



MERCURY INC7 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 2016

The seventh session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to Prepare a Global Legally Binding Instrument on Mercury (INC7) opened Thursday and is scheduled to conclude on Tuesday, March 15 in Jordan. Plenary convened in the morning and afternoon.

OPENING CEREMONY

Jacob Duer, interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention, welcomed participants and, noting that this is the largest INC to date, highlighted the participation of numerous intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

Saying that the Minamata Convention's first meeting of the COP is "just around the corner," INC Chair Fernando Lugris (Uruguay) asked participants to engage in INC7 with "an appetite for hard work" to address technical, operational and political issues during what is expected to be the last INC meeting.

Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) called for a systemic life-cycle approach to address mercury poisoning, based on public-private cooperation in countries of both North and South. Noting that pollutants kill nine million people a year globally, he highlighted that action under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development integrates health, security and production concerns with regard to issues that cannot be tackled by countries on their own. He referred to the Montreal Protocol as a model for the integration of science, policy and action to address a shared global problem.

On behalf of King Abdullah II, Taher Shakhshir, Minister of Environment, Jordan, called for INC7 to take the necessary measures to implement global mercury control, and drew attention to the Kingdom's environmental protection initiatives. He reiterated his country's commitment to enhance the implementation of the Minamata Convention, including through the initiation of a national mercury needs assessment study and a process for the identification and disposal of products containing mercury.

Delegates then watched a cultural performance and heard from youth members of the national conservation club.

PLENARY

Chair Lugris opened the afternoon session and outlined the provisional agenda which was adopted without amendment (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/1). He proposed organizing the agenda according to technical issues, financial issues, effectiveness evaluation, and legal issues and rules. He said that it is vital to finalize work in preparation for COP1.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Jordan, for the ARAB GROUP, called for the adoption of guidance documents, including for BAT/BEP, which he said should include low thresholds

for mercury wastes. He underlined the need for procedures to facilitate financial flows and for the specific international programme (SIP) to support institution building at the national level.

The EU called for the provisional adoption of all the documents requested by the diplomatic conference and announced that the EU has begun legislative procedures to ratify the Minamata Convention.

Japan, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, highlighted the importance of the draft guidance documents on the identification of mercury stocks and BAT/BEP, and said both should include options for parties. He underscored the relationship between technical options and the means to implement those options.

Uruguay, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP, noted the importance of capacity building to support effectiveness evaluation. He underscored the need for financing through the SIP to be additional to support allocated to other chemicals conventions.

Zambia, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, called for simplifying the forms for notification of consent to import mercury. He urged prioritizing support for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) in Africa in, for example, the development of funding proposals, reduction of required co-financing contributions, and relaxation of eligibility criteria for participation in the SIP to include all African countries. He proposed that UNEP host the SIP. He looked forward to development of comprehensive guidance on management of contaminated sites.

The Russian Federation, for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE GROUP (CEE), said almost all countries in the region are working towards ratification and implementation of the Convention.

SWITZERLAND reported on its provision of support for ratification of the Convention in 20 countries and its plans to support another 15. He outlined tasks to be completed before COP1, including adoption of BAT/BEP guidance, drafting of guidance to assist parties to complete the forms required under Article 3, and guidance on identification of individual stocks of mercury and mercury compounds, and their sources of supply. He highlighted the need for further guidance to be developed on: environmentally-sound interim storage; effectiveness evaluation; and contaminated sites.

Reiterating his country's commitment to the prevention and control of heavy metals including mercury, CHINA underscored the need for delegates to respect the 1992 Rio Convention principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in INC7 discussions.

NIGERIA noted his country's collaboration with the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in conducting pre-ratification activities, and drew attention to the development



of a national implementation plan for mercury in ASGM. KENYA welcomed the offer by Switzerland to host the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention.

The PHILIPPINES reported on the intersessional meeting of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, noting progress on, *inter alia*, addressing dental amalgam in East Africa, and collaborative work on the ASGM guidance.

Drawing attention to the links between a mercury-free world and social and economic development, INDONESIA stressed the importance of technology transfer for the implementation of the Convention. Lamenting the absence of a mercury-specific Sustainable Development Goal, IRAQ called for safe alternatives to mercury-containing products, as well as “rational financing” for Convention implementation.

JAPAN stressed its commitment to playing a leading role through, *inter alia*, organizing high-level events, assisting with mercury monitoring, preparing national inventories and capacity building. CHILE highlighted national initiatives on mercury and said the Convention will be a “compass and guide” for future legislation.

Noting its progress in replacing mercury thermometers and fully phasing out dental amalgam by 2020, INDIA called for capacity-building measures.

AFGHANISTAN underscored its commitment to ensuring that the economic benefits of mining are not undermined by damage to the environment, and welcomed technical support for managing hazardous waste.

KUWAIT highlighted national initiatives including the creation of an environmental police unit and a national committee on mercury including relevant stakeholders. She noted the need to provide technical assistance to support national capacity building.

The US called for prioritizing action on mercury emissions from coal fired power plants as well as mercury in ASGM, and supported the draft guidance for national priorities for ASGM.

IRAN announced that it is undertaking the last steps to deposit its instrument of ratification. Noting support received from UNEP, UNITAR and the Government of Switzerland, ZAMBIA informed INC7 that its instruments of ratification are complete and awaiting deposit. SENEGAL announced its ratification of the Convention and expressed appreciation to the GEF and UNIDO for their support in this process.

GUINEA called for financial and technical assistance to promote swift implementation, thanking the Government of Switzerland, UNITAR, UNIDO and others that have already provided assistance.

Noting mercury use in the health and mining sectors in his country, BURKINA FASO reiterated commitment to ratification of the Convention. TOGO called for assistance in raising awareness at the national level and underscored the need for alternatives to mercury-containing products in the energy sector.

THAILAND highlighted the establishment of a national committee on mercury and the creation of a national action plan for ratification.

SOUTH AFRICA highlighted its enactment of air quality and waste management acts, which provide for enforcement of mercury emission limits and responsible management and disposal of mercury waste. He called on all concerned to advance technology transfer on mutually-agreed terms, and to finalize the SIP to build technical and professional capacity for mercury phase out.

The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted a series of regional workshops, supported by the Government of Germany, on implementing the health-related aspects of the Minamata Convention. He noted that guidance on health strategies for the ASGM sector is being developed, and guidance on phasing out mercury in medical equipment is now available.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted its support for implementation of Minamata provisions for occupational health and safety, and its work on ASGM, especially in Ghana and the Philippines.

The ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP (ZMWG) highlighted its activities to support national governments with early ratification and implementation, including strategies to phase out mercury-added products and national action plans on ASGM.

The INTERNATIONAL POPS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN) highlighted its work in 30 countries to raise awareness of the Convention’s provisions, and announced its work, undertaken with UNEP, on global bio-monitoring of women of child-bearing age to reduce gaps in global monitoring.

Characterizing the transition to mercury-free dentistry as being “in high gear,” the WORLD ALLIANCE FOR MERCURY FREE DENTISTRY highlighted declarations and actions by civil society in Africa and Asia to reduce amalgam use.

UNDP highlighted several projects relevant to the Convention, including support for countries to reduce mercury releases from ASGM and from products such as compact fluorescent lamps.

WORK TO PREPARE FOR ENTRY INTO FORCE AND COP1

ARTICLE 3. MERCURY SUPPLY SOURCES AND TRADE: In the afternoon, the interim secretariat introduced the documents for mercury supply sources and trade (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/3-5). The AFRICAN GROUP and JAPAN called for clarification on the utility of including the secretariat on country-to-country communications on trade. GUINEA requested information on addressing mercury contaminated biomedical waste. GRULAC called for the revision of the form on notification for the register of information supplied by parties choosing not to apply Article 3(8).

SWITZERLAND and NORWAY introduced their proposal for the draft guidance to assist parties in completing the forms required under Article 3, noting the need to include guidance for the application of the prior informed consent procedure. The EU then introduced its proposal for the draft guidance, which includes the need to separate the guidance on forms relating to the management of movement of mercury from the notification for the register of information supplied by parties choosing not to apply Article 3(8). The ZMWG expressed support for the intent and rationale of the Swiss and Norwegian proposal. The US noted that this focus on the guidance was consistent with the mandate from INC6.

INC7 then established a contact group on technical matters, to be co-chaired by Kateřina Šebková, Czech Republic, and Leticia Reis de Carvalho, Brazil, with a mandate to consider the CRPs and review the guidance on forms developed by INC6

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite INC7’s heavy agenda of work to complete before COP1, the mood on Day One was akin to a school reunion. Delegates looked forward to leveraging the restorative powers of the Dead Sea, but also to upholding some light-hearted traditions that have developed during the INC process, including a reception hosted by the Government of Jordan on Thursday night and a “Swiss break” on Saturday night.

Delegates expressed high expectations for the meeting, with several saying they anticipated “smooth” and “productive” negotiations. One delegate noted that for issues requiring adoption by COP1, participants would need “more than progress, we need resolution.” Others quietly wondered if it would be more realistic to prioritize some issues and leave others to the COP. Given expectations that the first meeting of the COP will be held in the summer or autumn of 2017, INC7 is the last opportunity for parties to facilitate a successful start to the Minamata Convention.