



**Governing Council  
of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

Distr.: General  
19 November 2009

Original: English



**Eleventh special session of the Governing Council/  
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**  
Bali, Indonesia, 24–26 February 2010  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*  
**Emerging policy issues: environment in the multilateral system**

**Progress report on mercury**

**Report of the Executive Director**

*Summary*

The present report is submitted to provide an update on progress related to mercury, a decision on which was adopted by the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-fifth session as decision 25/5 III. The report includes the outcomes of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group meeting held in Bangkok from 19 to 23 October 2009 and information on progress under the Global Mercury Partnership.

\* UNEP/GCSS.XI/1.

## **I. Background**

1. At its twenty-fifth session, the Governing Council adopted decision 25/5 on chemicals management, including mercury. By that decision, the Governing Council agreed to further international action consisting of the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on mercury, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, together with interim activities, to reduce risks to human health and the environment.

## **II. Preparations for negotiations on a legally binding instrument**

2. By paragraph 32 of its decision 25/5 III, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to convene an ad hoc open-ended working group, to hold one meeting in the second half of 2009, to prepare for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, in particular to discuss the committee's negotiating priorities, timetable and organization.

3. That working group met from 19 to 23 October 2009 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. The meeting was attended by representatives of 101 Governments, 1 regional economic integration organization, 6 intergovernmental organizations and a number of non-governmental organizations.

4. The meeting was an opportunity to prepare for a rapid start to the negotiations on the legally binding instrument. The working group agreed on draft rules of procedure to be recommended to the committee, in addition to work for the secretariat to undertake in preparation for the committee's first session, including compiling options for the instrument's structure and descriptions of options for substantive provisions.

5. Representatives also participated in information sessions on the supply and storage of mercury, artisanal and small-scale gold mining and mercury in products and waste. Information conveyed in those sessions will be provided to the intergovernmental negotiating committee, the first session of which will be held from 7 to 11 June 2010 in Stockholm.

6. The report of the meeting (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/WG.Prep/1/10) is available on the mercury programme website at the following address: [www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/OEWG/Meeting.htm](http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/OEWG/Meeting.htm).

7. The mercury negotiations process will involve five sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, with the last of these sessions to be held prior to the twenty-seventh regular session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, in February 2013. These sessions will be followed later in 2013 by a diplomatic conference at which the text of the agreement will be opened for signature. Current estimates of the costs for each session are between \$1,050,000 and \$1,100,000, depending on the sessions' location and venue. The total costs of the five sessions of the committee and the diplomatic conference are therefore estimated to be approximately \$6.5 million. These costs will be met by financial or in kind contributions from Governments, including those who have offered to host sessions. In addition to the above, other costs will be incurred in relation to secretariat staff and staff travel, expert assistance in the preparation of documents, communications, outreach activities and Bureau and regional preparatory meetings. These additional costs are estimated to be approximately \$6 million for the period 2010–2013.

8. By paragraph 33 of its decision 25/5 III, the Governing Council also requested the Executive Director to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate effectively in the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group and the intergovernmental negotiating committee. Various regional consultations are being organized to provide such support to Governments in preparing for the negotiations.

## **III. Global Mercury Partnership**

9. Mercury partnerships were initiated in 2005 by the Governing Council and formalized in 2008 through the development of the overarching framework for the Partnership. The overarching framework establishes an overall goal for the Partnership: 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.

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10. There are currently seven partnership areas identified, including:
- (a) Mercury management in artisanal and small-scale gold mining;
  - (b) Mercury control from coal combustion;
  - (c) Mercury reduction in the chlor-alkali sector;
  - (d) Mercury reduction in products;
  - (e) Mercury air transport and fate research;
  - (f) Mercury waste management;
  - (g) Mercury supply and storage.

11. Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to join the Partnership and to undertake activities that contribute towards the existing work outlined in paragraph 34 of decision 25/5 III. In that paragraph, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to continue and enhance, as part of the international action on mercury, existing work in a number of areas. By paragraph 35, it urged Governments and other stakeholders to continue and enhance their support for the Partnership by providing technical and financial resources, such as by supporting the implementation of country-based projects tackling mercury risk reduction and risk management.

12. The first meeting of the Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group was held in Geneva from 31 March to 2 April 2009. The Group assessed the work under way in the partnership areas to consider potential outputs, targets and milestones that might inform the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee in its efforts to conclude a legally binding instrument on mercury. As an outcome of the meeting, the Group made recommendations based on the efforts identified in the current partnership area business plans to encourage the Partnership's future work. The report of the meeting is on the mercury programme website at the following address:  
[www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/PAG1\\_meeting/PAG1\\_Meeting\\_Documents.htm](http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/PAG1_meeting/PAG1_Meeting_Documents.htm).

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