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on mercury**

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*

**Report on the activities of the interim secretariat during
the period prior to the entry into force of the Convention:
cooperative activities with other relevant actors**

**Progress report on cooperation and coordination with other
actors**

Note by the secretariat

1. The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury, in paragraph 12 of its resolution on arrangements in the interim period (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/CONF/4, annex I), requested the interim secretariat to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other relevant actors, including the secretariat of the Basel Convention on 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.
2. In its resolution on matters pertaining to other international bodies, the Conference invited international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization and the World Customs Organization to cooperate closely with the intergovernmental negotiating committee and the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention to support the implementation of the Convention, particularly Article 16, as appropriate, and to provide information to the Conference of the Parties on the progress made in that regard.
3. During the interim period between the signing of the Convention and its entry into force, the secretariat has been cooperating closely with a number of organizations. Reports on the activities of three such organizations, prepared by the organizations themselves, are set out in the annexes to the present note, as follows: secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (annex I); United Nations Institute for Training and Research (annex II); and WHO (annex III). The reports are presented without formal editing by the secretariat.

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

Annex I

Information submitted by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions to the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury (INC-7)

Introduction

1. The present report summarizes the main cooperation and coordination activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) conventions with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention in areas of mutual interest, as well as other activities conducted jointly by parties to the BRS conventions and States implementing the Minamata Convention, since INC-6.¹
2. The cooperative activities described in the present report are undertaken by the BRS secretariat in response to requests made by the conferences of the parties to the BRS conventions in the framework of their dialogue with the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries of the Minamata Convention or the INCs, as described below.
3. In paragraph 27 of the omnibus decision on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions adopted during their meetings in May 2013², the conferences of the parties to the three conventions expressed their interest and signalled their readiness to cooperate and coordinate with the Minamata Convention on Mercury. In paragraph 28 of the same decision, they invited the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries of the Minamata Convention to consider cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual interest to the four conventions.
4. In paragraph 12 of its resolution on arrangements in the interim period, the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries of the Minamata Convention requested the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other relevant actors, including the BRS secretariat in order to make full use of relevant experience and expertise. Paragraph 5 of the resolution on matters pertaining to other international bodies invited the BRS secretariat to cooperate closely, as appropriate, with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention in areas of mutual interest.
5. At their meetings in May 2015, the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions welcomed cooperation and coordination between the BRS secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention and requested the BRS secretariat to continue and enhance such cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual interest with a view to fostering policy coherence, where appropriate, and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels.
6. The decisions on international cooperation and coordination (BC-12/17, RC-7/9, SC-7/27) containing the request described in paragraph 4 above are set out in the appendix to the present note.
7. In the fulfilment of the above-mentioned mandates, the Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Coordinator of the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention participate in meetings of the respective conventions' governing bodies.

Activities pertaining to mercury wastes

8. In Article 11 of the Minamata Convention, the resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries, and decision BC-11/5 of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, Governments recognize the close relationship between the Minamata Convention and the Basel Convention on issues related to the management of mercury wastes, including with respect to the updating of the Basel Convention technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of mercury wastes.
9. In its decision BC-11/5, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention initiated the updating of the technical guidelines on mercury wastes that had been adopted at its tenth meeting. The updating of the technical guidelines on mercury wastes was carried out by Japan as lead country, in consultation with experts nominated to participate in the small intersessional working group

¹ Information on cooperative activities between BRS secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention was made available to the INC-6 in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/5.

² See decisions BC.Ex-2/1, RC.Ex-2/1 and SC.Ex-2/1, part V on wider cooperation.

established by decision IX/15³. The process for updating the technical guidelines involved several rounds of comments by parties and others. The updated technical guidelines were considered by the Basel Convention Open-ended Working Group at its ninth meeting, in Geneva, from 16 to 19 September 2014. Pursuant to decision OEWG-9/4, the Working Group invited Japan and the small intersessional working group to continue the task of updating the technical guidelines and to submit the next revised version of the guidelines to the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, at its twelfth meeting, in May 2015.

10. By its decision BC-12/4, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention adopted the updated technical guidelines on mercury wastes and requested them to be disseminated to parties and others, including the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The technical guidelines on mercury wastes adopted by the Basel Convention Conference of the Parties are set out in document UNEP/CHW.12/5/Add.8/Rev.1⁴. The technical guidelines are currently being translated in the other five United Nations official languages and will be posted on the website once available.

11. In decision BC-12/4, the COP also invited parties and others to use the technical guidelines and to submit comments on their experiences and on any developments regarding methods for the environmentally sound disposal of mercury wastes, including the long-term effectiveness of the stabilization and solidification of wastes consisting of mercury. Information may be submitted to the secretariat no later than two months before the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (scheduled to take place in May 2017).

12. In line with decision BC-12/4, the BRS secretariat organized, in cooperation with the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre in Uruguay, a subregional workshop for enhancing capacities for ESM of mercury wastes, through dissemination of the technical guidelines on mercury wastes, in Latin American countries in Montevideo, from 17 to 19 November 2015. The interim secretariat was informed of this activity which was carried out with the involvement of UNEP Chemicals and Waste. Follow-up activities will be undertaken in countries of the sub region in 2016.

13. The BRS secretariat is involved in the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership as a member of the Partnership Advisory Group and the Mercury Partnership area groups on reduction in products, supply and storage and on waste management. The Secretariat participates in relevant meetings and provides inputs to the work of the Partnership, as appropriate.

14. The Expert Working Group on environmentally sound management (ESM), a group mandated by the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention to elaborate and implement actions for the implementation of ESM, is in the process of developing fact sheets on specific waste streams, including mercury wastes. The fact sheets are intended as a collection of practical, user-friendly information for policy makers on the ESM of specific waste streams under the Basel Convention. At its fourth meeting in November 2015, the Group agreed that, given the ongoing activities following the adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, no further work would be undertaken at the present time on the factsheet on mercury wastes. The matter will be considered further in the light of developments within the context of the Minamata Convention.

Activities pertaining to the environmentally sound interim storage of mercury

15. In line with relevant mandates, the BRS Secretariat cooperated with UNEP Chemicals and Waste to develop a practical sourcebook on mercury storage and disposal. The Secretariat provided inputs to the development of the sourcebook in particular to ensure coherence with the Basel Convention technical guidelines on mercury wastes. The finalised sourcebook was launched at the ICCM-4, in Geneva, from 28 September to 2 October 2015.

Activities pertaining to the group of technical experts on air emissions to prepare the guidance called for under article 8 of the Convention

16. The provisions of Article 5 of the Stockholm Convention cover the minimization and, where feasible, ultimate elimination of unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutants (POPs) listed in Annex C, Part I. To reduce the total releases of POPs derived from anthropogenic sources, parties are

³ The list of nominated experts is available on the Basel Convention website at: <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/TechnicalMatters/DevelopmentofTechnicalGuidelines/MercuryWaste/tabid/2380/Default.aspx>

⁴ Available at: <http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/ConferenceoftheParties/Meetings/COP12/tabid/4248/mctl/ViewDetails/EventModID/8051/EventID/542/xmid/13027/Default.aspx>.

also required to implement best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practice (BEP) for the sources listed in Annex C, Parts II and III. A number of the source categories listed in Annex C of the Stockholm Convention are the same as those listed in Annex D of the Minamata Convention. The Minamata Convention has taken the same approach as the Stockholm Convention to provide for the development of guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices to control and, where feasible, reduce emissions.

17. The provisions and guidelines under the Basel Convention are also relevant to the development of guidance called for under 8 of the Minamata Convention. The technical guidelines developed under the Basel Convention on waste management are relevant to the management of sludge and other wastes resulting from the capture of mercury from relevant sources, and could be valuable in minimizing or preventing cross-media effects which may result from poor management of such wastes.⁵

18. Since there are similarities between the requirements and processes under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention, the BRS secretariat has participated in the four meetings held by the group of technical experts established by the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention to develop the guidance called for in article 8 of the Convention. Basel Convention and Stockholm Convention experts involved in the development of the technical guidelines on mercury wastes and in the review/update of the Stockholm Convention BAT/BEP guidelines have also been part of the Minamata Convention BAT/BEP expert group and provided relevant technical input. Similarly, many of the experts involved in the development of the guidance under the Minamata Convention have been involved in the relevant technical work under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions. Experience and technical expertise have thus been shared regarding the Stockholm Convention BAT/BEP and the Basel Convention technical guidelines on mercury wastes.

Activities pertaining to financial resources

19. At its seventh meeting in May 2015, in its decision SC-7/21, the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention requested the BRS secretariat to identify possible elements of guidance from the Stockholm Convention to the GEF that also address the relevant priorities of the Basel and Rotterdam conventions and to inform Mercury INC-7 about this task. Information related to the implementation of this request is submitted by the BRS secretariat to the INC-7 in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF/8.

20. The Stockholm Convention has gathered vast experience with the operations of its financial mechanism in accordance with Articles 13 and 14 of the Convention. Several arrangements have been established under the Convention to ensure the effectiveness of the mechanism, particularly the existence of a memorandum of understanding between the COP and the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the provision of specific guidance on funding priorities, the determination of the funding needs for the implementation of the Convention, and a review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism.

21. The BRS secretariat cooperates and coordinates with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention on relevant experience with procedures and approaches established under the financial mechanism of the Stockholm Convention. As part of the cooperative activities undertaken, a joint retreat between the GEF, the BRS secretariat, the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the SAICM secretariat was organized on 5 October 2015. The BRS secretariat has provided inputs to preparation of INC-7 documents on the financial mechanism under the Minamata Convention (i.e. draft memorandum of understanding between the Minamata COP and the GEF Council set out in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/7 and on draft guidance to GEF set out in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/8).

22. The BRS secretariat cooperates and coordinates with the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention on other related financial resources issues. Pursuant to decisions BC-12/18, RC-7/8 and SC-7/22 on the implementation of the integrated approach to financing, the conferences of the parties to the BRS Conventions welcomed that, according to the terms of reference of the special programme, the Executive Secretary may participate as an observer in the meetings of the executive board of the special programme. The COPs also requested the Executive Secretary to attend such meetings and requested the BRS secretariat to cooperate, as appropriate, with the secretariat of the special programme.

⁵ The technical guidelines are available at:
[http://www.basel.int/Implementation/Publications/TechnicalGuidelines/
tabid/2362/Default.aspx](http://www.basel.int/Implementation/Publications/TechnicalGuidelines/tabid/2362/Default.aspx).

23. Accordingly, consultations and exchanges have taken place, as necessary, in relation to 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. The BRS secretariat has also been consulted by the interim secretariat on the preparation of the document for 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.

Activities pertaining to awareness-raising and technical assistance including regional centres

24. Another area of common interest among the four conventions pertains to awareness-raising and technical assistance, including regional centres under the Basel and Stockholm conventions.

25. At their meetings in May 2015, the conferences of the parties to the Basel and Stockholm conventions, in decisions BC-12/10 and SC-7/17, invited the regional centres undertaking activities on mercury to provide relevant information to the BRS secretariat in the view that it would be taken into account by the Secretariat in the next evaluation of the regional centres, in accordance with the applicable synergy criterion. The COPs also requested the BRS secretariat to forward that information to the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention for possible consideration by INC-7. Information in response to this request is submitted by the BRS secretariat to the INC-7 in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/INF/9.

26. The BRS secretariat has provided support to the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention for the organisation of subregional awareness-raising workshops in support for the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention. In addition to the support provided, the BRS secretariat shared experiences and lessons learned from the ratification and implementation of the BRS conventions, including any amendment thereof or Protocol thereto. This relates particularly to steps and technical modalities to follow towards the deposit of the instrument to consent to be bound. As at 20 June 2014, the BRS secretariat assisted with the organization of the workshops held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (19-21 March 2014), Nairobi, Kenya (23-23 April and 28-30 April 2014) and Dakar, Senegal (9-11 July and 14-16 July 2014). As part of this support, the secretariat also assisted with the organization of online training sessions in preparation for the above-mentioned subregional workshops.

27. The BRS secretariat has organized regional meetings to prepare for the meetings of the conferences of the parties held in 2015⁶ in conjunction with regional workshops organized by the interim secretariat to support ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention in March and April 2015. The back-to-back meetings featured joint discussions and provided opportunities to exchange information on experience gained from the implementation of the BRS conventions and on areas of common interest to the four conventions.

28. The annual joint meeting to enhance cooperation and coordination between the regional centres under the Basel and Stockholm conventions was held in Geneva, from 5 to 8 October 2015. A representative of the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention provided an update at the meeting on status of ratifications of the Minamata Convention, on preparations for the Mercury INC-7 and regional preparatory consultations. During the meeting, the regional centres exchanged information on their current activities involving the Minamata Convention as well as possible future activities.

29. As a follow up to a project for the development of inventories and management plans for hazardous wastes containing or contaminated with mercury in Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay, the Secretariat is disseminating the experience and results of the project in cooperation with the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre in Uruguay.

30. Furthermore, the BRS secretariat provided expertise to a mercury wastes workshop where participants discussed the current situation on mercury waste management at international level and in Asian countries, and to the inception workshop of the GEF funded Minamata Initial Assessment project implemented in Cambodia, Pakistan and Philippines. Both workshops were organized by UNEP IETC back-to-back in Osaka, from 16 to 18 December 2015.

⁶ The 2015 COPs regional preparatory meetings were requested in paragraph 2 of decisions BC-11/20, RC-6/19 and 6/25.

Activities pertaining to the servicing of meetings

31. The BRS secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention have taken steps to enhance their cooperation on the organisation and servicing of INCs and COPs meetings as well as regional preparatory meetings/consultations.

32. Staff from the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention provided support to the BRS secretariat during the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in Geneva, from 4 to 15 May 2015.

33. The BRS secretariat was consulted by the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention in the preparation of INC-7 documents in areas of relevance to the conventions. Upon request, the BRS secretariat has provided substantive inputs to documents where it has a particular expertise and experience. The BRS secretariat will be providing support to the interim secretariat in the running of the INC-7.

Other cooperative activities undertaken by the BRS secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention

34. The BRS secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention have taken steps to enhance their cooperation on other various matters, such as on joint outreach and communication as well as on overarching policy initiatives (e.g. efforts to mainstream chemicals and wastes into sustainable development goals, within the framework of 2030 sustainable development agenda). Other areas of mutual interest, such as compliance, may lead to cooperative activities in the future, as appropriate.

Appendix

Decisions BC-12/17, RC-7/9, SC-7/27: International cooperation and coordination

The Conference of the Parties

1. *Takes note* of the report by the Secretariat on international cooperation and coordination;⁷
2. *Joins* with the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme in emphasizing that the sound management of chemicals and wastes is an essential and cross-cutting element of sustainable development and is of great relevance to the sustainable development agenda;
3. *Highlights* the contribution of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement 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 to the protection of human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes through the sound management of chemicals and wastes;
4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to inform the co-facilitators for the consultations on the post-2015 development agenda under the United Nations General Assembly about the relevance of the conventions and the contribution that they can make to the implementation of that agenda and to provide input (for example information transmitted to the Secretariat in the national reports under the Basel and Stockholm conventions and scientific data prepared by the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee, the Chemical Review Committee and the Global Monitoring Plan under the Stockholm Convention) to the United Nations Statistical Commission and other relevant forums for the development of indicators relevant to the sound management of chemicals and wastes;
5. *Emphasizes* the importance of enhancing cooperation and coordination with other international bodies to facilitate the fulfilment of the objectives of the conventions, in particular within the chemicals and wastes cluster;
6. *Invites* the Environment Management Group to look at how the United Nations system can deliver in meeting the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals and wastes;
7. *Welcomes* United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 1/5 on chemicals and waste and requests the Executive Secretary to cooperate with the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme in fostering the implementation of that resolution and, more generally, on the continued and coordinated strengthening of the sound management of chemicals and wastes in the long term;
8. *Joins* the United Nations Environment Assembly in emphasizing the need for continued and strengthened multisectoral and multi-stakeholder involvement and requests the Executive Secretary to participate in the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and to ensure, within available resources, the effective involvement of the Secretariat in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;
9. *Also joins* the United Nations Environment Assembly in recognizing the continued relevance of the sound management of chemicals and wastes beyond 2020 and joins with the International Conference on Chemicals Management and others in stressing the importance of considering long-term policies, building on United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 1/5 and its annex, on strengthening the sound management of chemicals and wastes in the long term;
10. *Encourages* the organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals to present for consideration by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its fourth session specific policies and actions planned by each organization, within their own mandates, to meet the 2020 goal;
11. *Welcomes* cooperation and coordination between the Secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention and requests the Secretariat to continue and enhance such cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual interest with a view to fostering policy coherence, where appropriate, and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels;

⁷ UNEP/CHW.12/INF/31-UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.7/INF/20-UNEP/POPS/COP.7/INF/41.

12. *Requests* the Secretariat to continue:

(a) To enhance cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster, in particular to facilitate activities at the regional and country levels that would support the implementation of the agreements in the cluster in areas of mutual interest, and to consider which activities of the programmes of work may be effectively implemented in cooperation with other entities within the cluster;

(b) To enhance cooperation and coordination with other international bodies in areas of relevance to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, including in the areas and with the organizations listed in the aforementioned report;

(c) To report on the implementation of the present decision to the Conference of the Parties at its next meeting.

Annex II

UNITAR Report of activities to support the ratification of the Minamata Convention for 2015

Minamata Ratification Dossier project

In 2013, the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) from Switzerland provided UNITAR funding in support of the project “ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury”. The objective of this project is to accelerate the readiness of countries for the ratification of the Minamata Convention. These actions have assisted countries in identifying the most adequate approaches and the initial steps for ratification. The following table provides information on the project status and countries that have participated in this project:

Countries	Project Status
Armenia, Colombia, Gambia, Ghana, Jordan, Mongolia, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Uruguay	Either submitting final reports or finalizing activities
Senegal, Zambia and Nigeria	Ratification dossier prepared and project closed
Indonesia, Thailand and Yemen	Start in 2016

In addition to the above list of countries, in December 2015, the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) from Switzerland provided UNITAR funding to work with five additional countries on the same project. Invitations to participate will be sent to countries during the first quarter of 2016.

To date, three countries participating in the UNITAR projects have ratified the convention (Jordan, Mongolia and Uruguay). There are five additional countries at the final stages of ratification.

Additionally, UNITAR, in close collaboration with the Interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, has developed a Guidance note - “Advancing the National Ratification of the Minamata Convention” - to assist countries with the ratification process.

Minamata Initial Assessments (MIAs)

In 2014, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) invited countries to submit applications to develop a national assessment on mercury management to identify domestic mercury challenges and the extent to which existing legal and regulatory frameworks enable a country to implement future obligations under the Convention.

UNITAR, in close coordination with UNDP, UNEP and UNIDO, is currently supporting countries to develop their MIAs. At this moment, UNITAR is supporting more than 25 countries around the world to develop their MIAs.

In addition to the MIA development, UNITAR has assisted UNDP and IOMC organizations to develop guidance on MIA development. The guidance is nearing completion and is expected to be available in the next coming weeks.

MercuryLearn site and mercury inventory modules

In response to the increasing interest of countries to develop mercury emissions’ inventories and the subsequent high demand for guidance and training on this topic, UNEP and UNITAR agreed to collaborate on developing an online training platform: MercuryLearn. The platform currently hosts the training modules (for level 1 and 2) on mercury inventory development, which are based on the “Toolkit for identification and quantification of mercury releases”, produced by UNEP.

The main objectives of the MercuryLearn platform include:

- Support dissemination and enhance the usability of the UNEP Toolkit as a standard methodology to prepare national inventories of mercury emissions and releases;
- Increase interest by stakeholders and countries on preparing mercury inventories;
- Provide a platform for experts to exchange information and experiences in preparing inventories;
- Ensure consistency of inventory-development by using the UNEP toolkit as the standard method.

The mercury inventory training modules were launched in July 2015 and are open to anyone interested in mercury inventory development. UNITAR is currently working on an “offline” version of the modules to assist countries with limited or no internet access. The MercuryLearn platform can be found at: <http://mercurylearn.unitar.org/>

UNITAR is a proud and willing supporter of ratification and implementation of the Minamata Convention. We look forward to working collaboratively with the interim secretariat and other stakeholders in 2016.

Annex III

Work of the World Health Organization relevant to the Minamata Convention: August 2014 to December 2015

1. Collaboration between the World Health Organization and the INC and interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention stems from: the preamble of the Convention which recognizes the activities of WHO in the protection of human health related to mercury; Article 16 which establishes that the Conference of the Parties should consult and collaborate with WHO as appropriate in considering health-related issues, and promote cooperation and exchange of information with WHO; Resolution 3 of the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries which invites WHO to cooperate closely with the Conference of the Parties “to support the implementation of the Convention, particularly Article 16, and to provide information to the Conference of the Parties on the progress made in this regard”; and World Health Assembly Resolution WHA67.11.
2. In the period since WHO last communicated to the INC, i.e. August 2014 to December 2015, activities have focussed on: convening two regional workshops for ministries of health; issuing guidance relating to mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers and artisanal and small scale gold mining (ASGM); and implementing projects on dental amalgam and biomonitoring. Further information on these, plus other, activities is provided in the following sections.
3. In addition, WHO has provided technical advice to the interim Secretariat, to assist with responses to enquiries received.

Regional Meetings convened by WHO

4. WHO has convened a number of regional meetings to promote and discuss engagement of the health sector, in particular ministries of health, in the implementation of the Convention.
5. In June 2015, a meeting on *Health sector involvement in the implementation of the Minamata Convention: mercury exposure assessment and prevention* was convened by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, in Bonn, Germany, with financial support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety. The meeting was attended by the following Member States: Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkmenistan and Ukraine, and by representatives of international and non-governmental organizations and by a number of experts. Needs for capacity building and technical support to facilitate the implementation of the Convention in WHO European Region Member States were identified, including the development of human biomonitoring studies, strategy and policy development, training and capacity building, awareness raising (development of a toolkit to support implementation of article 16 on health aspects, and a fact sheet related to occupational mercury exposure) and information sharing and networking. Meeting participants acknowledged that actions related to the Convention should preferably be integrated with other health sector strategies; examples of entry points include food safety programs for control of methyl mercury exposure and national environment and health action plans.
6. A WHO workshop entitled *Health in implementing the Minamata Convention on Mercury* was organized by the WHO Regional Office for the Americas (PAHO) from 7-8 October 2015 in Montevideo, Uruguay, for Spanish-speakers. The workshop supported financially by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and PAHO, and was attended by the following Member States: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, as well as representatives of intergovernmental organizations, civil society and academia. The objective of the workshops was to promote understanding of the roles of the health sector in the implementation of the Convention and the related World Health Assembly resolution. A number of issues were addressed including the use of various mercury products in health care, ASGM, Article 16 on health aspects and the experience of ministries of health in preparation for ratification / implementation of the Convention. Participants prepared and signed a *Declaration of Montevideo* (reproduced in Annex I). The Declaration calls for ministries of health in Member States to designate a focal point to implement national measures in accordance with the provisions of the Minamata Convention.

Mercury-containing thermometers and sphygmomanometers

7. In 2015, WHO published guidance for ministries of health on *Developing national strategies for phasing-out mercury-containing thermometers and sphygmomanometers, including in the context of the Minamata Convention: Key considerations and step-by-step guidance*. This guidance aims to assist ministries of health with planning and leading the development of the system-wide (national) strategies that will now be required. A Russian language version also now available. http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury/en/

ASGM

8. WHO is developing tools, guidance and training materials to support countries to address the public health impacts of ASGM as well as support the development of public health strategies as required under Article 7 and Annex C of the Convention. Materials have been piloted in Mongolia (2013) and Ghana (2015) and are expected to be finalized in 2016.

9. On 1 – 2 October 2014, WHO, with financial support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, convened an expert meeting on Health in Artisanal Small Scale Gold Mining in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting discussed development of the public health strategy for national action plans to reduce or eliminate mercury emissions from ASGM. The suite of materials on ASGM and health under development comprises the following:

- a. guidance on how to conduct a rapid assessment of the health situation of ASGM miners and their family members;
- b. teaching materials for use in training health care providers about how to address environmental and occupational health issues associated with ASGM, including through awareness raising measures about options for reducing the use of/prevent further exposure to mercury;
- c. guidance on how to articulate public health strategies on ASGM including as part of wider National Action Plans developed with different sector stakeholders (e.g. mining, environment, etc.); and
- d. good practice guidance on the use of human bio monitoring in an ASGM context.

10. The WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia is working to integrate and apply some of the WHO tools, guidance and approaches developed in the context of gender, equity and human rights into the guidance materials currently under development for ASGM.

Dental amalgam

11. In partnership with UNEP, WHO has implemented pilot projects in three countries in West Africa relating to the phase down in use of dental amalgam. Currently the East Africa Dental Amalgam Phase down Project (EADAP) II is being implemented to expand and continue the efforts of the first phase of the project. EADAP II will include demonstration activities in additional dental clinics and examine approaches to ensure the sustainability of dental amalgam phase down, including specific needs for mercury waste management.

12. The WHO Regional Office for Europe has raised the awareness of phasing-down the use of dental materials through its annual meetings with ministries of health based Chief Dental Officers in Rome and Minsk. The meetings also emphasized the importance of pre- and continuing education on future dental materials.

13. WHO contributed to a report published by UNEP entitled *Lessons from countries phasing down dental amalgam*. WHO provided technical advice in planning of the background survey and the finalization of the survey report.

Biomonitoring

14. The WHO Regional Office for Europe, with input from WHO Headquarters, has been actively working with UNEP on the implementation of a global monitoring project to gather baseline information on mercury levels at a number of global sites. The project, entitled *Development of a Plan for Global Monitoring of Human Exposure to and Environmental Concentrations of Mercury*, funded by the GEF, will run for two years from 1 January 2015 and aims to harmonize approaches for the monitoring of mercury in humans and the environment, and strengthen capacity for the analysis of mercury in humans and the environment. WHO is implementing the biomonitoring component (including analysis of mercury contamination of human scalp hair, cord blood and urine) of the

project. WHO is also preparing related standard operating procedures, as well as procedures for the monitoring of mercury and methylmercury in fish and shellfish. A pilot survey to assess exposure to mercury is planned to begin in 2016 and training for representatives of potential pilot countries will take place in Slovenia in February 2016.

Other activities and collaborations

15. For the Bonn workshop, WHO published an Annotated Bibliography of Key Information from the World Health Organization relevant to the Minamata Convention on Mercury. A summary table listing the information relevant to each article of the Convention is provided in Annex II. The full document is available from: http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury/en/

16. The WHO Regional Office for Europe organized a Special Session on *Protecting human health from adverse impacts of mercury and its compounds: from science to policy and actions* during the 12th International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, with the objective of highlighting the support needed from the scientific community to implementation of the health aspects of the Convention. The main topics discussed during the Session included breaking down the barriers hindering medical research, assessment of health risks posed by mercury to vulnerable population groups, strengthening capacity of developing countries to address mercury problems, improvement of advisory systems for communication of methyl mercury risks to public, and development of a harmonized scheme for assessing human exposure to mercury on the global scale. The abstract was published in the Conference book⁸.

17. The WHO Regional Office for Europe convened an expert group meeting from 29 September - 1 October 2015 on *Available evidence for the future update of the WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines*. In relation to the WHO air quality guideline value for inorganic mercury, the following was agreed “considering the limited new health evidence from inorganic mercury, the relatively low direct contribution to human exposure through air (levels of inorganic mercury in air are extremely low), and that a UN convention exists specifically addressing mercury, experts agreed in the context of this process that there is no need for immediate re-evaluation of the evidence”.

18. WHO regional offices participated in almost all of the first series of the UNEP sub-regional workshops on ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention. The WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia financially supported the participation of health ministries in the workshop held in New Delhi.

19. WHO, together with the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, convened a workshop on *Prevention-intervention strategies to reduce exposure to e-waste* in Depok, West Java in August 2015. Topics discussed include risk communication and capacity building to reduce exposure to chemicals via e-waste, including mercury.

20. WHO published an article in the Pan American Journal of Public Health on the proper design and dissemination of fish advisories within the context of implementation of the Convention⁹.

21. WHO participates in the IOMC Mercury Group, established to coordinate the work of the IOMC organizations on mercury, in particular, to support a harmonized approach in the implementation of MIA and NAP projects.

22. WHO participates in the DC ASGM round table quarterly meetings in Washington DC organized by the Natural Resources Defense Council, to exchange information on projects, programs and networking opportunities to foster further collaboration among institutions.

⁸ Implementation of the Minamata Convention in the health sector: the role of WHO. I.Zastenskaya1, N. Hassan, C. Vickers, E. Paunovic, D.Jarosinska/ ICMGP 2015 KOREA 12th International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, June 14-19, 2015. Jeju Korea www.mercury2015.com.

⁹ PAHO Bulletin of Public Health publication: Boischio A. Developmental neurotoxicity: methylmercury and prenatal exposure protection in the context of the Minamata Convention. Rev Panam Salud Publica. 2015; 38(4):243-247.

Appendix I – Montevideo Declaration on the Minamata Convention

Montevideo Declaration on the Minamata Convention

8 October 2015

The representatives of the Ministries of Health of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, and of civil society and academia, meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 8 October 2015 at the WORKSHOP ON HEALTH IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

The Parties,

Recognizing that mercury is a chemical of global concern owing to its long-range atmospheric transport, its persistence in the environment once anthropogenically introduced, its ability to bioaccumulate in ecosystems and its significant negative effects on human health and the environment,

Noting that the Minamata Convention contains an article on health-related aspects in addition to other relevant provisions, and that the Convention imposes a number of obligations on Parties, requiring, where applicable, the adoption of measures for the health and allied sectors such as the gradual elimination, through the prohibition of the manufacture, import or export prior to 2020, according to the dates of entry into force of the Convention, of mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers, cosmetics containing mercury — including skin lightening soaps and creams — , topical antiseptics containing mercury and dental amalgam with added mercury, and the development of public-health strategies in national action plans to eliminate or reduce the use of mercury in the mining industry, unless the amounts involved are declared to be negligible;

Endorsing the implementation of World Health Assembly resolution WHA67.11 of May 2014 on the role of WHO and ministries of health in the Minamata Convention on Mercury;

Recalling the public health impacts of exposure to mercury and mercury compounds: the role of WHO and ministries of public health in the implementation of the Minamata Convention;

Recalling the renewed commitments of the post 2015 development agenda (25-27 September 2015), the sustainable development goals contained in the final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Río+20) (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012) entitled “The Future We Want”, the 2010 Adelaide Declaration on Health in All Policies, and the 8th Global Conference on Health Promotion, held in Helsinki in 2013, which called for collaboration between all sectors to promote public health, with a plan of action adopted by PAHO in 2014, the Universal Health Coverage policy and strategy adopted by PAHO in 2013; and the Declaration of the Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Associated States on the Management of Chemical Substances (June 2013), signed at the 34th meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay;

Recalling that the objective of the Minamata Convention on Mercury is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds;

Mindful that the Minamata Convention on Mercury encourages Parties to:

(a) Promote the development and implementation of strategies and programmes to identify and protect populations at risk, particularly vulnerable populations, and which may include adopting science-based health guidelines relating to exposure to mercury and mercury compounds, setting targets for mercury exposure reduction, where appropriate, and public education, with the participation of public health and other involved sectors;

(b) Promote the development and implementation of science-based educational and preventive programmes on occupational exposure to mercury and mercury compounds;

(c) Promote appropriate health-care services for prevention, treatment and care for populations affected by exposure to mercury or mercury compounds; and

(d) Establish and strengthen, as appropriate, the institutional and health professional capacities for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of health risks related to exposure to mercury and mercury compounds;

Stressing the importance of financial, technical, technological, and capacity-building support, particularly for developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, in order to strengthen national capabilities for the management of mercury and to promote the effective implementation of the Convention;

Noting that nothing in this Convention prevents a Party from taking additional domestic measures consistent with the provisions of this Convention in an effort to protect human health and the environment from exposure to mercury in accordance with that Party's other obligations under applicable international law;

Have agreed that:

(a) It is vitally important that WHO/PAHO support the implementation and coordination of activities to advise and support Member States in their efforts to enforce the Minamata Convention on Mercury, including mobilizing funds and in respect of all other health-related aspects envisaged in WHO/PAHO work programmes, with a view to promoting and protecting human health;

(b) WHO/PAHO must support Member States in developing and implementing strategies and programmes to identify and protect populations at risk, particularly vulnerable populations, including communities in areas affected by artisanal or small-scale gold mining, which could include the approval of science-based health guidelines relating to exposure to mercury and mercury compounds, setting targets for mercury exposure reduction, where appropriate, and public education, with the participation of public health and other involved sectors;

(c) it is necessary and appropriate that ministries of health in Member States should designate a focal point to implement national measures in accordance with the provisions of the Minamata Convention.

Appendix II - Index of Key WHO Information organized by Article of the Minamata Convention

Table 1. WHO information resources in relation to the articles of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Down the side are the WHO information resources. Across the top are the articles of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (directly) linked to human health issues. Article 4: Mercury- added products, 5: Manufacturing processes in which mercury or mercury compounds are used, 7: Artisanal and small-scale gold mining, 8: Emissions, 9: Releases, 16: Health aspects, 17: Information exchange, 18: Public information, awareness and education, 19: Research, development and monitoring, 20: Implementation plans, 21: Reporting, 22: Effectiveness evaluation. Note that article 1 refers to the objective of the Convention to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds, and is therefore overarching.

WHO Information resources	Articles of Minamata Convention											
	4	5	7	8	9	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<i>WHO fact sheet –</i> -WHO Fact Sheet on mercury (2013)			X			X		X				
<i>Thermometers (for medical use) and Sphygmomanometers –</i> -Developing national strategies for phasing out mercury-containing thermometers and sphygmomanometers in health care, including in the context of the Minamata Convention on Mercury: key considerations and step-by-step guidance (2015); -Replacement of mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers in health care (2011); -A new solar-powered blood pressure measuring device for low-resource settings (2010).	X					X	X					
<i>Skin Lightening Products-</i> -Mercury in Skin Lightening Products (2011).	X							X	X			
<i>Dental Amalgam-</i> Future use of materials for dental restoration (2010); -Promoting the phase down of dental amalgam in developing countries (2014); -East Africa Dental Amalgam Phase-Down Project	X						X	X		X		
<i>Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining -</i> -Mercury Exposure and Health Impacts among Individuals in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Community: A Comprehensive Review (2014); -Mercury Exposure and Health Impacts among Individuals in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Community (2014); -Hydrogen cyanide and cyanides (2004); -International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSC) on a number of cyanide compounds; -IPCS/CEC Evaluation of Antidotes Series- Antidotes for Poisoning by Cyanide (1993); -Integrated Management of Adolescent and Adult Illness district clinician manual: Hospital care for adolescents and adults (2011); - Developing national public health strategies on ASGM, including in the context of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (forthcoming 2015); -Conducting health situation assessments in the context of ASGM (forthcoming 2015); -Training materials (forthcoming 2015)- for training health care providers on how to identify and address environmental and occupational health issues associated with ASGM.			X			X	X		X			
<i>WHO Health Guidelines on air, drinking water and dietary intake-</i> -WHO Air Quality Guidelines (2000);				X		X	X		X			

