

Ref: MC/ES/2021/31

Geneva, 6 May 2021

Subject: Information on the work of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in the field of gender

Dear Madam/Sir,

The Secretariat of the Minamata Convention is pleased to update the Parties to the Minamata Convention on the latest developments and activities carried out by the Secretariat in the field of gender and mercury.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury preamble notes awareness of "health concerns, especially in developing countries, resulting from exposure to mercury of vulnerable populations, especially women, children, and through them future generations." Furthermore, National Action Plans to address artisanal and small-scale gold mining are to include strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of childbearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Principles of gender equality are also embedded in the current Programme of Work of the Minamata Convention, including through the support delivered under the capacity-building and technical assistance programme.

Firstly, I am delighted to inform you that I nominated Ms. Lara Ognibene, Legal/Programme Officer, to act as gender focal point within the Secretariat's team. Ms. Ognibene has been coordinating gender activities since November 2020 and is the Secretariat representative in the network of MEA gender focal points established by UNEP in December 2020.

Thanks to the generous financial support of Sweden, the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention has undertaken several activities with the objective of mainstreaming gender within its programme of work. In November 2020, the Secretariat issued a [call for information on gender and mercury](#) inviting Parties and interested stakeholders to submit scientific, technical and policy information on gender and mercury. The Secretariat received submissions from 10 countries and 16 stakeholders, for which I would like to thank all the submitters. The information was used to develop communication and awareness raising material, including a [Minamata insight publication on gender and mercury](#) and a [video](#), which was launched by the Secretariat on 2020 International Women's Day. The Secretariat is also planning to further share information on gender during dedicated online events, such as a [Minamata Online](#) session, an online training course on gender and mercury, and a side-event during the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Furthermore, the Secretariat developed an internal gender roadmap, which analyses current initiatives undertaken by other MEAs and UN bodies in the field of gender and identifies priority actions to be undertaken by the Secretariat with the objective of mainstreaming gender within the programme of work. The Secretariat will prepare a document on gender for consideration by the COP at its fourth meeting.

Women's equality and empowerment is key not only to the effective implementation of the Convention but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all Sustainable Development Goals depend on the achievement of Goal 5 on Gender Equality. The Secretariat is looking



forward to collaborating with Parties and stakeholders to further recognize the importance of this issue and to identify concrete actions to further mainstream gender in the programme of work of the Convention.

As always, I thank you for your work on the implementation of the Minamata Convention and your commitment to [#MakeMercuryHistory](#).

Yours sincerely,

Monika Stankiewicz

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Executive Secretary

To: National Focal Points for the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Cc: Governments through their official channels of communication to the UN Environment Programme

Permanent Missions to the UN Environment Programme and to the UN in Geneva