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PROJET MERCURE

BURKINA FASO

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Unité – Progrès – Justice

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP OF SENSITIZING,
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC ON MERCURY (Hg)
IN BURKINA FASO**

Ouagadougou, 09 to 11 November 2009

This workshop was held as a national activity under the agreement between UNEP and the government of Burkina Faso and financed by the Norwegian Partnership Agreement 2008/2009, NF/4030-08-05, through component 9 “Mercury Waste Management “

From the 09 to 11 November 2009, the National Workshop of sensitizing, information and education of the public on mercury (Hg) in Burkina Faso was held in Ouagadougou in the room of Conferences of the House of the Women.

This workshop aimed at:

- ✓ to inform and sensitize the participants on the effects of mercury on human, animal health and of the environment;
- ✓ to cause the implication of the actors in the fight against the anarchistic use of the aforementioned substance;
- ✓ to promote the education of the public as regards management of mercury.

The workshop gathered forty five participants (cf lists participants in appendix) coming primarily from the various ministries, of the civil company, several institutions and associations working in the environmental protection.

WORK OF THE ATELIER

The activities proceeded in three principal sequences including/understanding the opening ceremony, the introductory communications into plenary and of discussions, work of group and restitution.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was chaired by Madam the Secretary-general, representing the Minister for the Environment and Framework of Life. She was assisted by the representative of the General manager of the Improvement of the Framework of Life and the National Expert, representing the international Consultant.

Two short speeches punctuated the opening ceremony to give the words of welcome of the Expert and the speech of the Minister for the Environment and the Framework of Life, pronounced by Madam the Secretary-general.

In his word of welcome to all, the National Expert first excused the absence of the international Consultant for reason of disease. Then, he informed the audience about the start of the intergovernmental negotiations in June 2010 in Stockholm to prepare for a global legally binding instrument on mercury.

In same dynamics, he informed the audience of the designation of Burkina Faso, to shelter a session of the Committee of intergovernmental negotiations on mercury in 2011.

He concluded this matter by saying that this choice is a sign of confidence of the international community with regard to our country.

In her speech, Madam the Secretary-general emphasized the harmful effects of mercury on health and the environment and indicated in substance that the behaviour of the workshop takes part of the efforts of the Department of the Environment in order to equip the public on these problems. She informed the audience that Burkina Faso, thanks to her efforts was retained with four other countries of the world (Chile, Pakistan, the Philippines and Cambodia) to shelter the pilot project of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the management of mercury and waste containing mercury.

After the opening ceremony, the work continued first in plenary, then in groups, and the restitution into plenary.

Introductory communications in plenary and discussions

Varied and various topics were approached of which in particular effects of mercury on the environment and health, the presentation of the results of the inventory of mercury in Burkina Faso, the technical directives for the development of Action plans of Management of mercury, a case study on the situation of gold washing in Burkina Faso and the legal aspects of the management of the chemicals.

In total, nine (09) communications were presented during two days at the participants of which those concerning the context and of implementation of the project and the technical aspects were delivered by Mr. Désiré OUEDRAOGO, the National Expert, representing the International Consultant; they are the following communications:

- ✓ overall picture of the Mercury Project: context and implementation;
- ✓ toxicology of mercury and impact on human, animal health and the environment;
- ✓ products containing mercury;
- ✓ presentation of the results of the mercury inventory in Burkina;
- ✓ processes employed for the recovery of gold by the gold washers;
- ✓ situation of artisanal gold washing in Burkina Faso: practices and perspectives;
- ✓ legal framework of the management of the chemicals in Burkina Faso: strengths and weaknesses;
- ✓ technical guidelines for the management of waste containing mercury of the Basel Convention;

- ✓ guidelines for the development of action plans of management of the chemicals.

The Expert initially reviewed in his first introductory communication on the significant aspects of the Project, in particular on decision GC25, the questions of partnership in the management of waste of mercury and the various programmed activities. He continued by illustrating in a second communication that mercury is present in a range of different materials (mercury amalgams, barometers and vacuum gauges, switches, fluorescent lamps, thermometers, etc.) and in some chemical products, mixtures of chemicals and waste.

In his communication relating to the toxicity of mercury, he first gave a short history of the toxicity of mercury to man, the Expert described the various processes of exposure to mercury and stressed that it is shown scientifically that mercury has renal, cardiovascular effects (heart and blood system), genotoxicity, gastro-intestinal, hepatic and carcinogenic effects. The bio-accumulation which occurs through food and via the whole trophic network is one of the principal ways of exposure of humans.

As many reasons which justify the development of a National Action plan of management of mercury in Burkina, and this, starting from the results of inventory to reduce the sources of mercury, to reduce the emissions and transfers of mercury and their impact on health and the environment. Mr Désiré OUEDRAOGO indicated that the emissions and transfers add up 3 992 kg and are distributed in water, the air, the soil and in the products in our country.

The expert also reviewed different areas of mercury recovery from gold (proceeded electrolytic of leaching, Minataur procedure, distillation of vacuum mercury, the use of retorts, etc.). The methods of traditional gold washing, unfortunately involve enormous occupational hazards.

To conclude on these interventions, the Expert presented the technical guidelines for the management of waste containing mercury as recommended by the Basel Convention .

Following this series of communications, various questions and concerns were raised by the participants which one can retain inter alia:

- ✓ why the choice of mercury among so much of other heavy metals or dangerous chemical substances?
- ✓ what is undertaken for the management of the burning of the tires noted in the town of Ouagadougou?

- ✓ If co-financing of the project? Which are the key partners and the situation of the project within the Ministry of Environment?
- ✓ which are the difficulties encountered within the first phase of the project?
- ✓ to give further information on the Convention of Basle and its linkages with the Kyoto Protocol;
- ✓ is it then necessary to give up the utility instruments containing of mercury?
- ✓ which can be the first recommended actions in the event of acute intoxication by mercury?
- ✓ which possible alternatives can be recommended for the elimination of mercury?
- ✓ lack of information and sensitizing of the population in particular in mining ores;
- ✓ knowledge of the half-life of mercury (Hg);
- ✓ the name of the disease caused by mercury;
- ✓ identification of the occupational diseases;
- ✓ the difference between risk management and management of the risks.

The Expert, supported by participants specialists, provided brief replies appropriate to the various concerns. He stressed that the project will carry out in the days to come from the sampling of hair of the exposed subjects, rice, *etc.* in order to determine their mercury content.

The Expert insisted in his conclusions on the fact that the circulation of waste related to mercury must respect the directives of the Basel Convention.

The representative of the Ministry for the Mines, the Careers and Energy, Mr Patrice B DABIRE brought light on the situation of gold washing in Burkina Faso. Following the concerns raised by all and sundry on the problem of gold washing in our country, the transfer indicated that mercury was introduced in Burkina Faso, on the gold bearing sites, there is that ten years and that today, it is used on almost all the gold bearing sites. It concluded by stressing that the future of gold washing in its current form is dubious because of its negative impact on the environment and of what it constitutes a creaming of the gold bearing layers; gold washing must evolve/move to take forms more acceptable for the environment and more profitable for all the mining actors.

Mr Barthélémy KERE, Director of the Cleansing and the Prevention of Pollution and Nuisances intervened on the legal framework of the management of the chemicals in Burkina Faso by centering his communication the strengths and weaknesses.

With the resulting one from his intervention, he arises that the weaknesses take precedence over the forces and the released concerns related to:

- ✓ the existence of the infrastructures adapted for the control of the chemicals;
- ✓ ignorance of the International Conventions on the matter;
- ✓ inexistence of the specific standards to our countries;
- ✓ the disparity of the actions of the various speakers in the field;

Brief replies S were also brought to these various concerns.

Synthesis of work of group

Two working groups were set up with for mandate to reflect upon and to contribute their views to the three following topics:

- ✓ topic 1: To enumerate the criteria of "prioritization" of the actions to be carried out within the framework of the development of a National Action plan of management of the mercury waste.
- ✓ topic 2: To give the principal elements of a National Action plan of management of the mercury waste.
- ✓ topic 3: To identify the requirements in terms of activities for sensitizing within the framework for the implementation for the technical directives for management for the waste mercury for a specific sector (civil society, mining, dentists, industrialists)

The results of work of group were presented and amended by the whole of the participants into plenary and whose syntheses are presented below.

GROUP 1:

Results of topic 1:

1. width: area affected (locality),
2. gravity: intensity of the damage,
3. relevance: convincing (financial donors and stakeholders),
4. impacts (consequences)/incidences: short, mid-term and long term,
5. duration: effects on human, economic resources (finance and material, targets).

Results of topic 2:

1. analysis of situation,
2. identification of the problems,
3. prioritisation of the problems,
4. fixing of the objectives (general and specific objectives),
5. strategies,
6. budgeting,
7. planning or operational planning (with objectively verifiable indicators),
8. follow-up – evaluation.

Results of topic 3

Sensibilisation contains awareness raising, training and education.

To take into account the issuers, the channels and receivers or targets.

To this end one has:

- ✓ the micro programs in the radio;
- ✓ the messages in the television;
- ✓ Insertions in the newspapers;
- ✓ postings on the panels;
- ✓ the television radio transmissions;
- ✓ documentary films;
- ✓ folders;
- ✓ gadgets;
- ✓ animations: theatres, fora, musics, talks/debates, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc;
- ✓ radio games;

- ✓ scientific workshops;
- ✓ The formation continues.

GROUP 2

Results of the topics 1& 2

The topics one and two overlap. The actions below are classified according to their priority character and answer the principal elements of a National action plan of management of the mercury waste.

The actions are:

1. legal,
2. inventory,
3. results of research,
4. objectives (general objective, specific objectives),
5. results awaited by activity,
6. budget (budgeting the activities, cost of the materials, human resources, technical means),
7. logical,
8. planning of the activities,
9. follow-up – evaluation.

Results of topic 3

Requirements in terms of activities for sensitizing within the framework for the implementation for the technical guidelines for management of mercury waste for the following sectors:

- ✓ **civil society:**
 - ✓ training,
 - ✓ didactic supports (in national languages)
 - ✓ legal texts,
 - ✓ technical and financial means,
 - ✓ media.

✓ **mining:**

- ✓ training,
- ✓ suitable and easy technologies of access,
- ✓ equipments for individual protection,
- ✓ synergy of action,
- ✓ committee of control and follow-up – evaluation.

The needs are transversal/cross-sectoral. Thus, the already quoted needs are also valid for the dentists and the industries.

Suggestions at the place of the coordination of the project

- ✓ To harmonize all the presentations in French version;
- ✓ To imply the Ministry for Youth and Employment for the next meetings.

Summarized exit on the site of gold washing of Was sulky

A guided tour of the site of gold washing of Was sulky (located at 100 kilometer from Ouagadougou) in the province of Passoré (Yako) was organized on day November 11th, 2009.

The guided tour under the supervision of Mr. Patrice B DABIRE from the Ministry for the Mines, the Careers and Energy made it possible to the team to note visu the precarious conditions under which work the gold washers.

Indeed on the site of Was sulky, the layers are dug according to the seam and being able to go up to 20 meters to see 80 meters of depth. The layers are connected between them by drains dug by the gold washers in order to allow the air circulation. The descent in the layers is done without precaution.

The team also visited the counter. This level one notes that they are the women who are charged to ram and wash the granites to extract gold. They are exposed to the silicosis like their children laid down with same the ground. For a ton of granite to be worked, one finds oneself with 10 to 20 g of gold. The counter is also the place where gold is sold (1 kg of gold with 12500 FCFA the gram around 28 US Dollars).

It should be stressed that mercury and the cyanide are not used any more on the site of Was sulky. The minors rather use fire to heat the mixture and then the magnet to recover gold.

In a general way, the visitors are unanimous that the site of Was sulky is a site of artisanal gold washing where the environment and the health of the workers are threatened.

Conclusion

At the end of work, the Expert thanked, in the name of Madam the Secretary-general the participants for their availability and their contributions to the success and the achievements of the objectives of the workshop.

In addition he informed the participants, that a project team will carry out in the next days of the exits in order to carry out samplings and invites each actor to imply itself more and continue the process of sensitizing, information and education of the public.

Ouagadougou, 11 th november 2009

Rapporteurs

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Chairman

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OF The PUBLIC ON MERCURY (Hg) IN BURKINA FASO
Ouagadougou 09, 10, and 11 November 2009**

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