

Ref.: MC/ES/2020/18

Geneva, 29 June 2020

**Subject:** Update on the progress of work under the Minamata Convention in the intersessional period

Dear Madam/Sir,

The Secretariat of the Minamata Convention is honoured to update the Parties to the Minamata Convention on the latest developments and activities held during the intersessional work.

Firstly, I am delighted to inform you that since the beginning of this year, six new countries deposited instrument of ratification/became a party to the Convention, bringing the **total number of parties to 122**. I would like to express my appreciation to Bahamas, Cyprus, North Macedonia, Albania, Greece and Oman and recognize the decisive steps taken by the countries to base their actions to protect the human health and the environment from mercury on a legally binding instrument.

In consultation with the COP-4 President, Ms. Rosa Vivien Ratnawati of Indonesia, a **second online meeting of the Bureau** of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention (COP-4 Bureau) was successfully organized on 4 June 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Parties that at the first online meeting of the COP-4 Bureau, held on 3 February 2020, Ms. Angela Patricia Rivera Galvis from Colombia was elected as Rapporteur for COP-4. A report of the second meeting is available on the Minamata website in the [Meetings/COP Bureau](#) section.

**The intersessional work towards COP-4** is being proactively pursued through online meetings and other electronic communication.

- The ad hoc group of experts on the review of Annex A and B, co-chaired by Mr. Darren Byrne (Ireland) and Ms. Gwenetta Fordyce (Guyana), met online twice and is meeting again on 1 July. The group decided to extend the deadline for the submission from Parties and others of information on products, processes and their alternatives until 31 July, and invites further submissions using the [templates](#) that it developed. Submissions already received are available on the [website](#). The submission of information on dental amalgam is due by 1 July, but this may also be extended to 31 July if needed.
- The group of technical experts on mercury releases, co-chaired by Ms. Bianca Dlamini (Eswatini) and Mr. Greg Helms (US), met online once and will meet again on 30 June. The group of technical experts on mercury waste thresholds, co-chaired by Mr. Andreas Gössnitzer (Switzerland) and Ms. Oluwatoyin Olabanji (Nigeria), met twice and will meet again on 8 September. Information on the progress of work by these groups is available on the [website](#).
- With regard to the arrangements for the first effectiveness evaluation under Article 22, as communicated in my [letter](#) on 21 May 2020, the Secretariat has developed a [plan of work](#) on evaluation indicators and a [roadmap](#) for developing monitoring guidance. Two online information sessions on developing guidance on monitoring for evaluating the effectiveness of the Convention were held on 10 June 2020 in the morning and the afternoon European time. Altogether, 158 participants from over 50 countries attended the sessions. Parties and stakeholders are invited to comment on the draft annotated outline of the monitoring guidance by 31 July, and to identify experts and scientists to contribute to the drafting of the



guidance by 15 August 2020. The first webinar of the identified experts will be convened in early September.

- Online information sessions on the 2020 phase-out deadline on mercury-added products and on the review of Annexes A and B will be convened on 2 and 7 July respectively. Online information sessions on the proposed effectiveness evaluation indicators are planned for mid-September. Additional information sessions can be arranged upon need and request.

The Secretariat would like to thank Parties for their engagement in the intersessional work, and I would welcome any feedback you may have to make the next online sessions and meetings even better.

With respect to the Convention's financial mechanism, I would like to bring to your attention the **58<sup>th</sup> GEF Council**, which was held virtually on 2-3 June 2020. The Council approved a substantial chemicals and waste work program which includes three mercury related projects (Reduce the Impact and Release of Mercury and POPs in Vietnam through Lifecycle Approach and Ecolabel; Eliminate Mercury Use and Adequately Manage Mercury and mercury wastes in the chlor alkali sector in Mexico, and the Global Greenchem Innovation and Network Programme). The Council also approved the GOLD+ program, which will advance the work of the PlanetGOLD program to reduce and eliminate mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining through formalization, access to finance and markets, and access to mercury-free gold mining technologies. As the GEF's 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment cycle enters the mid-point in implementing its overall 206 million mercury portfolio, GEF-financed projects are assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement the Convention. Similarly, the Specific International Programme is advancing fifteen projects approved by its Governing Board in two application rounds, and the Secretariat is in close communication with project partners to address their implementation needs.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Secretariat is analysing **actual and potential impacts of the pandemic on intersessional work on a regular basis**.

So far, only one physical meeting under the Minamata Convention, that of the ad-hoc group of experts on the review of Annex A and B, could not be held according to the planned schedule. The group is working online as explained above, and agreed to work electronically given the COVID situation, and to consider the possibility of an in-person meeting at a later stage.

The COP-4 Bureau is kept fully informed of the planned meetings and will re-evaluate the situation and guide the Secretariat as appropriate in the second part of the year.

A list of meetings held and planned under the Minamata Convention in the 2020-2021 biennium is posted on the website, under [Intersessional work](#) section. The list will be regularly updated e.g. to reflect any additional online meetings.

The Secretariat will continue to investigate and bring into use available tools to enhance online collaboration. In this regard, I would like to recognize a substantial role UNEP has been playing to enhance opportunities for successful online meetings. This has included exchange and sharing of experiences among MEAs on modernising environmental diplomacy and studying legal and procedural aspects of holding online decision-making meetings. Modernizing methods of environmental governance is one of the four building blocks of UNEP response to COVID-19, which is available [online](#).



Furthermore, on 28 May, the Minamata Secretariat presented its work to adjust intersessional activities and capacity building and technical assistance support in light of COVID-19 at the Geneva Environment Dialogues | *#10 Minamata Convention Intersessional Work*. The report of the webinar and the presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Last but not least, please be informed that the Secretariat continues to fulfil its functions through teleworking modalities, as mentioned in the Communication sent on 31 March 2020. The majority of colleagues will be doing so for still some weeks. However, planning has taken place for a gradual return to the office.

I would like to reiterate my highest appreciation for your continued support and commitment to the implementation of the Minamata Convention and I hope you and your families are well and safe during this challenging times.

Your sincerely,

*Monika Stankiewicz*

Monika Stankiewicz  
Executive Secretary

To: Governments through their official channels of communication to the UN Environment Programme  
Cc: National Focal Points for the Minamata Convention on Mercury  
Permanent Missions to the UN Environment Programme and to the UN in Geneva