

Minamata COP-6 Highlights: Tuesday, 4 November 2025

Delegates to the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-6) to the Minamata Convention grappled with some of the trickier issues facing delegates, including trade and supply, extensions of exemptions for phaseout obligations on mercury-added products, artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), and mercury waste. Delegates managed to adopt the first COP-6 decision, on capacity-building, technical assistance, and technology transfer.

Matters for Consideration or Action by the Conference of the Parties

Mercury-added Products and Manufacturing Processes in Which Mercury or Mercury Compounds are Used: *Extensions for Exemptions:* The Secretariat presented the documents ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/6/Add.3](#); [UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/42](#) and [INF/44](#)).

BANGLADESH noted that it seeks an additional five-year exemption for seven product categories, due to the lack of updated data on current market conditions or the lack of cost-effective alternatives.

THAILAND asked for an additional five years for six product categories as needing time to strengthen national capacity to replace them.

INDIA introduced its request (CRP.6) for additional five-year exemptions for six categories, saying more time is needed to apply the phaseout in rural and remote regions.

The AFRICAN GROUP suggested the requests do not meet the Convention's criteria for extensions of exemptions. Supported by SWITZERLAND, URUGUAY, and the NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL (NRDC), he suggested that the three countries should be referred to the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC) instead. He called for a COP decision setting out clear procedures for any future temporary exemption requests.

Several delegates questioned whether the requests met the criteria for exemptions.

The US said that the requests should be handled by a COP decision, not a referral to the ICC.

NRDC cautioned that since this was the first time the COP was considering extensions of exemptions under Article 6, care should be taken to avoid setting any unfortunate precedents. The INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN) pointed out that countries had more than enough time to prepare for phaseout, the availability of alternatives had been confirmed by prior COPs, and some of the petitioners had even received funding to help phase out products.

Noting doubts expressed about the requests, President Álvarez asked Bangladesh, India, and Thailand to consult with others to see if a consensus can be reached on their requests. As for the African suggestion on a decision on procedure, he formed a Friends of

the President group, facilitated by Eva Salplachtova (Czechia), to formulate a draft decision on the topic.

In the afternoon, the Technical Matters Contact Group met to discuss amendment proposals involving dental amalgam, but delegates could not agree on a phaseout date of 2030 or 2034 and language that would allow for any special exceptions.

Mercury Supply Sources and Trade: The Secretariat presented its note ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/5](#)) on mercury supply sources and trade, and one on the draft study of the global supply, production, trade, and use of mercury compounds ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/5/Add.1](#)).

CANADA, AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, and NORWAY offered a proposal (CRP.2) to establish an open-ended expert group (OEEG) to consider the Secretariat's study as well as information submitted by Parties and stakeholders on supply sources and trade on possible mercury compounds to be listed in an annex.

SWITZERLAND, the UK, the EU, MEXICO, the US, CAMEROON, and SAUDI ARABIA supported CRP.2.

The AFRICAN GROUP requested mercury compounds to be included in Article 3 and in a new annex.

The PHILIPPINES welcomed the Secretariat's updates to the guidance on the use of forms on import and export of mercury.

INDONESIA, UGANDA, the US, the EU, and INDIA requested some amendments to the draft decision in document UNEP/MC/COP.6/5. The EU also called for the development of international guidance for the consistent use of harmonized system codes related to mercury and mercury compounds.

BRAZIL called for a coordinated approach to tackle illegal trade in mercury, especially in ASGM activities, requiring control, traceability, viable alternatives, and a just transition. SURINAME stressed the links between illegal trade in mercury and ASGM.

Ecuador, for the ANDEAN COMMUNITY, supported carrying out case studies on illegal trade in mercury for consideration at COP-7.

CHINA expressed concerns over the accuracy of data used in the Secretariat's study and called for more scientific research on whether legal trade in mercury compounds compromises the Convention objectives.

The ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY invited Parties to: prioritize and accelerate phaseout of primary mercury mining; create an OEEG on illegal mercury flows; and generate no harm related to mercury mine closure.

The FRANKFURT ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY urged Parties to prohibit international trade in all types of mercury before 2032.

IPEN, echoed by ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP, supported: CRP.2; an amendment to the Convention to end mercury trade; and pilot projects.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL (IITC) drew attention to contaminated sites and, with the INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANIZATION, to the violence and environmental degradation brought by ASGM to Indigenous communities.

The COP requested the cosponsors of CRP.2 to consult with the Parties who requested discussion or amendments on the proposal,

and President Álvarez invited Parties to submit their amendments to the draft decision in document UNEP/MC/COP.6/5 by the end of the morning plenary.

Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining: The Secretariat introduced its note ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/7](#)), the draft sections on the review of the implementation of Article 7 for inclusion in the ASGM national action plan (NAP) guidance ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/7/Add.1](#)), and draft provisional guide on the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities in the development, implementation, and review of NAPs ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/11](#)).

BRAZIL noted the complexity and importance of developing a NAP on ASGM and called for a contact group on their proposal (CRP.7) which outlines amendments to the draft decision in UNEP/MC/COP.6/7 through measures such as enhancing traceability of gold and support for just transitions of families reliant on ASGM.

In ensuing discussions, COLOMBIA, INDONESIA, ECUADOR, the PHILIPPINES, PAKISTAN, SURINAME, MEXICO, SAUDI ARABIA, and the AFRICAN GROUP supported the draft decision and CRP.7. UGANDA, ZAMBIA, NIGERIA, and BOTSWANA further highlighted the importance of access to technology and finance for the development of effective NAPs.

The EU, the US, and the UK welcomed CRP.7 but agreed that a contact group on this topic was needed for further discussion.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH INTERNATIONAL, ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP, and THE AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF QUERETARO urged Parties to speed up the submission of NAPs. The WOMEN CAUCUS FOR MINAMATA emphasized the need to include a gender-based approach in the implementation of NAPs. IPEN, COLNODO, ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, and CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CRIME ANALYSIS invited Parties to consider the phasing out of mercury from ASGM.

Delegates agreed to form a contact group, with co-chairs to be announced on Wednesday morning.

Mercury Waste: The Secretariat presented the relevant documents ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/8](#); [UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/12](#)).

JAPAN introduced a proposal (CRP.3), co-sponsored by Australia and Norway, inviting parties to propose new requirements on the environmentally sound management (ESM) of mercury waste, and requesting the Secretariat to prepare a summary analysis on the effectiveness of the 15mg/kg threshold established at COP-5. The EU, CANADA, JORDAN, PAKISTAN, MALDIVES, SAUDI ARABIA, and IRAN supported CRP.3.

The AFRICAN GROUP called for maintaining the 15mg/kg threshold as an interim value and technical and financial assistance for developing countries.

ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, highlighted the “major challenges” of the ESM of mercury waste for developing countries, which lack the technical and financial resources to identify and collect such waste properly, and suggested discussing the item in a contact group.

The US urged Parties using an alternative threshold to submit their documented waste management measures to the Secretariat. They also questioned the need for additional requirements on the ESM of mercury waste.

MALDIVES stressed that a future annex on mercury waste should provide for financial and technical assistance to Small Island Developing States.

The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION highlighted a multi-million-dollar project supported by the Global Environment Facility to phase out mercury-containing medical devices in five countries.

IPEN deplored that decision MC/COP.5 left the opportunity to use alternative mercury waste thresholds and urged the COP to adopt a single value.

The IITC drew attention to the impact of military waste on Indigenous communities’ health.

The INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DENTAL RESEARCH lamented that waste management “continues to be the last consideration, not the first” on the issue of dental amalgam. Answering a question from the US and Argentina, the Secretariat reported that they had not received information from Parties using different thresholds and therefore had not established a public register.

The COP requested Japan to consult with interested parties to review the draft decision in CRP.3 and submit a revised text for consideration by the COP.

Capacity-building, Technical Assistance, and Technology Transfer: The Secretariat introduced the document containing a draft decision ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/13](#)) and the desk study on the overview of alternative technologies under the Minamata Convention on Mercury ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/18](#)).

In the ensuing discussion, SIERRA LEONE, JAPAN, SAUDI ARABIA, KENYA, CAMEROON, UGANDA, IRAN, SENEGAL, MOZAMBIQUE, SRI LANKA, JORDAN, and BANGLADESH supported the draft decision and stressed the importance of, *inter alia*, targeted regional capacity-building, mercury laboratories, South-to-South and triangular cooperation, and training of customs and port officials.

The EU, the US, COLOMBIA, and URUGUAY requested minor amendments to the draft decision.

ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP highlighted their 20-year programme supporting governments worldwide in phasing out mercury-added products, such as skin-lightening creams and promoting mercury-free alternatives.

The COP agreed to the changes suggested by Uruguay, the US, the EU, and Colombia, and adopted the decision.

Programme of Work and Budget

The Secretariat presented the relevant documents ([UNEP/MC/COP.6/23](#); [UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/36](#), [INF/37](#), [INF/38](#)). Executive Secretary Stankiewicz indicated that the Secretariat faced unexpected staff costs challenges related to fluctuations in key currency exchange rates. As temporary measures were put in place, she underscored the healthy financial situation of the Secretariat.

For the 2026-2027 biennium, the Secretariat presented two budget scenarios, one maintaining the 2024-2025 level in nominal terms (the zero-nominal-growth scenario) and the other reflecting a 5% increase over the 2024-2025 level (“the 5% scenario”).

In the ensuing discussion, the EU emphasized how the lack of payment of contributions by some Parties undermines the smooth implementation of activities. The AFRICAN GROUP expressed preference for the adoption of the 5% scenario.

The COP established a contact group, co-chaired by Miriam Medel Garcia (Mexico) and Eveline Verhaar (the Netherlands), to further discuss this matter.

In The Corridors

The morning started with heated debates on extending exemptions on mercury-added products. Some observers worried that extending the phaseout period for another five years would “undermine the purpose of the Convention.” One frustrated participant asked the plenary: “Are we serious about making mercury history?”

During lunch break, some delegates expressed surprise that the trade/supply question had not been referred to a contact group as originally envisioned in the meeting scenario document. When one pointed out that no one had requested it from the floor, another retorted that since it had been suggested in pre-session documents, they hadn’t thought a specific request was needed. “My delegation is small – how can we follow all these small groups and sideline discussions?”

Keeping with the intended pace of the agenda remained challenging. The President ended the day with a warning to Parties that he will bring a two-minute timer Wednesday, noting that “I love you very much, but my love doesn’t extend to going over on Friday.”