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Item 5 (h) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of
the Parties: cooperation with the World Health
Organization and the International Labour Organization**

**Work of the International Labour Organization relevant to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2017 and 2018**

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note sets out an update on the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO) relevant to the Minamata Convention. The annex, which complements document UNEP/MC/COP.2/12 on cooperation with the World Health Organization and ILO, is presented as submitted by ILO, without formal editing.

* UNEP/MC/COP.2/1.

Annex

Work of the International Labour Organization relevant to the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2017 and 2018

1. Collaboration between the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Conference of the Parties and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury is based on the text of the Convention, in particular paragraph 2 b) of article 16. So far, the ILO and its constituents have focussed their technical support in line with Article 7 and Annex C of the Convention.
2. Since the adoption of the convention, ILO activities relevant to the Minamata Convention have particularly focused on the following:

Promotion of ILO International Instruments towards the prevention of occupational diseases caused by mercury

3. The ILO, through its offices worldwide, has been promoting the ratification and the implementation of the ILO international instruments relevant to mercury exposures in various Member States. This includes the promotion of the Convention on Chemicals, 1990 (No.170) and the Convention on Safety and Health in Mines, 1995 (No. 176). This is in addition to the ILO List of Occupational Diseases (revised 2010) in the annex of the Recommendation, 2002 (No 194) which includes occupational diseases caused by mercury or its toxic compounds. Furthermore, the ILO is currently developing the diagnostic criteria to provide for coherent diagnosis of occupational diseases listed under R194 that also covers diseases caused by mercury or its toxic compounds.
4. Organisation of a parallel session to discuss occupational safety and health (OSH) risks in the mining sector in China on the occasion of the China Occupational Safety and Health Forum in September 2018, during which issues of exposure to mercury in the mining sector were discussed at national and global levels.
5. Support to the Philippines in the application of the ratified convention No.176 through a capacity building workshop aimed at workers' organizations in December 2017. The workshop extensively discussed the prevention of exposure to mercury in the mining sector. The workshop was held within the framework of the "Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies" project. Philippines is also revising its list of occupational diseases in line with R194.
6. Other countries revising their list in line with R194 are Lao, Myanmar and Indonesia.

Projects in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) and in the Automobile Dismantling Sector

7. The project "Convening Actors to Develop and Implement Strategies to Reduce Child Labour and Improve Working Conditions in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (CARING GOLD MINING PROJECT)". This is a project in the Philippines funded by United States Department of Labor (2015-2019) that addresses child labour, decent work deficits and working conditions in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). It aims to regulate ASGM and has carried out many promotional and other activities including in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation BAN Toxics, which has long been partnering with ASGM communities in the area of eliminating use of mercury. For instance, the recent 5th National ASGM Summit which took place in the Philippines (September 27-28 2018) emphasized the need for improved OSH in the small-scale mining sector, the elimination of child labour and mercury use.
https://www.ilo.org/manila/eventsandmeetings/WCMS_645607/lang--en/index.htm

8. Further, in the Philippines, the ILO is working on the promotion of the use of the gravity concentration method as a mercury-free gold processing technology in the Project's pilot sites. The ILO is also supporting work of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Minamata/ASGM and expanding its scope to include child labour and improvement of working conditions.
9. The project "Promoting Decent Work and a Just Transition in Automobile Dismantling Sector in Fiji" (October 2017 – September 2018, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency). The project's immediate objective was to promote more and better jobs through the improvement of OSH and green growth in the automobile dismantling sector in Fiji. It also aimed at contributing to the prevention of occupational exposures to mercury and its safe disposal. A first report of a field survey shows that in car dismantling garages surveyed in Fiji, none of the garages applied the recommended mercury disposal methods. The project plans to develop and promote the application of OSH and

environmentally friendly waste disposal guidelines and widespread training targeting policy makers, sector actors and the society in general.

10. In Guyana, the ILO has supported the Guyana School of Mining in the finalization of the OSH Inspection Manual for Small and Artisanal Open-cast Mines in Guyana. This manual makes reference to the Minamata Convention and its principles and was motivated by a recent incident in the Guyana Gold Board related to contamination with mercury by the amalgamation process.
<https://dpi.gov.gy/cdc-niosh-visiting-team-submits-findings-to-paho-who/>

11. The ILO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour of Suriname is in the process of finalizing a draft manual similar to the one in Guyana. The ILO will be reflecting the provisions of the Minamata Convention as well as exploring synergies with the UN Development Programme project under The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) in this process.
<https://www.thegef.org/project/artisanal-and-small-scale-gold-mining-asgm-national-action-plan-nap-suriname>

12. In Ghana, the ILO is working with the TWG on the Minamata Convention on the development of a Minamata Impact Assessment and National Action Plan on the elimination of mercury. The ILO is also working with the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT) on the piloting and roll-out of a mercury-free gold processing method. The ILO is also developing with Friends of the Nation (FoN), a local non-governmental organisation involved in the work of TWG on Minamata, a communications campaign on the Minamata convention anchored on the link between mercury-use and child labour.

13. In other regions, the ILO is considering potential countries where support is needed. For instance, in Mauritania, gold mines are developing exponentially mainly in the north of the country and this is causing environmental and health concerns. “L’Union Nationale du Patronat de Mauritanie” (UNPM) which is the national employers’ organization has expressed an interest to conduct common actions with ILO to inform artisanal and industrial explorers on the short and long term risks associated with the trade. The ILO is currently mobilising resources to organize a first workshop on this item during which the Minamata Convention will be promoted and discussed for application and implementation.

Global Codes of practice, research papers and working documents

14. ILO has published a study which it is currently promoting among constituents: “Sectoral Studies on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains.” This study includes a case study: ‘Promoting Decent Work in Global Supply Chains: The Gold Industry’, pages 49-88. The study refers to the occupational safety and health concerns around mercury in the gold mining sector.
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_485367.pdf

15. The ILO and its tripartite constituents adopted a code of practice on safety and health in opencast mines in 2018 and which was developed based on the Meeting of Experts on Safety and Health in Opencast Mines, held in Geneva, on 16-20 October 2017. The code of practice requests governments and employers to take preventive action from hazardous chemicals, which includes mercury. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_617123.pdf

16. The ILO developed a working document in December 2017 on the risks of exposure to mercury for workers in artisanal and small scale gold mines. This paper explores ways to reduce the exposure of ASGM workers to mercury, supporting the ILO technical assistance, the promotion of a sustainable culture for the prevention of accidents and diseases and improving occupational safety and health. The document is part of the endeavour to promote technologies for improving or eliminating mercury use by artisanal miners on the basis of Article 7 of the Minamata Convention, and to promote good safety and health practices at ASGM sites.

The ILO continued support

17. Next March 2019, the ILO will participate in the Hong Kong OSH Council to share ILO standards and tools on the safe management of hazardous chemicals at an International Chemical Safety Seminar, where the ILO will promote the provisions of the Minamata convention with respect to mercury exposure.

18. Sustainable ASGM would mean transforming mineral resources into a livelihood for poor populations and future generations without adversely impacting the environment. Formalizing the mining industry would be a crucial step towards resolving the problem of mercury use in ASGM and guaranteeing gold that is produced responsibly and in keeping with voluntary social and environmental standards. ILO's intervention would consist of conducting targeted studies and proposing sustainable

mining approaches and projects to governments through a tripartite arrangement involving the authorities responsible for mining resources, miners' organizations as well as employers' organizations in the initiative aimed at finding alternatives to mercury-based processing of ore and the enhancement of occupational safety and health practices in ASGM. Governments will be encouraged to implement binding action plans for cutting back on the use of mercury in artisanal gold mines. Such action plans will include strategies to end the use of mercury and its exposures especially to children and women, and the application of good OSH practices designed to tackle the risks from mercury exposure.
