



UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

N° 1 October 2009

ABOUT THE UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP

The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is a voluntary initiative where government, non-government, public and private entities have agreed to work together in a systematic way to achieve the goal of the Partnership. The overall goal is to protect human health and the global environment from the release of mercury and its compounds by minimizing and, where feasible, ultimately eliminating global anthropogenic mercury releases to air, water and land. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership complements and supports the implementation of UNEP Governing Council Decision 25/5.

The partnership areas spread across all major sectors of mercury related work.

THESE BEING:

- ARTISANAL AND SMALL SCALE GOLD MINING;
- MERCURY IN PRODUCTS;
- MERCURY RELEASES FROM COAL COMBUSTION;
- MERCURY CELL CHLOR-ALKALI PRODUCTION;
- MERCURY AIR TRANSPORT AND FATE RESEARCH;
- MERCURY WASTE MANAGEMENT;
- MERCURY SUPPLY AND STORAGE (NEW APRIL 2009).

Business plans for the partnership areas are available at:

WWW.CHEM.UNEP.CH/MERCURY



First Meeting of the Partnership Advisory Group

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP ADVISORY GROUP (HG PAG) TOOK PLACE FROM 31 MARCH – 2 APRIL 2009 IN GENEVA. THE HG PAG COMPRISES 25 MEMBERS AND WAS ESTABLISHED TO ENCOURAGE THE WORK OF THE PARTNERSHIP AREAS CONSISTENT WITH THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE PARTNERSHIP. THE HG PAG IS TO MEET ANNUALLY WITH THE NEXT MEETING PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER 2010.

The meeting showed that overall interest in the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is strong. The positive results at the Governing Council, particularly the commendation of the Partnership for its achievements and the clear message that interim activities are to be strengthened during the mercury treaty negotiating process, encouraged the group to a new level of commitment.

Discussions included considerations of how to encourage the work of partnership areas, improve linkages between related partnership areas, as well as how the work of the Partnership could inform discussions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. There were also discussions on the need for increased resources for all partnership areas.

The Hg PAG identified the importance of the mercury storage issue and welcomed the offer of the Zero Mercury Working Group to serve as an interim lead on mercury storage and supply issues. The willingness of the Natural Resource Defense Council to serve as a co-lead for the artisanal and small scale mining partnership area was also welcomed by the Group.

The main outcome of the meeting includes a report on activities of the partnership (2007-2008) and a draft report on overall progress.

Further information may be found at: www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/PAG1_meeting/Partnership_Advisory_Group_Meeting_2009.htm



Mercury Ad Hoc Open Ended Working Group

At its 25th session, the UNEP Governing Council agreed to elaborate a legally binding instrument on mercury, and asked UNEP to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee with the mandate to prepare a legally binding instrument on mercury, commencing its work in 2010. To prepare for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC),

the Governing Council established an ad hoc open-ended working group, to hold one meeting in the second half of 2009, to discuss the negotiating priorities, timetable and organization of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. The meeting will be held in Bangkok from 19 to 23 October 2009.

Meeting documentation is available at: www.chem.unep.ch/mercury.

MERCURY EMISSIONS FROM COAL

The coal partnership area aims to promote the clean and efficient use of coal, minimising mercury emissions along with emissions of other major pollutants such as particulates, sulphates and nitrates. It also evaluates emissions of mercury from coal use around the world.

Lead:

International Energy Agency Clean Coal Centre (IEA CCC)

Lesley Sloss

MERCURY WASTE MANAGEMENT

The objective of the waste partnership is to minimize and, where feasible, eliminate unintentional mercury releases to air, water, and land from mercury waste by following a lifecycle management approach. Part of the overall approach is to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to deal effectively with mercury waste.

Lead:

Government of Japan

Professor Tanaka

ARTISANAL AND SMALL SCALE GOLD MINING (ASGM)

The ASGM partnership area promotes a target of a 50 percent reduction in mercury demand in ASGM by the year 2017. To achieve this, the partnership area seeks to eliminate the practice of whole ore amalgamation and promotes other changes in ASGM mining and processing techniques to achieve measurable reductions in mercury releases.

Co-Lead:

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Ludovic Bernadaut

Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Susan Keane

Mercury emissions from coal partnership area

Coal is a significant source of mercury pollution and one which poses a major challenge for the global community. UNEP has been fortunate in receiving €1 million from the European Commission to work on projects in major coal using countries.



Photo/ Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

UNEP has initiated activities in China and Russia as part of this project and is working with the coal partnership area to achieve several goals related to the project. First, emission inventories are being developed for large coal fired plants. In order to develop information that is as accurate as possible, the inventories will be developed through a bottom up approach, based on plant and coal specific data. Second, a Process Optimisation Guidance document (POG) is being prepared to demonstrate to states and operators of coal-fired plants the most appropriate and cost-effective

Of the around 6,000 tonnes of mercury entering the environment annually, some 2,000 tonnes comes from power stations and coal fires in homes. In the atmosphere or released down river systems, the toxin can travel hundreds and thousands of miles.

methods for mercury reduction at coal fired plants. Examples of strategies lined out in the POG include the optimisation of existing multi-pollutant control systems; coal switching and blending; and other specific control strategies such as bromine or sorbent addition.

The POG will be translated and disseminated to governments and relevant industry leaders, including through a series of workshops in participating countries.

UNEP is currently working to secure activities in other major coal using countries for this project.

Waste management partnership area

In support of the waste management partnership area, UNEP Chemicals Branch is executing the project "Management of Mercury and Mercury-Containing Waste". The project, funded by the Norwegian Government, started in December 2008 and will run until early 2010. The project aims to reduce releases of mercury into the environment and reduce the exposure of workers and communities to mercury and mercury-containing waste.

Participating countries in this global project are Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, Pakistan, and the Philippines. The project provides an opportunity to test the applicability of the Draft Technical Guidelines on the Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) of Mercury Waste developed by

the Open-ended Working Group under the Basel Convention.

Project activities include the analysis for mercury in hair samples and some foodstuffs, to determine human exposure, as well as in environmental samples to help understand potential contamination with mercury in these countries.

An inception workshop was held in Cambodia, 4-6 March 2009 where participating countries and other experts agreed on the work plan and the timetable.

National, sectoral training workshops according to national priorities are being held in second half on 2009.

This project will be complemented by a project implemented by the Secretariat of the Basel Convention through the Basel Convention Coordinating Center in Uruguay involving four countries from the Latin American region.



Photo/ J.Barbetta

Further information can be found at : <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/Sector-Specific-Information/Waste-management-project.htm> or from hfiedler@chemicals.unep.ch

MERCURY-CONTAINING PRODUCTS

The objective of the partnership area is to phase out and eventually eliminate the use of mercury in products and to eliminate mercury releases during manufacturing and other industrial processes through the promotion of environmentally sound production, transportation, storage, and disposal procedures. Key product areas identified include: batteries, dental amalgams, measuring and control (largely medical sector), electric and electronic switches, fluorescent lamps, cosmetics.

Lead:

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Maria Doa

MERCURY AIR TRANSPORT AND FATE RESEARCH

The partnership area seeks to increase global understanding of international mercury emissions sources, fate and transport by: accelerating the development of sound scientific information to address uncertainties and data gaps in global mercury cycling and its patterns; enhancing sharing of such information among scientists and between them and policymakers; providing technical assistance and training, where possible, to support the development of critical information.

Lead:

Italian Institute for Atmospheric Pollution

Nicola Pirrone

ASGM regional partnership project in Asia and South America

The ASGM partnership area is working on two regional projects that have been funded through the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management Quick Start Programme. The first is in Asia with focus on Cambodia and the Philippines and the second is in South America with focus on Peru and Bolivia.

They are 18 month projects that are designed to secure government commitment in addressing ASGM. In doing so, the governments involved will develop multi-stakeholder strategic plans for mercury reductions in ASGM, building upon on-going activity to address mercury and artisanal mining and building capacity for regional collaboration

for addressing ASGM. With limited opportunity for coordination within the multi-stakeholder community involved, this project is an opportunity to coordinate future actions in a focused and more sustainable way. Towards the end of 2010 regional conclusion workshops will take place to foster outreach and present lessons learned.

The projects are getting started with inception workshops set for November/December 2009. UNEP is acting as the executing agency with the national governments responsible for the main coordination at a national level (i.e. planning, organization of work and workshops, national plan). Other stakeholders from the partnership, will be taking part

in the project.

The United States of America is in the process of funding a similar project in French speaking West Africa.



Photo/ UNIDO

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 10 MILLION ARTISANAL AND SMALL SCALE GOLD MINERS IN ABOUT 50 COUNTRIES GLOBALLY

New mercury supply and storage partnership area

At the April 2009 Hg PAG meeting, the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) was identified as the interim lead for a proposed partnership area on mercury supply and storage. Michael Bender, a ZMWG co-coordinator and director of the U.S.-based NGO Mercury Policy Project/Tides Center, agreed to serve as interim chair.

A government chair or co-chair is being sought to support the new supply and storage partnership area. A business plan has been drafted and was distributed to partners and other stakeholders in September 2009 for input. The plan provides a com-

mon, cohesive structure for activities related to mercury supply and storage. It recognizes that mercury supply and trade are priority areas for the upcoming INC deliberations to prepare a legally binding instrument on mercury. Accordingly, the proposed business plan targets activities that will provide input into the INC process and help achieve the target of 50% global supply reduction by 2013. A first meeting of this new partnership area will be scheduled soon.

A number of related activities have been initiated in this area, including the UNEP storage projects in Asia and South America (supported by the Government of Norway) as well as the Kyrgyzstan primary mercury mining project (supported by the Governments of Norway, Switzerland and the USA).



Photo: Underground salt mines, K+S, Germany

Michael Bender
Zero Mercury Working Group

