



Distr.: General  
7 July 2017

Original: English



## United Nations Environment Programme

---

### Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury First meeting

Geneva, 24–29 September 2017

Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda\*

### Matters for action by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting: programme of work of the secretariat and budget for the period 2018–2019

## Progress report on the work of the interim secretariat in the period since the seventh 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 to prepare a global legally binding instrument 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.7/21) was presented to the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its seventh session, held from 10 to 15 March 2016 at the Dead Sea, Jordan. The present report summarizes the major activities undertaken by the interim secretariat since the committee's seventh session, covering both its work to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, including intersessional work requested by the committee at its seventh session, and its work in support of the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention.

---

\* UNEP/MC/COP.1/1.

## **II. Support for the preparations for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, including intersessional work requested by the intergovernmental negotiating committee**

### **A. First meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury**

3. The interim secretariat is in the process of organizing the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention. That process has included drafting and sending out invitation letters, establishing an online pre-registration platform, developing models of credentials to be submitted by Parties, reviewing requests for the admission of observers and organizing logistical matters in relation to the 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 Conference of the Parties at the meeting.

4. Logistical activities have been undertaken with the support of staff members of the Chemicals and Health Branch of the Economy Division of UNEP. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has provided input to relevant documents. Both the Chemicals and Health Branch and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions will be providing support to the interim secretariat to facilitate the running of the meeting.

5. The preparation of technical material, in particular meeting documents, has been led by the interim secretariat. As requested by the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its seventh session, documents have been prepared in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, in particular national Governments, including parties to the Basel Convention, regional and subregional monitoring programmes and partnerships, the World Health Organization (WHO), regional representatives, regional and national institutions, academia, industry, civil society, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and others as appropriate. During the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, the secretariat was asked to seek input from Governments and a range of other interested stakeholders on a number of issues to be considered at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The submissions received are available on the Minamata Convention website. A group of experts has provided input for the draft guidance on environmentally sound interim storage of mercury and mercury compounds other than waste mercury. Draft guidance documents on environmentally sound interim storage and on the development of a national action plan to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining have also been opened for public comment. In addition, an informal process on the establishment of mercury waste thresholds has been undertaken, led by the Government of Japan.

6. A number of the documents for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties have not required substantive work because they simply present material adopted or agreed upon on a provisional basis by the intergovernmental negotiating committee. In some cases, however, the interim secretariat has amended these documents as requested by the committee, as described in the report of the committee's seventh session (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/22/Rev.1).

7. 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 would perform the functions of the permanent secretariat for the Convention (UNEP/MC/COP.1/14), as well as in the presentation and structure of the programme of work and budget for the secretariat (UNEP/MC/COP.1/21 and Add.1).

8. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has provided input on the guidance document on artisanal and small-scale gold mining, particularly in taking into consideration comments received during the intersessional period. Input was also sought from WHO, in particular in relation to draft guidance on public health aspects of the preparation of national action plans. The interim secretariat worked closely with the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in finalizing the documents relating to a draft memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention and the GEF Council, as well as on draft guidance to GEF.

9. In addition to its 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 provide information on its activities in support of the Convention for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Accordingly, a progress report on activities under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (UNEP/MC/COP.1/INF/2), a report on GEF activities (UNEP/MC/COP.1/INF/3), a report on the activities 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 (UNEP/MC/COP.1/INF/4) and a report on activities undertaken by all other partner organizations (UNEP/MC/COP.1/INF/5) will be available for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

## **B. Meetings of the bureau of the intergovernmental negotiating committee**

10. Since the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, three meetings of the committee's bureau have been held, on 24 and 25 August 2016 in Livingstone, Zambia, on 12 January 2017 in Haikou, Hainan Province, China and on 3 and 4 July 2017 in Bangkok. The Government of Switzerland, which will host the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Geneva, was represented as an observer at the meetings. Among others, the main objectives of these meetings were to take stock of the outcome of the committee's seventh session, to ensure adequate planning for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, including in particular its high-level segment, to consider the issues to be addressed, to discuss strategic and policy matters and to develop logistical plans for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Reports of the bureau meetings are available on the Convention website.<sup>1</sup> Cooperation with the secretariats of GEF and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in particular was also addressed at the meetings, through briefings provided by the two secretariats.

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

## **C. Regional meetings in preparation for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

11. In preparation for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, the interim secretariat is organizing a series of regional consultations for the African, Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern European and Central Asian, and Latin American and the Caribbean regions. These consultations were called for by a number of Governments to allow the regions to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with particular attention to ensuring full participation from the regions. These meetings are being held as follows:

- (a) For Asia-Pacific, from 5 to 7 July 2017 in Bangkok;
- (b) For Africa, from 11 to 13 July, in Johannesburg, South Africa;
- (c) For Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, on 12 and 13 July 2017 in Brno, Czechia;
- (d) For Latin America and the Caribbean, from 25 to 28 July 2017 in Buenos Aires.

12. The overall objective of these consultations is to contribute to the success of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties by giving Parties and countries in the regions the opportunity to consult one other in advance of the meeting, to consider meeting documents, to discuss substantive matters on the agenda, to identify regional priorities and challenges and to facilitate the preparation of regional positions. The meetings will also provide an opportunity for the regions to consider the membership of the bureau for the Conference of the Parties, as well as membership of the implementation and compliance committee under the Convention. The regional consultations will include presentation by the interim secretariat of the documents for the first meeting, followed by discussions among Governments and possible development of positions on the issues to be addressed at the meeting. The provisional programme for each regional consultation has been developed in cooperation with the members of the intergovernmental negotiating committee bureau from the region.

13. The regional consultations are being organized by the interim secretariat in cooperation with Basel and Stockholm convention regional centres for the African region, the Central and Eastern European and Central Asian region and the Latin American and the Caribbean region and with the Asia Office of the United Nations Environment Programme for the Asia-Pacific region and in close

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

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 and the European Commission as principal contributors.

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

14. In addition to its work in support of the intergovernmental negotiating committee and its activities and the work to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the interim secretariat has supported activities at the national and regional levels to facilitate the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention.

#### **A. Organization of Minamata Convention working sessions**

15. In cooperation with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and relevant regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm conventions, the interim secretariat has organized working sessions on the Minamata Convention on Mercury. These sessions were held back to back with the preparatory meetings for the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. The working sessions were held as follows:

- (a) Asia-Pacific: 9 to 10 March 2017, Bangkok;
- (b) Africa: 17 March 2017, Dakar;
- (c) Central and Eastern Europe: 24 March 2017, Riga;
- (d) Latin America and the Caribbean: 27 to 31 March 2017, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

16. The objective of these working sessions was to provide an opportunity for a brief presentation of the objectives of the Convention, as well as an opportunity for countries to present their preparation for implementation and ratification, and to highlight particular challenges or successes. The working sessions also offered an opportunity for input and comments on certain issues to be presented at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in particular the guidance on the development of national action plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining, as well as the development of guidance on contaminated sites. There was also an opportunity to discuss specific technical issues relevant to each region. The secretariats of the United Nations Development Programme, UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and WHO all contributed to the Minamata working sessions.

17. Information on the regional working sessions is available at [www.mercuryconvention.org/AwarenessRaising/Workshops/tabid/3800/Default.aspx](http://www.mercuryconvention.org/AwarenessRaising/Workshops/tabid/3800/Default.aspx).

#### **B. Support for pilot projects at the national and regional levels**

18. The interim secretariat continued its support for pilot projects at the national level to promote activities intended to assist with ratification and implementation of the Convention in a number of countries. Key activities undertaken at the country level included preparatory work towards the development of national action plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining. 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 Asia-Pacific region. The interim secretariat also participates actively, upon request, in enabling activities related to Minamata initial assessments and the development of national action plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining, including by reviewing legal assessments and final project reports provided by the implementing agencies, as well as through the development of presentations on the Convention for project inception workshops.

#### **C. Additional outreach and awareness-raising activities**

19. 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 seventh 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. The website now provides, in addition to outreach and awareness-raising information, all the guidance documents and relevant forms adopted on a provisional basis by the committee to facilitate their use in the implementation of the Convention.

The Convention website has been translated and is now available and updated in English, French and Spanish.

20. The interim secretariat has also collaborated with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research on an online training platform, MercuryLearn, and has contributed, through the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Information and Knowledge Management Initiative, an online introductory course on the Minamata Convention that appears on the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA).

21. The interim secretariat has also developed a series of fact sheets, “Becoming a Party to the Minamata Convention on Mercury”, “Minamata Convention on Mercury at a glance”, and “Key control measures under the Minamata Convention”, which are available in English, French and Spanish on the Convention website.

22. Finally, the interim secretariat has contributed to the delivery of webinars on various aspects of the Minamata Convention, including emissions and artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

#### **IV. Other activities undertaken by the interim secretariat**

23. The interim secretariat has taken part in a number of processes along with the Chemicals and Health Branch, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions secretariat and the secretariat of the Strategic Approach, including the review of projects submitted under 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.

24. Members of the interim secretariat also 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 24 April to 5 May 2017.

25. The interim secretariat has also attended meetings of the GEF Council, as well as meetings on the seventh replenishment of the GEF trust fund. The interim secretariat has also contributed to the development of the documents for the discussions on the seventh replenishment of the GEF trust fund and continues to review and comment on the documents as they are further developed. The secretariat also participated in a number of meetings relevant to mercury and the chemicals and waste agenda, namely, the annual joint meeting to enhance cooperation and coordination between regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm conventions, held in Geneva from 31 October to 2 November 2016, the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and meetings held under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe, in particular regarding the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and will participate in the thirteenth International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, to be held in Providence, Rhode Island, United States of America, from 16 to 21 July 2017.

#### **V. Financing for the work of the interim secretariat**

26. 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 Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America and by the European Union.

#### **VI. Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties**

27. The Conference of the Parties may wish to take note of the activities of the interim secretariat to date, in particular during its consideration of the proposed programme of work and budget for the permanent secretariat, taking note of new activities that may be required following entry into force of the Convention and the additional resources that such activities may require.