



MERCURY INC6 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2014

INC6 delegates convened in plenary on Tuesday morning, during which Chair Lugris announced that Nicaragua had become the eighth country to ratify the Minamata Convention. In the afternoon, plenary was suspended to allow delegates to meet in contact groups on technical issues and finance. Both groups continued working into the evening.

WORK TO PREPARE FOR ENTRY INTO FORCE AND COPI

ARTICLE 13. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISM: The Secretariat introduced the documents (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/20; UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/21; UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/23; and UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/8).

The EU highlighted the need to use the time at INC6 to facilitate the construction of guidance for GEF support, working in cooperation with the GEF Secretariat.

Paraguay, for GRULAC, underscored the need to ensure additional funding for promoting technical assistance and capacity building.

Zambia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, highlighted the special needs of African countries, which should be reflected in a future Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the GEF and the Minamata Secretariat, and said countries that have expressed interest in signing the Convention should also be eligible for funding. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, with INDIA and EGYPT, expressed concern that countries are not eligible for GEF funds until they have signed the Convention.

CHINA underscored the importance of ensuring GEF's accountability to the Convention, called for operational funding mechanisms by the COP, and, supported by INDIA, suggested looking to the Green Climate Fund, Montreal Protocol and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification as models. EGYPT proposed that countries taking steps toward signing the Convention should be assisted through GEF financial resources and the specific international Programme.

Noting its current issues with conditionality of GEF funds, IRAN said the GEF should provide adequate reasons to parties if it decides not to finance adopted projects.

SWITZERLAND and NORWAY supported the GEF guidance, which proposes an initial focus on assessment activities and artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM). SWITZERLAND called delegates to ensure "lean administration" of the specific international Programme and to complement the existing financing and governance of the chemicals and waste regime.

INDIA underscored the need for a working relationship between the COP and the GEF.

JAPAN called for avoiding duplication of contributions to the specific international Programme, the GEF trust fund, the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening established by the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), and activities already covered by other international treaties. He recommended prioritizing work or activities specific to mercury, such as ASGM and the establishment of inventories.

URUGUAY highlighted a current regional project on mercury pollution and underscored the value of the BRS regional centers in coordinating technical assistance.

Chair Lugris proposed, and delegates agreed, to establish a contact group on the financial mechanism, to be co-chaired by Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica) and Greg Phillip (Canada).

ARTICLE 8. EMISSIONS: The Secretariat introduced UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/10, which sets out the terms of reference for the group of technical experts on BAT/BEP as a subsidiary body of the INC. She noted that an informal summary of the group's first meeting is contained as an annex to the document.

John Roberts (UK), Co-Chair of the BAT/BEP expert group, reported the outcomes of the group's second meeting and noted the group's aim to ensure consistency with standards and techniques adopted by the other chemicals conventions. He said a third meeting would be held in March 2015 to finalize a full draft report for review by parties ahead of INC7.

KENYA asked whether the group has developed guidance on how to carry out initial rapid monitoring at country level using existing technical capacities, in order to create baselines for policymaking. In response, the secretariat highlighted the UNEP toolkit as a useful starting point but said additional studies may be required to determine a baseline and monitor progress on sources relevant to Article 8.

CHILE requested clarification on whether the group will also prepare guidance on inventories.

In response to a question from BELARUS on how to provide technical input, Chair Lugris noted that this can be done via both the designated experts and the review process that will be undertaken once the draft report becomes available.

INC6 adopted the amended rules of procedure of the technical group.

ARTICLE 9. RELEASES: The Secretariat introduced document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/15 on initial information on sources of releases and methodology for the development of inventories.

GUINEA asked if countries should wait for the conclusion of this work before taking action. The Secretariat emphasized that the Toolkit for Identification and Quantification for Mercury



Releases is functional, and said ongoing work is on the nature of the formal guidance on the methodology for preparing inventories of releases, to be adopted by COP1.

ARTICLE 21. REPORTING: The Secretariat introduced the draft proposal on reporting format and frequency (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/11/Rev.1). CANADA then introduced its proposal for the reporting format, noting that updates would be provided without having to transcribe previously submitted information, similar to the approach taken under the Basel Convention.

JAPAN supported Canada's proposal and a four-year reporting cycle. COLOMBIA also supported Canada's proposal, declaring that such information will be helpful particularly in the long term and is a good basis for developing a databank of information.

Zambia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested reporting should occur more often than every four years. NIGERIA supported annual reporting, saying reporting at four-year intervals would not allow for effective monitoring of implementation of the Convention. NAMIBIA supported frequent reporting and highlighted the need for funds to support information gathering for reporting purposes.

NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and the EU called for a user-friendly electronic reporting system and supported a four-year cycle for most information, with more frequent reports on information related to trade flows. SWITZERLAND noted that the four-year timeline would harmonize with the BRS reporting cycle.

EGYPT underscored the need for coordination with the Basel Convention in order to avoid duplication of work. The EU called for close cooperation with the BRS Secretariat.

CHINA said reporting basic information should be required while provision of supplementary information should be voluntary.

The US said the first round of reporting should occur no later than one year after the Convention's entry into force, as the information will be essential to early implementation. He proposed harmonizing reporting with the three-year reporting required on ASGM and suggested distinguishing between aspects of the Convention with and without explicit reporting obligations. He suggested further discussion of reporting issues in a contact group.

IRAN proposed limiting the scope of reporting to what is required under the Convention and providing a section in which parties can choose to provide other information if desired. PAKISTAN, supported by INDIA, favored keeping the reporting format simple and in strict accordance with Article 21, with the option to further elaborate reporting requirements as countries build capacity.

The ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP said information should be collected frequently, noting that the Montreal Protocol requires annual reporting on CFC production and trade, and suggested that copies of trade consent forms be provided to the secretariat as a form of reporting. He also called for including additional information on measures taken to discourage new mercury product types and decommissioning of chlor-alkali plants.

Delegates agreed to refer the issue to the contact group on technical issues for further discussion.

CONTACT GROUPS

In the afternoon, plenary was suspended to allow the two contact groups to meet. Both groups worked late into the evening and will reconvene on Wednesday.

Technical Issues: The group conducted a first reading of technical guidance on: the process by which a party may seek an exemption from the obligation to phase out products or processes listed in Annexes A or B of Article 6; and the provision of written consent or general notification for the import or export of mercury (Article 3).

On exemptions, participants used the document on integrated guidance submitted by the US (CRP.2) as the basis for their discussions. Divergent views were expressed on whether to include a detailed list of product and process sub-categories, with the majority calling for a simple and flexible format that allows countries to describe the products and processes for which they seek exemption and their reasons for doing so.

On notifications, the group based their discussion on CRP.1, submitted by the US. With regard to information to be provided by the importing party on the purpose, delegates called for specifying whether it relates to environmentally-sound interim storage or other uses as allowed for under the Convention. With regard to shipment information to be provided by the exporting country, some delegates called for inclusion of additional information, such as transit countries and sources of mercury, in line with the principle of informed consent. Others cautioned against expanding the scope of the Convention and noted that such information can be requested under existing national laws.

Finance: On eligibility for GEF financing, delegates considered text from negotiations of the Stockholm Convention and Nagoya Protocol stating that developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are signatories or in the process of becoming parties should be eligible for financial support. Delegates favored latitude to allow non-signatory countries to access financing to support activities toward signing and ratification. They requested the Secretariat to merge elements of the texts and present a draft for further discussion.

On elements of an MOU between the COP and the GEF Council, delegates discussed preparation of initial guidelines on: pre-entry into force; the interim period between entry into force and COP1; and the post-COP1 period. The discussion clarified that the MOU would define the roles and responsibilities of each body.

On GEF guidelines for Minamata Convention Initial Assessment Activities (MIA), delegates discussed the GEF's indicative list of categories of activities to be funded. Several participants called for awareness-raising activities, while others cautioned that such activities may depart from the concept of "initial assessment."

Delegates requested that aspects of Article 16, on health, be reflected in the guidelines. They favored defining broad principles for funding activities, such as ensuring value for money and prioritizing "low-hanging fruit."

IN THE CORRIDORS

INC6 started Tuesday on a positive note with Chair Lugris' announcement that Nicaragua had become the newest signatory to ratify the Minamata Convention, bringing the total number of parties to eight. The push for speedy ratifications was supported by a lunchtime side event, hosted by UNITAR and funded by the Swiss government, during which representatives of the BRS Conventions, the Interim Secretary of the Minamata Convention and several developing countries shared ideas for encouraging early ratification.

However, not all INC6 delegates were optimistic about the chances of achieving the "50 by 2015" goal. One participant highlighted political barriers such as lack of awareness or coordination among ministries at the national level, saying, "Signing the Convention goes way beyond legal issues." An NGO delegate underscored the need for grassroots action, characterizing initiatives to raise the public profile of the Minamata Convention as "comparatively weak." He contended that this has made rallying domestic support for ratification all the more difficult, and said advocacy organizations must play a much bigger role in mobilizing action.