209 of whom were women) were trained and updated on import procedures for HCFCs and HCFC-containing equipment;
- (b) Three enterprises have satisfactorily fulfilled their commitment to the project; they are committed to using HFO-based formulated polyols, and the use of HCFC-141b was banned from 1 January 2020;
- (c) Training in good practices was effectuated for of a total of 158 trainers and 1,112 refrigeration and air-conditioning (RAC) technicians, 55 of whom were women; 30 RAC technical training centres and 19 RAC service workshops were provided with equipment kits and tools for the application of good practices; and 17 training seminars were carried out to promote refrigerants with low global-warming potential (GWP) in supermarkets and hotels;
- (d) The Domestic Refrigeration Mechanic Programme, taught by the Human Resources Development Institute (INADEH) nationwide, was updated to formally include the “Good Practices in RAC” module since January 2021, with a total of 586 technicians who had graduated from these courses as of 31 December 2022; and
- (e) The Panamanian Commission on Industrial and Technical Standards adopted international standards³ regarding the safety and environmental aspects of RAC systems and heat pumps, specifying the requirements for the safety of persons and property, providing guidance for the protection of the environment, and establishing procedures for the design, construction, installation, operation, maintenance, and repair of refrigerating systems, the recovery of refrigerants, reuse and disposal of all types of refrigerants and refrigerant oil, including extensions or modifications of existing systems, and conversions of systems for the use of another refrigerant.

Implementation of the first tranche of stage III of the HCFC phase-out management plan

Legal framework

7. The Customs supervise the licensing system through a “block” on all ODS customs codes, which requires approval of the National Ozone Unit (NOU) to authorize imports. This system has worked well, and well-established communication channels exist between the NOU and the Customs. Furthermore, the

³ Specifically, standards ISO 5149-1, -2, -3, -4:2014.

Ministry of Health, to which the NOU belongs, and the Colón Free Trade Zone authorities have maintained meetings to establish a voluntary reporting of trade and stock, and there is already a focal point from whom the NOU may request information on the movement of ODS trade within it.

8. In August 2022, the Government of Panama gazetted a Resolution adopting an accelerated phase-out schedule for HCFC consumption, according to the country's commitment under stage III of the HPMP.

9. Three training sessions were carried out for customs officers to update them on import procedures, the 2022 Harmonized System nomenclature for HCFCs and HFCs, and control of potential HCFC illegal trade, including training on the use of refrigerant identifier equipment for 92 customs officers, 66 of whom were women;

Refrigeration servicing sector

10. The following activities have been implemented:

- (a) Four coordination meetings were held with the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA) to schedule the update of the regular curriculum for RAC technicians on good practices and low-GWP alternative technology; 40 hours of virtual training on natural refrigerants, with emphasis on hydrocarbons (HCs), were conducted to update the knowledge of 18 RAC trainers from the MEDUCA professional and technical institutes; and an expert was hired to conduct technical consultations with the MEDUCA RAC institutes and to propose a redesigned curriculum;
- (b) Inspection visits were made to 10 technical educational centres to evaluate compliance with safety measures and commitment to the implementation of the courses on good practices, which resulted in the selection of seven schools that were strengthened with equipment and basic tools kits for their RAC laboratories;
- (c) Coordination meetings were held with relevant authorities to determine the roles and responsibilities in the process of establishing a certification in labour competencies in the RAC sector; a roadmap to develop the process of RAC technician certification was agreed upon; and a national consultant is providing support by drafting the competency standards for certifying RAC technicians;
- (d) A study on the feasibility of establishing self-sustainable refrigerant collection, recycling and reclaiming centres in the country was carried out and concluded with a diagnosis of the current status of recovery and recycling activities; five meetings were conducted with decision-makers from RAC enterprises and universities to identify where the refrigerant recovery, recycling and reclaiming (RRR) centres could be installed, aiming at covering the entire country;
- (e) Technical specifications, budget, and terms of reference were prepared for the unified acquisition of equipment and tools to furnish the first HCFC RRR centre and three collection centres; and
- (f) A total of 38 awareness campaigns were developed nationwide, promoting the elimination of HCFCs and the use of low-GWP alternatives, raising awareness among 87 women and 150 men.

Project implementation and monitoring

11. The project coordination and management of the HPMP is supervised by the NOU, with the support of a dedicated consultant. The NOU supports the implementation of activities, organizes meetings with stakeholders and prepares reports. The total expenditure of US \$22,716 for these activities includes the hiring of consultants and preparation of the verification report (US \$19,716) and holding coordination workshops and meetings (US \$3,000).

Level of fund disbursement

12. As of April 2023, of the US \$206,800 approved so far, US \$63,073 (30 per cent) had been disbursed. The balance of US \$143,727 will be fully disbursed in December 2024.

Implementation plan for the second tranche of stage III of the HCFC phase-out management plan

13. The following activities will be implemented between June 2023 and March 2026:

- (a) *Legal framework:* Contracting a national consultant to assess the current HCFC licensing and quota system, holding discussions with main country stakeholders, and making a proposal for extending the current licensing system to HFCs; delivering two training workshops for customs officers on the licensing and quota system and preparing an annual update on the use of tariff codes for customs officers and customs brokers; conducting two visits to the Colón Free Trade Zone and to the customs control centres per year; designing and printing materials to disseminate the revised regulations among technicians, refrigerant and equipment suppliers and end-users (US \$32,500 and remaining balance of the first tranche);
- (b) *Application of good refrigeration practices and procedures in the RAC servicing sector:* Providing a training update to 22 trainers and 170 technicians on good servicing practices and alternative refrigerants; distributing 65 kits for handling HC refrigerants⁴ and for the recovery and recycling of refrigerants; developing and keeping updated the Single Registry of RAC Workshops and Technicians in the country; establishing five voluntary agreements with RAC end-users for the environmentally sound use of zero-ODP and low-GWP refrigerants; designing and printing 100 manuals on good environmental practices for distribution in technical training institutions and universities (US \$25,300 and remaining balance of the first tranche);
- (c) *Establishment of the RAC technician certification scheme:* Designing the structure for the certification process; finalizing and adopting three national standards on labour competencies and the methodology to evaluate technicians against the standard for certification; developing a system to train local experts to evaluate the certification tests; supporting the certification of six national experts to evaluate the technicians; certifying the first 25 RAC technicians; and preparing materials and strategic communication actions to promote certification among the RAC sector stakeholders (US \$58,450 and remaining balance of the first tranche);
- (d) *Strengthening of the formal education technical institutes:* Purchasing and distributing 12 tool kits and basic equipment for the laboratories of the technical education centres⁵ and

⁴ Charging station/vacuum pump, welding kit, hoses kit, leak detector, manometer and precision balance for HC.

⁵ RAC teaching modules, recovery units, recycling units, vacuum pumps, scales, cylinders, manifolds, refrigerant identifiers, piercing valves, hoses for different refrigerants, kit for HCs.

including new content on low-GWP alternatives in the RAC technician training curricula (US \$175,000);

- (e) *Strengthening of the RRR network*: Providing practical training to 160 RAC technicians on RRR practices; conducting two visits to other countries within the region to learn about their RRR experiences; equipping⁶ and setting up sustainable infrastructure for RRR and three refrigerant collection centres; designing and printing materials to promote RRR practices among RAC technicians (US \$68,000 and remaining balance of the first tranche);
- (f) *Technical assistance for end-users in the adoption of zero-ODP, low-GWP technologies*: Implementing at least one pilot project to demonstrate the use of RAC equipment based on non-ODS, low-GWP refrigerants; training 60 end-users and technicians in low-GWP alternatives; and designing and printing materials on the costs and advantages of selecting low-GWP technologies in the RAC sector to be distributed among end-users (US \$74,862);
- (g) *Public awareness activities*: Developing and conducting six national awareness-raising campaigns aimed at RAC end-users and decision-makers in Government institutions to promote the phase-out of HCFCs and the adoption of low-GWP alternative technologies; (US \$34,000 and remaining balance from the first tranche); and
- (h) *Project coordination and management of the HPMP*: Supporting the implementation of activities, organizing meetings with stakeholders and preparing reports; the total planned expenditure of US \$29,500 includes hiring consultants and issuing a verification report (US \$24,500), costs of monitoring-related travel (US \$2,000), and organization of coordination workshops and meetings (US \$3,000).

SECRETARIAT'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION

COMMENTS

Report on HCFC consumption

Verification report

14. The request for the second tranche of stage II of the HPMP for Panama required the submission of a verification report of HCFC consumption in the country for the years 2020-2022. As the tranche request is being submitted to the first Executive Committee meeting of the year, and noting that the HCFC consumption reported between 2020 and 2022 under the CP implementation and Article 7 reports is at least 30 per cent below the country's maximum eligible consumption under its Agreement with the Executive Committee, the Secretariat recommends approval of this funding tranche request in line with decision 72/19(b)⁷ and without setting a precedent, on the understanding that:

- (a) The Treasurer will be requested to transfer the approved funds to UNDP only after receipt by the Secretariat of the verification report confirming that the country is in compliance;

⁶ Sixty cylinders (30/50 lb) and six storage cylinders (100/250 lb); four sets containing a refrigerant recovery and recycling machine, refrigerant gas identifier, charging manifold for HCFC-22, halogen leak detector, nitrogen cylinder set 1.5 m³ with gauges, digital vacuum gauge, recovery cylinder cleaning kit, floor scale 150 kg, vacuum pump 7.5 cubic feet per minute, analytical balance 1,500 g; one HCFC and HFC refrigerant gas reclaim machine, and a transfer pump for refrigerant recovery.

⁷ Decision 72/19(b) states that, should the verification reports not be ready in time for the first meeting of the year, transfer of approved funds to the agencies would occur only after receipt by the Secretariat of the verification report confirming that the country was in compliance with the Montreal Protocol and the Agreement between its Government and the Executive Committee.

- (b) UNDP has committed to submitting the verification report at the earliest by May 2023, and no later than 12 weeks prior to the 93rd meeting;
- (c) The recommendations included in the verification report will be addressed during the implementation of the second tranche and the actions implemented towards that end will be included in the progress report of the second tranche of stage III of the HPMP to be submitted with the country's third tranche request; and
- (d) In the unlikely event of non-compliance by the Government of Panama with its Agreement with the Executive Committee, relevant actions will be taken by the Executive Committee.

Progress report on the implementation of the first tranche of stage III of the HCFC phase-out management plan

Legal framework

15. The Government of Panama has already issued HCFC import quotas for 2023 and 2024 at 9.79 and 8.23 OD tonnes, respectively, which are lower than the Montreal Protocol control targets.

Refrigeration servicing sector

16. Noting that during the first tranche, the preparation of a technician certification scheme consisted of preliminary discussions with relevant authorities to agree on a road map, the Secretariat asked how the process would continue in the second tranche to establish a certification scheme by the end of 2024. UNDP explained that although the development of a labour-competency-based certification scheme was at an early stage, the Ministry of Health, with the support of the local UNDP country office, had obtained the high-level commitment of INADEH to implement the certification process. As a result of the involvement of INADEH, the National Commission of Labour Competencies has been convened to foster the labour competency certification process. During the second tranche, the NOU will continue to actively assist the Commission in completing this process.

17. In response to the clarification requested on the model of the certification system, UNDP reported that the NOU would continue consultations with relevant institutions and stakeholders to determine the scheme's economic model, and how it would be maintained over time, including whether technicians would pay for certification. However, the Government conceived of the system as being voluntary, creating interest among RAC technicians by, for instance, sensitizing end-users to get them to hire certified technicians. Furthermore, the proposed registry of RAC technicians/workshops aims to create a certified technician database, among other purposes.

18. Noting the limited success of previous recovery and recycling experiences in the country, the Secretariat requested more information on the proposed measures to successfully implement these activities under stage III, including any regulatory measures supporting recovery and recycling, and the economic model for autonomous recovery and recycling operations. UNDP indicated that due to a more restrictive HCFC-22 import quota in recent years and the subsequent increase in the substance's price, stakeholders have a growing interest in refrigerant recovery. UNDP added that the feasibility study conducted in the first tranche had concluded that a RRR centre should be located in Panama City, while three collection centres should be established in other cities, with recovery equipment and training on its use provided to technicians.

19. The Secretariat asked whether the RRR unit to be procured could be used for HCFCs, HFCs and blends. In response, UNDP explained that although the recovery equipment acquired recovered both HCFCs and HFCs, the reclaim equipment would be used for HCFC-22 because the RRR networks for HFCs were much more complex and costly than those for single-component refrigerants like HCFC-22.

20. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of enforcing refrigerant emission control measures to support the phase-out strategy in the servicing sector in line with decision 86/87(b)(ii). In this regard, UNDP

reported that the technical standard⁸ corresponding to refrigeration systems, safety and environmental requirements – Part 4 – operation, maintenance, repair and recovery, was in force and would be included in competency building for RAC technicians and the awareness-raising activities of the HPMP.

21. The Secretariat enquired about the norms for the safe installation and servicing of equipment using flammable or toxic refrigerants. UNDP responded that the country had approved the relevant technical standard,⁹ and that the project had provided capacity building and would deliver training and tools to technicians to safely handle flammable refrigerants.

22. Regarding the pilot project to demonstrate the use of non-ODS, low-GWP technologies, the Secretariat asked for detailed information on the planned conversion and its compliance with the requirements of decision 84/84 to be considered for funding. UNDP responded that only technical advice would be provided to the selected enterprises, which were expected to finance the required equipment and infrastructure adaptation with their own resources. The project would cover the training of 60 technicians from end-user enterprises on low-GWP alternatives, and the design, printing and distribution of 100 pamphlets to building awareness on the costs and advantages of selecting low-GWP technologies in the RAC sector.

Gender policy implementation¹⁰

23. The following initiatives were undertaken in the first tranche and will be continued: collecting data to produce gender-disaggregated indicators, presenting reports with disaggregated figures and establishing an *ex post* baseline of women technicians in the RAC sector for comparison with the number of women involved in RAC activities; introducing gender-sensitive language in communications and training materials; incorporating gender aspects in the recruitment of new consultants; ensuring that the project team participates in gender talks given by the UNDP country office and takes the mandatory course on gender required by UNDP; and encouraging women to participate in the HPMP activities.

Sustainability of the HCFC phase-out and assessment of risks

24. UNDP assessed that there were no risks relating to the implementation of the HPMP, as the enforcement of the licensing system for HCFC imports, together with the accelerated HCFC phase-out resolution recently issued, would ensure compliance with the 97.5 per cent HCFC reduction target by 2028. UNDP did, however, identify a controllable risk of delays in HPMP implementation associated with the general elections (congressional and presidential), which would require appropriate scheduling of HPMP activities. Other controllable risks were linked to market availability and the capacity of the RAC sector to adopt the alternative technologies being promoted, as well as to the rotation of staff and the commitment and capacity of key partners, particularly those involved in certifying technicians. UNDP and the NOU will be attentive to all these cases so that they can adjust project implementation.

25. The long-term sustainability of RAC training is assured since good practices are included in the regular courses on refrigeration of one nationwide training centre and will be included in the technical training offered by MEDUCA. Furthermore, the technician certification system being developed, the provision of tool kits for using flammable refrigerants to RAC technicians, and the provision of equipment and tools to training institutes, together with interventions in the end-user sectors and the information outreach and targeted awareness-raising campaigns, will support the transition to low-GWP technologies. The sustainability of refrigerant RRR infrastructure will be provided by market processes (reduced supply and higher prices of HCFC-22) and by selecting interested beneficiaries with experience in the sector.

⁸ DGNTI COPANIT ISO 5149-4:2014

⁹ DGNTI COPANIT ISO 5149-1, -2, -3:2014

¹⁰ In line with decision 84/92(d), decision 90/48(c) encouraged bilateral and implementing agencies to continue ensuring that the operational gender mainstreaming policy was applied to all projects, taking into consideration the specific activities presented in table 2 of document UNEP/OzL.Pro/ExCom/90/37.

26. The sustainable implementation of HPMP activities, inter alia HCFC licensing and quota system enforcement, prevention measures for detecting HCFC illegal trade, the polyurethane foam conversion project, the RRR scheme, the certification and continued training of servicing technicians and technical support to end-users, will ensure the country achieve sustainable phase-out of HCFCs.

Conclusion

27. The Secretariat notes that Panama is in compliance with the Montreal Protocol and the Agreement with the Executive Committee, and that its 2022 HCFC consumption is 59 per cent below the baseline level and 37 per cent below the target for the year. The Secretariat further notes the efforts made by the Government for a timely completion of stage III of the HPMP. The overall disbursement rate for the first tranche is 30 per cent, and activities under the tranche have progressed with the development of legislation, training of customs officers, and a training update for RAC trainers from MEDUCA. Furthermore, the certification system for RAC technicians will be operational as of 2025; and the procurement of equipment to strengthen the refrigeration training institutes and the RAC service workshops and to set up the infrastructure for the RRR network has already started. The activities planned under the second tranche will further strengthen the refrigeration servicing sector and ensure the long-term sustainability of stage III. UNDP has committed to submitting the verification report for 2020 to 2022 at the earliest by mid-May 2023 and the Secretariat recommends *inter alia* that the Treasurer be requested to transfer approved funds to UNDP and UNEP only after receipt by the Secretariat of the verification report confirming that the country was in compliance for that period.

RECOMMENDATION

28. The Fund Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee note the progress report on the implementation of the first tranche of stage III of the HCFC phase-out management plan (HPMP) for Panama, and further recommends blanket approval of the second tranche of stage III of the HPMP and the corresponding 2023–2026 tranche implementation plan for Panama at the funding level shown in the table below, on the understanding that:

- (a) The Treasurer will be requested to transfer the approved funds to UNDP only after receipt by the Secretariat of the verification report confirming that the country is in compliance;
- (b) UNDP has committed to submitting the verification report at the earliest by mid-May 2023, and no later than 12 weeks prior to the 93rd meeting;
- (c) The recommendations in the verification report will be addressed during the implementation of the second tranche and actions implemented towards that end will be included in the progress report of the second tranche of stage III of the HPMP to be submitted with the country's third tranche request; and
- (d) In the unlikely event of non-compliance by the Government of Panama with its Agreement with the Executive Committee, relevant actions will be taken by the Executive Committee.

	Project title	Project funding (US \$)	Support costs (US \$)	Implementing agency
(a)	HCFC phase-out management plan (stage III, second tranche)	497,612	34,833	UNDP