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

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Report on the activities of the interim secretariat during
the period prior to the entry into force of the Convention**

Progress report on the work of the interim secretariat in the period since the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 11 of its resolution on arrangements in the interim period before entry into force of the Convention (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/CONF/4, annex I), the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide interim secretariat services to support the intergovernmental negotiating committee on mercury and its activities until the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In paragraph 12 of that resolution, the Conference requested the interim secretariat to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other relevant actors, including the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in order to make full use of relevant experience and expertise. In paragraph 13 of the resolution it requested the Executive Director to facilitate activities at the regional and country levels to support implementation during the interim period in an effective and efficient manner.

2. A summary of the activities undertaken by the interim secretariat in response to these requests (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/22 and Corr.1 and UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/7) was presented to the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its sixth session, held from 3 to 7 November 2014 in Bangkok. The present report summarizes the major activities undertaken by the interim secretariat since the committee's sixth session, covering both its work in support of the committee and its activities until the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its work in support of the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention by parties.

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

II. Support for the intergovernmental negotiating committee and its activities until the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties

A. Seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee

3. The interim secretariat is in the process of organizing the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. That process has included drafting and sending out invitation letters, as well as organizing logistical matters, working in close cooperation with the host country, Jordan, to develop the necessary arrangements and agreements and identify a meeting venue. Other activities have included arranging for conference services support, organizing travel for funded participants, supporting the activities of the bureau of the intergovernmental negotiating committee and preparing meeting documents for consideration by the committee.

4. Logistical activities have been undertaken with the support of staff members of the Chemicals and Waste Branch of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics of UNEP and of the United Nations Office for Project Services, which is assisting with arrangements for the travel of sponsored participants to the session. Chemicals and Waste Branch staff members are also supporting the organization of side events at the seventh session. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has provided support for the development of a document-sharing site to be used during the seventh session. Both the Chemicals and Waste Branch and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions will be providing support to the interim secretariat for the running of the session.

5. The preparation of technical material, in particular meeting documents, has been led by the interim secretariat, with significant contributions from the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (in particular the co-leads of certain partnership areas) and other relevant actors, in particular the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

6. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has provided substantive input to documents in areas where it has particular expertise, such as import and export controls, storage, waste, contaminated sites, monitoring and reporting. The experience gathered by the conventions themselves was drawn upon in the development of the draft rules of procedure (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/13) and draft financial rules for the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/14) that were considered by the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its sixth session. The versions of those documents presented at the seventh session will allow the discussions to continue the work undertaken during the sixth session. Building on its experience in working with GEF, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has also contributed to the development of a draft memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the GEF Council and of draft guidance to GEF on overall strategies, policies, programme priorities, eligibility for access to and utilization of financial resources and on an indicative list of categories of activities that could receive support from the GEF Trust Fund. The experience and contribution of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions secretariat was taken into consideration by the Executive Director in his report on proposals on how he will perform the functions of the permanent secretariat for the Convention (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/15) as well as in his information document prepared at the request of the ad hoc expert group on financing on the options for the hosting institutions of the specific international programme to support capacity-building and technical assistance referred to in paragraph 6 (b) of article 13 of the Minamata Convention (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF.6)

7. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has provided input for documents on activities undertaken within the scope of the voluntary partnerships and other materials that could form the basis for guidance requested under the Minamata Convention. The guidance document on artisanal and small-scale gold mining was prepared by the relevant partnership area, while input on other relevant areas has been sought through the partnership secretariat. The interim secretariat worked closely with the GEF secretariat in the preparation of the documents relating to the draft memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties on the Minamata Convention and the GEF Council and the draft guidance to GEF. Input was also sought from WHO, in particular on the issue of the means of obtaining monitoring data in relation to effectiveness evaluation.

8. In addition to their contributions to the development of meeting documents, each of the organizations contributing to the work of the interim secretariat, particularly in support of ratification and early implementation, has been invited to present at the committee's seventh session a progress report on its work. Accordingly, a progress report on the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (see UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF/3) and a report on activities undertaken by all other partner organizations (see UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF/4) will be available to the committee at its seventh session.

B. Meetings of the bureau of the intergovernmental negotiating committee

9. Since the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, two meetings of the bureau have been held, one through teleconference on 20 April 2015 and one face-to-face in Moscow on 1 and 2 July 2015. A second face-to-face meeting is planned to be held in Jakarta on 18 and 19 January 2016. Among the main objectives of these meetings was to take stock of the outcome of the committee's sixth session, to ensure adequate planning for the seventh session, to consider the issues to be addressed at the committee's seventh session and to have strategic and policy discussions and develop logistical plans for the seventh session. Reports of the bureau meetings are available on the Convention website.¹ Cooperation with the secretariats of GEF and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in particular was also addressed at these meetings, through briefings and updates provided by the two secretariats.

10. The interim secretariat supported the organization of these meetings through logistical preparations and the delivery of necessary information prior to and during the meetings.

C. Regional meetings in preparation for the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee

11. In preparation for the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, the interim secretariat has also undertaken to organize a series of regional meetings for the African, Asian-Pacific, Central and Eastern European and Central Asian, and Latin American and Caribbean regions. These meetings were called for by a number of Governments to allow the regions to prepare for the seventh session of the committee and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. These meetings will be held as follows:

- (a) For the Asian-Pacific region, from 20 to 22 January 2016 in Jakarta;
- (b) For the African region, from 2 to 4 February 2016 in Lusaka;
- (c) For the Central and Eastern European and Central Asian region, on 3 and 4 February 2016, in Brno, Czech Republic;
- (d) For the Latin American and Caribbean region, from 9 to 12 February 2016 in Montevideo.

12. The overall objective of these meetings is to contribute to the success of the committee's seventh session by giving countries in the regions the opportunity to consult each other in advance of the session, to consider meeting documents, to discuss substantive matters on the agenda for the session, to identify regional priorities and challenges and to facilitate the preparation of regional positions. The regional meetings will include presentations by the interim secretariat of the documents for the seventh session, followed by discussions among Governments and possible development of positions on the various issues to be addressed at the seventh session. The provisional programme for each regional meeting will be developed in cooperation with the members of the intergovernmental negotiating committee bureau from the region.

13. The regional meetings are being organized by the interim secretariat in cooperation with the Basel or Stockholm Conventions regional centres in the respective countries and in close cooperation and coordination with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. The meetings are being funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Switzerland as the principal contributor and from the Governments of Germany and the Netherlands.

¹ <http://mercuryconvention.org/Negotiations/INCBureau/tabid/3827/Default.aspx>.

D. Group of technical experts to prepare the guidance called for under article 8 of the Convention

14. Since the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee the interim secretariat has organized two meetings of the group of technical experts established by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries to prepare the guidance called for under article 8 of the Convention, bringing to four the total number of meetings held by the expert group.

15. The third meeting of the expert group, hosted by the Government of South Africa, was held in Pretoria from 2 to 6 March 2015. A small meeting of the co-leads responsible for various sectors was held in Geneva on 11 and 12 June 2015 to finalize the draft guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices prior to circulation for public comment. The interim secretariat made the draft guidance available on the Convention website for comment and compiled the comments received for consideration by the expert group at its fourth meeting.

16. The fourth meeting was held in Stockholm from 7 to 11 September 2015 with support from the Government of Sweden as well as from the European Union.

17. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions have each provided a resource person for each of the meetings of the group. These resource persons have contributed to the discussions on the guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices, providing input based both on technical expertise and on the experience within the convention concerned in preparing guidance material. In preparing input material for the meetings of the group, the secretariat also drew on relevant material prepared previously under the Stockholm Convention.

E. Ad-hoc working group of experts on financing established at the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee on mercury

18. At its sixth session, held from 3 to 7 November 2014 in Bangkok, the intergovernmental negotiating committee established an ad hoc working group of experts on financing to work during the period between its sixth and seventh sessions. The mandate of the group was to provide input to the committee at its seventh session with regard to implementation of paragraph 6 of the resolution of on financial arrangements (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/CONF/4, annex I), of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention, which requests the committee “to develop for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting a proposal for the hosting institution for the specific international programme, including any necessary arrangements with the hosting institution, as well as guidance on the operation and duration of that programme”.

19. The ad hoc working group of experts met once, from 26 to 29 October 2015 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, at the invitation of the Brazilian Government and with the financial support of the Government of Germany.

20. The meeting was organized by the interim secretariat, with logistical support provided by the Stockholm Convention Regional Centre for Technical Assistance and Technology Transfer for Latin American and Caribbean Region. In addition to logistical preparations, as requested by the committee at its sixth session the interim secretariat invited and compiled comments from Governments on the mandate of the ad hoc working group of experts and prepared, among others, a document outlining options for hosting institutions for the specific international programme and available information on arrangements with the hosting institutions. The interim secretariat also assisted in the conduct of the meeting and prepared additional background documents to support the ad hoc working group of experts and the co-chairs in their work.

III. Support for the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention

21. In addition to its work in support of the intergovernmental negotiating committee and its activities, the interim secretariat has supported activities at the national and regional levels to facilitate the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention.

Organization of subregional and regional capacity-building and awareness-raising workshops

22. In cooperation with the regional offices of UNEP, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and relevant regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm conventions, the interim secretariat continued the delivery of the programme of subregional awareness-raising

workshops that it had launched in March 2014 to assist countries to prepare for ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention. As a result, an additional four subregional workshops were held as follows:

- (a) Mesoamerica workshop: 26–28 November 2014, Mexico City;
- (b) Caribbean workshop: 19–21 January 2015, Port of Spain;
- (c) Pacific workshop: 19–21 January 2015, Apia;
- (d) Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia workshop: 18–20 February 2015, Minsk.

23. The objective of this first round of 12 subregional workshops organized between March 2014 and February 2015 was to improve the understanding of the Convention and familiarize participants with the process for signature, ratification and implementation. Providing information about available sources of support and creating opportunities for exchange and action in the subregions were also part of the process. Finally, the development by each participating country of national road maps setting out the measures to be taken at the national level to move towards ratification and implementation concluded each workshop. Through the participation of their representatives at the workshops, implementing agencies learned about planned activities at the national level. The workshops also provided an opportunity for the coordination of work during the interim period, including enabling activities delivered with the support of GEF. The secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and WHO all contributed to the workshops.

24. In follow-up, the interim secretariat organized, in cooperation with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, an additional round of workshops, this time at the regional level, which were held back to back with the regional meetings to prepare for the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions held in May 2015. These workshops provided an opportunity for countries to report on progress on the activities set out in the road maps they had developed at the subregional workshops and for the interim secretariat to disseminate additional information and guidance on key issues of concern to each region. They also represented an opportunity to discuss further possible areas of cooperation within the regions as well as preparations for the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The workshops also featured a joint session with the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm convention regional meetings focusing on financial resources for chemicals and wastes, the sustainable development goals and cooperation and coordination between the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata conventions. The regional workshops were held as follows:

- (a) Asia and the Pacific workshop: 17–20 March 2015, Jakarta;
- (b) Africa workshop: 24–27 March 2015, Nairobi;
- (c) Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia workshop: 7–10 April 2015, Bratislava;
- (d) Latin America and the Caribbean workshop: 14–17 April 2015, Montevideo.

25. Intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies and other entities that play important roles in supporting efforts to achieve ratification and implementation of the Convention, including GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, WHO, the Basel and Stockholm convention regional centres and several non-governmental organizations active in the various regions, also took part in the workshops. These organizations have also made presentations on the support available to countries for the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention.

26. Reports on the subregional and regional workshops are available at www.mercuryconvention.org/AwarenessRaising/Workshops/tabid/3800/Default.aspx.

Support for pilot projects at the national and regional levels

27. The interim secretariat continued its support for pilot projects at the national level to promote activities intended to lead to ratification and implementation of the Convention in a number of countries. Key activities undertaken at the country level included the development of inventories of mercury uses, emissions and releases, as well as a legal and policy review and assessment. The interim secretariat is also supporting the implementation with partner organizations of pilot projects at the regional level, including support for a project to determine mercury levels in hair in women of child-bearing age in selected countries of the Asian-Pacific Region as well as for the organization in April 2015 in Abidjan of a subregional workshop for a selected number of Francophone African

countries on the implementation of the Convention's provisions on dental amalgam. Such projects will continue through 2016.

Additional outreach and awareness-raising activities

28. The Convention's outreach activities have been boosted by the hosting of the Convention website on a platform provided by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, together with technical support provided by that secretariat in the maintenance and further development of the website. Since the sixth session of the committee the interim secretariat has worked to improve the dissemination of information on the Convention website, including through the publication of updated supporting documentation.

29. The interim secretariat supported the organization, in New York on 24 September 2015, of a special high-level event hosted by the Governments of Japan, Switzerland, the United States of America and Uruguay to promote the ratification of the Convention in the margins of the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Governments of Chad and Samoa announced their ratification of the Minamata Convention and deposited their instruments of ratification on that occasion.

IV. Other activities undertaken by the interim secretariat

30. The interim secretariat took part in a number of processes along with the Chemicals and Waste Branch, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions secretariat and the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. It contributed to work on the integration of the sound management of chemicals and wastes into the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the establishment of the special programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

31. Members of the interim secretariat provided logistical and substantive support for the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions held in Geneva from 4 to 15 May 2015, as well as for the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, which took place in Geneva from 28 September to 2 October, 2015.

32. Finally, the interim secretariat took part in a joint retreat between GEF, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the interim secretariat of the Minamata convention in Geneva on 5 October 2015. It also participated in a number of meetings relevant to mercury and the chemicals and waste agenda, namely, the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant (ICMGP), held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 14 to 19 June 2015, and the annual joint meeting to enhance cooperation and coordination between regional centres under the Basel and Stockholm conventions, held in Geneva from 5 to 8 October 2015.

V. Financing for the work of the interim secretariat

33. The above-described activities carried out by the interim secretariat would not have been possible without the generous voluntary financial support provided by the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.

VI. Conclusion

34. The committee may wish to take note of the activities of the interim secretariat to date and to encourage Governments and others in a position to do so to contribute to the activities currently under way. The committee may also wish to provide guidance to the interim secretariat on further work that may be needed and any other issues of concern.
