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**United Nations  
Environment  
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**Intergovernmental negotiating committee  
to prepare a global legally binding instrument  
on mercury  
Sixth session**

Bangkok, 3–7 November 2014

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Work to prepare for the entry into force of the Minamata  
Convention on Mercury and for the first meeting of the  
Conference of the Parties: matters required by the  
Convention to be decided upon by the Conference of the  
Parties at its first meeting**

**Initial compilation of information on methodologies for  
acquiring monitoring data or for providing the Conference of  
the Parties with comparable data**

**Note by the secretariat**

1. In paragraph 2 of its article 22, the Minamata Convention on Mercury provides that the Conference of the Parties shall, at its first meeting, initiate the establishment of arrangements for providing itself with comparable monitoring data on the presence and movement of mercury and mercury compounds in the environment as well as trends in levels of mercury and mercury compounds observed in biotic media and vulnerable populations. In paragraph 3 of that article, the Convention states further that the evaluation shall be conducted on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical, financial and economic information, including:

- (a) Reports and other monitoring information provided to the Conference of the Parties pursuant to paragraph 2;
- (b) Reports submitted pursuant to article 21;
- (c) Information and recommendations provided pursuant to article 15;
- (d) Reports and other relevant information on the operation of the financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building arrangements put in place under the Convention.

2. While much of the information will be provided to the Conference of the Parties by Governments, there is a variety of current and planned data-collection initiatives that might be relevant to the Conference of the Parties in the context of effectiveness evaluation. A brief description of some of those initiatives is provided below.

3. Following the publication of the first Global Mercury Assessment in 2002, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), at the request of the UNEP Governing Council and working in cooperation with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, in 2009 and 2013 prepared technical reports presenting information on emissions and releases of mercury. The reports were

\* UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/1.

largely based on modelled data, with input from monitoring data where available, as well as on information on the actual use of mercury at the national level. This information base will be supplemented over time with the information on sources, emissions and releases of mercury that will be gathered from national inventories compiled by countries as part of their preparations to tackle national mercury issues and to meet the requirements of articles 8 and 9 of the Convention. An idea of the trends in mercury emissions and releases can also be gathered from a comparison of the technical reports prepared by UNEP. Changes in methodology and the underlying assumptions for emissions and releases, however, render impossible any detailed trend analysis at this stage.

4. Additional information may be gathered through the preparation, where relevant, of Minamata Convention initial assessments, which can be used to assess the presence and movement of mercury and mercury compounds. In addition, the UNEP Live initiative offers a platform for the collection, processing and sharing of environmental science and research. The platform, which is publically accessible, will provide a means of sharing data collected at the national level and help ensure its broader consideration.

5. With funding made available by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP is implementing a global monitoring project to gather baseline information on mercury levels at a number of global sites. The project, entitled “Development of a plan for global monitoring of human exposure to and environmental concentrations of mercury”, will run for two years from June 2014. The objective of the project is to harmonize approaches to the monitoring of mercury in humans and the environment, and to strengthen capacity for the analysis of mercury in humans and the environment, with a view to accurately determining concentrations of mercury in humans and the environment on a global scale. The main implementation partners are the World Health Organization (WHO) with regard to the biomonitoring component of the project and the Institute of Atmospheric Pollution Research (CNR-IIA) with regard to the environment component.

6. Like GEF projects to support implementation of the Global Monitoring Plan on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in accordance with article 16 of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, this GEF project will also pilot approaches developed in selected countries. The project builds on two existing global activities for the monitoring of mercury. With regard to air monitoring, the project will cooperate with the Global Mercury Observation System (GMOS) and its already established network of monitoring stations ([http://www.gmos.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=16](http://www.gmos.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=16)).

7. Regarding effects on human health, the project will build on existing work led by WHO experts. WHO has undertaken a number of activities relating to the gathering of monitoring data. Thus, with regard to human biomonitoring, mercury has been selected as an indicator under the European Environment and Health Process. The WHO Regional Office for Europe has held a series of expert and intergovernmental consultations to develop a methodology for and secure agreement on a biomonitoring survey. This work can inform an international monitoring programme, and it has been taken into account in the global monitoring project referred to above. Further information is available at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/data-and-evidence/environment-and-health-information-system-enhis/activities/human-biomonitoring-survey>. This biomonitoring survey will assess prenatal exposure to methylmercury by measuring total mercury in maternal hair and, when there are known local sources of exposure to inorganic or elemental mercury, mercury in maternal urine and in cord blood.

8. Since 1976, the Global Environment Monitoring System Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme, commonly known as GEMS/Food, has informed Governments, the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other relevant institutions, as well as the general public, about levels of and trends in contaminants in food, their contribution to total human exposure and their significance for public health and trade. The GEMS/Food programme is implemented by WHO in cooperation with a network of more than 30 WHO collaborating centres and recognized national institutions located around the world. The programme also involves the participation of national experts in more than 100 countries, working to collect and analyse data and information to support the food risk assessment process.

9. The GEMS/Food database is open for competent authorities to submit and share food surveillance and monitoring data. The data are checked for consistency and completeness before being accepted by WHO; as a result, GEMS/Food provides reliable hazard identification information to be used in setting priorities for Codex consideration. The database has comprehensive information on the level of mercury in food and is available at <https://extranet.who.int/gemsfood/Search.aspx?Contaminant=Mercury>.

10. WHO has expressed interest in contributing to the effectiveness evaluation, as it has already done for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

11. Mercury levels have also been assessed by civil society organizations in a number of countries, which have tested mercury levels in hair and published the data online. While considerable work remains to verify the results, and to subject the methodologies and data to peer review, the data may also provide a valuable source of information.

12. Article 22 of the Minamata Convention provides for the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention. Certain factors to be taken into consideration are listed in paragraph 3 of that article, which specifies that the evaluation is to be made “on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical, financial and economic information”. It may also be useful to look at the movement of mercury in trade as a measure of the effectiveness of the Convention in reducing the use of mercury, giving particular attention to available economic information. UNEP has previously prepared a global survey of the international trade in mercury, which was presented to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session. Further assessment of the trade in mercury may yield valuable information, including an indication of areas where further attention to trade issues would be most effective.

13. The intergovernmental negotiating committee may wish to request the secretariat to seek information on the availability of monitoring data from all Governments and relevant organizations and to prepare a compilation and analysis of the means of obtaining monitoring data for consideration by the committee at its seventh session.

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