



MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Today we celebrate the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Minamata Convention, which reflects the wise decision of the international community to have a global legally-binding instrument to protect human health and the environment from the toxic effects of mercury.

The Convention entered into force last year after reaching the milestone of 50 ratifications. Within a year, the number of parties to the convention almost doubled. Today the parties are 95 and more and more countries are pledging their political and financial support to help reduce and eliminate the use of mercury and mercury compounds.

Through the Convention the global community remembers the many lives already lost to mercury poisoning and commits to prevent catastrophes similar to the one that took place in Minamata, Japan in the late 1950s.

Since the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Geneva from 24 to 29 September 2017, significant progress has been made:

- The ad hoc group of experts on the arrangements for providing the Conference of the Parties with comparable monitoring data, and elements of a convention's effectiveness evaluation framework met in March 2018, in Ottawa, Canada.
- The first meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee was held in Geneva in May 2018. On that occasion the Committee prepared its rules of procedure -to be submitted to the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties for approval- and held discussions on its programme of work.
- The Governing Board of the Specific International Programme also met in Geneva in May 2018 and adopted its Rules of Procedure as well as Guidelines for the Application to the Programme. The first call for applications for project proposals between USD50,000 and USD250,000 to be funded by the Programme, is now open. The deadline for submission is 31 August 2018.
- In consultation with relevant experts, including technical experts from the Basel Convention, a revised version of the draft guidelines on the interim storage of mercury and mercury compounds has been produced and will be submitted for consideration to the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be held in Geneva, from 19 to 23 November 2018. The Conference will carry out its work regarding mercury releases, environmentally sound interim storage of mercury other than waste mercury, mercury waste – in particular, consideration of relevant thresholds–, and regarding guidance on the management of contaminated sites. The Conference will review the organizational arrangements, including location and the host country contribution, in accordance with the spirit of the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the permanent secretariat.

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As citizens of the Earth, we have excellent reasons to celebrate this first anniversary. We all have the exceptional opportunity to support the implementation of the Convention and by doing so, to contribute to its ultimate goal.

We have the honour to be part of an endeavor that will help the international community to make mercury history!

Thanks for your great support to the Minamata Convention and the work of the Secretariat.

Best wishes,

Rossana



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