



MERCURY INC7 HIGHLIGHTS: SUNDAY, 13 MARCH 2016

On Sunday morning, delegates to INC7 convened in plenary to hear reports from contact groups on rules, finance and technical issues before moving ahead with work on issues including, *inter alia*, artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), mercury supply sources and trade, environmentally sound interim storage of mercury other than waste mercury, mercury wastes, and contaminated sites. The contact group on rules continued its work in parallel with the morning plenary and into the afternoon. The contact groups on finance, reporting and technical issues convened in the afternoon.

WORK TO PREPARE FOR ENTRY INTO FORCE AND COP1

ARTICLE 3. MERCURY SUPPLY SOURCES AND TRADE: In the morning, technical issues contact group Co-Chair Šebková reported that the group cleared the guidance boxes in three of the five forms in the guidance document on trade. She reported that the group had yet to start the guidance on identification of stocks and sources of supply.

ARTICLE 7. ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING: The interim secretariat introduced the documents (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/17 and INF/7).

The NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, with the UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP, noted many partner contributions. The WHO drew attention to its ongoing development of training materials for healthcare providers.

The AFRICAN GROUP said the ASGM sector is informal and highly mobile. He requested the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership to pilot the guidance and conduct a review and validation workshop before COP1. MALL, GHANA, SIERRA LEONE, BURKINA FASO and SENEGAL noted the prevalence of ASGM in their countries and presented their national actions. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO highlighted a partnership project that will certify that its gold is legal, traceable and conflict-free. TOGO said research in his country has revealed clandestine ASGM operations.

The EU suggested mentioning the role of certification bodies and referring to “parties” rather than “countries.”

MALAYSIA requested the interim secretariat to help determine criteria for defining where ASGM is “more than insignificant” with reference to Article 7.3. INDONESIA called for flexibility in setting implementation timelines and establishment of licensing systems. He requested deleting the mention of cyanide use as a “worst practice.”

The US said that related child labor, human health and poverty concerns, as well environmental risks, make action on ASGM a high priority.

IPEN urged governments to promote jewelry made by local communities and to purchase and formally record gold produced by small-scale miners. ZMWG called for considering

migrant miners. Citing a study in the Philippines, THE WORLD ALLIANCE FOR MERCURY-FREE DENTISTRY expressed concern that dentists may be supplying mercury to miners illegally.

Chair Lugris noted that parties generally agreed to adopt the guidance on a provisional basis. He invited all concerned to make suggestions for improvements before COP1.

ARTICLE 8. EMISSIONS: In the morning plenary, informal group Co-Facilitator Roberts reported on progress made during the informal consultations, highlighting the Co-Facilitators’ preparation of a proposal on additional paragraphs to be included in the BAT/BEP guidance to clarify the relationship between the guidance and obligations in the Convention.

ARTICLE 10. ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND INTERIM STORAGE OF MERCURY OTHER THAN WASTE

MERCURY: The interim secretariat introduced the compilation and summary of submissions, identification of relevant sections of Basel Convention guidance and roadmap for work in interim guidance (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/18).

Several countries and ZMWG indicated interest in providing experts. The AFRICAN GROUP stressed the need to support participation. SWITZERLAND supported engaging experts from the Basel Convention.

CANADA and the US sought clarification that the Basel Convention technical guidelines are not being revised. GRULAC underlined the need for the Minamata Convention to develop its own guidelines, taking into account the work of the Basel Convention and national realities.

CANADA suggested that COP1 did not have to adopt the guidance, while SWITZERLAND supported their adoption at COP1.

The US underscored the need to recognize the difference between interim storage and waste. MALAYSIA called for a clear definition of interim storage.

The BRS CONVENTIONS said that the roadmap considers and aligns with the activities of the Basel Convention as appropriate and stated that the technical guidelines contain relevant information for interim storage and for management of contaminated sites.

Chair Lugris asked the interim secretariat to consult with interested groups and prepare a CRP for consideration.

ARTICLE 11. MERCURY WASTES: The interim secretariat introduced the compilation of information on the use of mercury waste thresholds (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/19), noting that submissions were received from nine countries and one regional economic integration organization. The EU called for more information to be submitted for consideration by COP1. GRULAC and GUINEA suggested an expert group be established to address this issue with a view to defining a global threshold standard. The US proposed a threshold range of 0.1-0.2mg Hg/L. Calling for a master plan for threshold definition, JAPAN noted his country’s threshold of 0.5µg Hg/L.



SWITZERLAND drew attention to its draft proposal, which welcomes the Basel Convention technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of mercury wastes; requests parties of the Minamata and Basel Conventions to use these guidelines; and invites parties to the Minamata Convention who are not party to the Basel Convention to use the guidelines as guidance. IPEN urged INC7 to adopt guidance on thresholds, suggesting that substances containing 2mg Hg/Kg or more should be defined as waste.

Delegates agreed to task the interim secretariat to request countries to submit information on national thresholds. Chair Lugris informed delegates that calls to establish an expert group on this issue, as well as suggestions to utilize the expertise of the Basel Convention, would be noted in the meeting report.

ARTICLE 12. CONTAMINATED SITES: The interim secretariat introduced the guidance on managing contaminated sites and the proposed way forward for developing guidance (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/20), noting that relevant Basel Convention technical guidelines had been considered, as had experience under the Stockholm Convention.

GRULAC highlighted the potential need to establish a group of experts and requested a regional workshop on contaminated sites.

Highlighting the significant workload before the INC, the EU and the US suggested deferring this issue to COP1. The US also expressed concern about efforts to coordinate with the Stockholm Convention, saying relevant work had not been undertaken by this Convention.

SOUTH AFRICA, URUGUAY, the GAMBIA, KUWAIT and CHINA underscored the importance of work on this issue.

The AFRICAN GROUP underscored the challenges posed by inadequate data, technology and resources to mitigate contaminated sites. TUNISIA and TOGO called for technical support to facilitate identification of contaminated sites. EGYPT and MOROCCO cited relevant work under the Barcelona Convention, and MOROCCO and TOGO highlighted guidance prepared by IPEN to help countries address contaminated sites. The INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL called for use of IPEN's draft guidance on contaminated sites as a basis for discussion.

SWITZERLAND and ZMWG supported the proposed way forward and SWITZERLAND called for "tight collaboration" with the conventions in the chemicals and waste cluster, governments and other organizations.

IPEN called for INC7 to provisionally adopt guidance on managing contaminated sites to allow immediate action to be taken. The WORLD ALLIANCE FOR MERCURY-FREE DENTISTRY called for aggressive reduction in mercury use, saying use in dental amalgam is unnecessary.

Delegates requested the interim secretariat to compile information for consideration at COP1.

ARTICLE 14. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISM: Chair Lugris introduced the draft MOU between the Minamata Convention COP and the GEF Council (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/CRP.5). INC7 agreed to forward it to the GEF Council and to COP1 for further consideration.

ARTICLE 23. CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES: In the morning, rules contact group Co-Chair Khashashneh reported that the group discussed whether to reflect the format adopted in the BRS Conventions, and the mandate of the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention to increase financial allocations.

CONTACT GROUPS

FINANCE: Delegates undertook a second reading of the draft guidance to the GEF on overall strategies, policies, priorities and eligibility for access to, and utilization of, financial resources,

as well as an indicative list of categories of activities that could receive GEF support. The group also initiated a review of the Co-Chairs' proposal on the SIP.

RULES: A non-paper was introduced by UNEP that contained proposed changes to the text on the draft financial rules, and participants continued a paragraph-by-paragraph reading.

On Rule 4, regarding the approval of the trust fund, many developed and developing countries said they were not in a position to discuss the changes without further consultations and that they did not want to prejudice the outcome of the 2nd meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) scheduled for May. Other participants said that the proposed changes would not prejudice UNEA. Additional discussion focused on the nature of host country contributions; the Special Trust Fund; and support for participation by developing countries and SIDS in the work of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

On Rule 5, discussions continued on whether or not to include language referencing "voluntary contributions" by parties. Some countries underscored the non-binding nature of the Convention, said that the word "voluntary" conflicts with the fact that contributions would be considered based on "indicative assessments" and highlighted the need for contributions to be serious commitments. Other discussions focused on minimum contributions by parties; contributions by non-parties; timeline for notification of contributions; and how to handle arrears.

TECHNICAL ISSUES: Co-Chair Carvalho advised participants that the text from the previous day's discussion on draft guidance to assist parties in completing the forms required under Article 3 had been captured in a non-paper, and that several issues under this topic remained to be considered.

The group discussed an EU proposal to the draft guidance on the identification of individual stocks of mercury or mercury compounds (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/CRP.2), as well as other proposed changes. They disagreed on whether "individual" stocks of mercury and mercury compounds should be defined as the aggregate of stocks held by a single entity, or as stocks at a single location, with some countries arguing that parties should have flexibility in setting their own definitions.

REPORTING: One participant suggested having one simple form for all or, alternatively, two different forms for countries with more or less capacity. A developed country suggested the possibility of submitting an incomplete report and another suggested identifying some information as supplemental. The contact group continued into the evening, discussing outstanding questions in the form.

IN THE CORRIDORS

After a convivial "Swiss Break" on Saturday evening, delegates used Sunday to knuckle down to work. They met with varying levels of success in achieving their aims, especially in the contact groups. Reflecting on the continuing slow pace in some groups and the challenges of finding common ground on some issues, one delegate joked that if Day Three was the "day of frustration," for some, Day Four had been "the day of despair." Noting that Monday would be "pretty much the last chance" to resolve outstanding business, another participant predicted that many issues would be resolved more easily once delegates achieved greater clarity on the financial rules that would apply to the Conference of the Parties.

As the labor-intensive Sunday wore on, the sunny outdoor terrace of the conference venue was buzzing with a steady stream of delegates taking cigarette breaks and queuing for coffee and carb-laden snacks. Delegates were alerted in plenary that both food and coffee would be available late into the evening, implicitly communicating organizers' expectations that work would continue apace in these last days of the INC process.