Summary of comments received by parties on the atmospheric monitoring cost estimation tool and responses by the Secretariat

The Secretariat appreciates all parties that took the time to test the online atmospheric monitoring cost estimation tool and provide comments and suggestions. The feedback received is valuable and will be taken into consideration in the further development and improvement of the tool. The following sections provide a summary of the main points raised and the corresponding responses from the Secretariat.

1. The comments acknowledged the usefulness of the online interactive cost-calculation tool and the phased monitoring approach in understanding the potential costs associated with establishing and operating atmospheric monitoring stations. They highlighted the need for the atmospheric monitoring cost estimation tool to account for differences in national circumstances, particularly in small, mountainous, landlocked and low-volume-consuming countries. Factors identified as potentially affecting costs included terrain and site accessibility, existing infrastructure, electricity and internet connectivity, transportation and logistics, availability of specialized technical expertise and laboratory facilities, and the costs of equipment, maintenance, calibration, consumables and long-term operation.

   The comments also noted existence of an air-quality monitoring station in operation which does not monitor ozone depleting substances and also does not meet the criteria for establishing and maintaining atmospheric monitoring of controlled substances specified under the phased monitoring approach. In the case of identification of a suitable monitoring station in neighbouring countries, greater flexibility in the tool was suggested to reflect the potential use or upgrading of existing infrastructure, participation in regional monitoring arrangements, and the associated costs of cooperation, including data access and sharing, sample analysis, technical support and capacity-building. The comments further suggested distinguishing one-time capital expenditure from recurring operational costs, enabling longer-term life-cycle cost estimates, and clarifying that the results are indicative and dependent on country-specific circumstances.

   Response by the Secretariat
   The feedback received will be taken into consideration in the further development and improvement of the tool.

2. The comments identified a technical issue that prevented users from modifying the default cost values for individual monitoring phases in the online costing tool. Clarification was sought on whether the inability to adjust costs was due to a tool malfunction or a limitation in the tool's intended functionality.

   Response by the Secretariat
   Users are intended to modify the default cost values to reflect national circumstances and delete cost items where appropriate. The issue affecting this functionality was identified as a likely error introduced during subsequent code updates and has since been resolved.

3. The comments indicated that the tool was generally functioning as intended but identified a technical issue preventing users from editing or deleting certain cost items that may not be applicable to their selected monitoring sites. It was noted that resolving this issue would allow users to better reflect site-specific circumstances and obtain more accurate cost estimates.

   Response by the Secretariat
   The reported technical issue has been resolved, and users should now be able to edit or delete individual cost items as appropriate.

4. The comments questioned the need for the online costing tool given that parties did not specifically request or intervened to support such as tool, its anticipated wider uptake by parties and the allocation of Secretariat resources to its further development. Concerns were raised regarding the usefulness of an interactive format compared with a publicly available information in table format in the Secretariat information note on the tool presenting high- and low-cost estimates and associated cost items for different monitoring options.

   Response by the Secretariat
   The tool was developed using remaining funds from the EU-funded pilot project on atmospheric monitoring activities, with support for the tool from the European Union and the Advisory Committee. While the underlying cost information could also be presented in a spreadsheet or table, the interactive, web-based format offers additional benefits. It provides users with a guided introduction to the Phased Monitoring Approach and illustrates how individual cost items relate to different monitoring phases and implementation scenarios. It also facilitates the preparation, saving, comparison and sharing of multiple cost estimates. Furthermore, the online format allows for the centralized maintenance and updating of the tool as experience is gained, feedback is received and cost assumptions evolve.

5. The comments also highlighted usability issues, particularly the need to repeat the entire questionnaire to assess the impact of changing individual parameters, such as monitoring tower height. In addition, a technical issue was identified with the functionality for modifying default cost values, which was considered important for enabling customized, site-specific estimates. The comments further suggested that the tool's potential user base might be limited, as detailed cost estimates would primarily be required by parties actively considering the establishment of monitoring stations.

   Response by the Secretariat
   The current workflow for comparing different inputs could be improved, particularly by allowing users to assess the impact of changing individual parameters without having to complete the entire questionnaire again. The technical issue affecting the functionality for entering customized costs has been resolved.

   Parties considering the establishment of monitoring stations are an important group of intended users. The tool is also designed to support the work of the Advisory Committee, the Multilateral Fund and its implementing agencies, and other stakeholders involved in developing or reviewing atmospheric monitoring projects, as well as those seeking to better understand the Phased Monitoring Approach and its associated costs. The tool is intended to provide a common, accessible and standardized framework for estimating the costs of establishing and operating monitoring stations across different implementation scenarios. Its further development will take into account the feedback received, with a view to improving its functionality and usability.