

## Report of the meeting

*Third online meeting of the Bureau of the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury,  
Tuesday, 13 October 2020, by teleconference*

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### Participants

Present: Rosa Vivien Ratnawati (Indonesia, for Asia Pacific, and President), W.T.B Dissanayake (Sri Lanka, for Asia Pacific), Oarabile Serumola (Botswana, for Africa), Karmen Krajnc (Slovenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Angela Patricia Rivera Galvis (Colombia, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Bethune Morgan (Jamaica, for Latin America and the Caribbean), Marie-Claire Lhenry (France, for the Western European and Others), Alison Dickson (Canada, for the Western European and Others), Roger Baro (Burkina Faso, for Africa), Claudia Dumitru (Chair of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, Ex officio member), Monika Stankiewicz (Executive Secretary) and members of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Note: Anahit Aleksandryan (Armenia, for Central and Eastern Europe) was not able to participate. The Secretariat will share this report and follow-up.

### 1. Updates from the Secretariat

- Ms. Rosa Vivien Ratnawati, the President of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention (COP-4), welcomed the members of the Bureau to the meeting and thanked them for joining its third online meeting despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. She informed that the technical preparations for COP-4 were under way, including negotiation of the Host Country Agreement, and she referred to a consultation initiative by Canada and Norway on the effectiveness evaluation.
- Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, added her warm welcome to the members of the Bureau. She thanked the President and the Bureau members for participating in the video production for the Minamata Convention's 3rd anniversary.
- The agenda of the meeting was adopted without change.

### 2. Updates from the Secretariat

#### a. Article 21 reporting

- Upon invitation from the President, the Secretariat presented that by 21 September 2020, 90 national reports had been received, reflecting a reporting rate of 78.9% for the reporting period. Remaining 24 Parties are encouraged to submit their reports. The Secretariat has been in contact with the national focal points (NFPs) of the submitting Parties to ask for final validation of the submitted reports. After the confirmation from the NFPs the reports are published on the Minamata website. All submitted national reports will also form part of the work of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, and the report of the Secretariat to COP-4.
- A Bureau member appreciated the strong reporting rate and applauded the reporting Parties for their efforts and welcomed the activity of the Secretariat to publish national reports.
- The Secretariat noted the request from a Bureau member to check the NFP of her country to complete the final validation of the submitted report.



- The President further called upon all Bureau members to reach out to their regions to encourage submissions of the remaining reports or to encourage Parties to link with the Secretariat if additional information or advice is needed for the completion of the remaining reports.

#### **b. Work of technical expert groups, monitoring guidance, info sessions**

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the sessions of the Minamata Online, which are arranged according to three thematic streams: implementation review and support, mercury science and COP-4 preparation. Five sessions have been hosted so far, including on proposed indicators and monitoring guidance as part of the intersessional work on the effectiveness evaluation of the Convention. Eight more sessions are to be held, including the COP-4 briefing session on 3 November.
- On the work on the proposed indicators and developing monitoring guidance, the Secretariat held online sessions to share the planned roadmap and the recordings and the presented information is now uploaded on the Minamata website.<sup>1</sup> The planned schedule for the upcoming months is as follows:
  - By 30 November 2020: Parties and stakeholders are to consider their initial views and responses on the proposed indicators and submit them to the Secretariat.
  - By 15 January 2021: Secretariat posts draft guidance on the website for comments.
  - By 31 January 2021: The Secretariat will facilitate an exchange session on the received views and initial responses. This exchange will enable clarifications on the views and responses submitted, additional questions that may have arisen, and other relevant information sharing and exchange on the proposed indicators.
  - By 31 March 2021: Parties are to submit their views on the draft guidance.
  - July 2021: Guidance document will be finalized for processing as COP-4 document.
- The status of intersessional work was further presented by the Secretariat. The first webinar of the experts who were identified by Parties and stakeholders to contribute to the drafting of guidance on mercury monitoring was held on 15 September. The annotated outline of the guidance will soon be finalized and the experts will meet again on 27 October to discuss the generic chapters. This work may still need further involvement of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, since only seven of these countries have identified experts, none of which is from Africa. Additional participation is still possible.
- The Secretariat also presented the continued efforts made by the three intersessional expert groups:
  - The ad hoc group of experts on the review of Annexes A and B is putting together information on alternatives to products and processes using mercury. The group has met five times and the sixth meeting will be held in late November. Thematic teleconferences on specific types of products and processes are convened every Wednesday.
  - The group of technical experts on mercury releases is considering the list of relevant point sources of mercury release to land and water, and guidance on releases inventory. The group has met online four times and the fifth meeting will be held on 6 November.
  - The group of technical experts on mercury waste is working on establishing thresholds for waste contaminated with mercury, including mine tailings. The group has met three times and the fourth meeting will be held on 20 October.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/News/fromtheConvention/MOEEIndicators/tabid/8544/language/en-US/Default.aspx>



- Bureau members thanked and congratulated the Secretariat for the well-executed Minamata Online series, noting that the uploaded recordings and presentation materials from the sessions are informative and helpful for Parties and stakeholders.
- The President took note of the work progress and reiterated full support to the preparation for COP-4 carried out by the technical expert groups.

#### **c. Updated calendar of UNEP/MEAs meetings**

- The Secretariat presented the updated list of UNEP/MEA meetings and informed the Bureau on the UNEP Virtual Diplomacy Exchange meeting held in June 2020.
- A Bureau member informed that the postponed IP4 meeting<sup>2</sup> was planned to be held physically in March 2021 in Bucharest, Romania.
- The President welcomed the initiative of UNEP to create an online calendar of UNEP major international meetings that is planned to be regularly updated, which will facilitate planning in the countries and within MEAs and especially scheduling future meetings.

#### **d. Other issues**

- The President noted that the General Assembly was convened on 30 September 2020 for the Global Biodiversity Summit. This comes as part of global preparations for adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in 2021. As part of these preparations, the Minamata Convention President and Secretariat were invited to the Swiss-led Bern Process, which is a preparatory stream to bring together biodiversity-related and chemicals-related conventions.
- At the request of the President the Secretariat informed that the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework takes place under a global mandate, and as such the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, including the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, were invited to provide technical and related input to UNEP. The Secretariat also participated in the Swiss-led Bern process. Lastly, the Minamata Secretariat and the Secretariat of the BRS is engaging in an exploratory study on linkages between biodiversity and chemicals and waste, and also on the linkages between climate change and chemicals and waste. Additionally, upon the request of the President, W.T.B Dissanayake reflected on the Bern Process meetings he has attended on her behalf.

### **3. Holding meetings online and virtual collaboration**

- The Executive Secretary of the Convention presented the overview of the planned meetings under the Convention. 45 online meetings and webinars organized by the Secretariat have been planned in 2020. One physical meeting had been planned this year for the Specific International Programme (SIP) Governing Board, but it will now take place online. There were four physical meetings planned for the first and second quarters of 2021 that are now expected to be held online: of the group of technical experts on mercury releases, on monitoring guidance, of the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC) and of the SIP Governing Board. The format of the meetings of the ICC and the SIP Governing Board will be concluded upon consultation with the respective chairs.
- The Secretariat presented the note on “Convening online meetings under the Minamata Convention in light of COVID-19”, including detailed analysis of the potential challenges and opportunities of holding certain types of online meetings. The paper addressed the organization of online expert meetings and meetings of bodies with limited membership under the Convention. Main advantages presented included

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<sup>2</sup> Fourth Meeting of the Intersessional Process for Considering SAICM and the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Beyond 2020 (IP4)



the possibility of continuing the intersessional work under the Minamata Convention; the possibility for one region to nominate more experts to alternate in participating to both physical and online meetings of an expert group; and the saving of costs related to participants' travel and daily subsistence allowance. Technical barriers presented included the existence of a digital divide between developing and developed countries. In this regard, the Secretariat informed Bureau members about a new UNEP policy on the reimbursement of communication costs for virtual meetings. The policy enables invited participants from developing countries or from countries with an economy in transition, who would not be able to join the intersessional meeting without financial assistance, to receive an allowance for connectivity costs. Finally, the note provides an overview of applicable rules of procedure under the Convention as well as overall guidance that could be followed for an online inter-governmental meeting governed by a formal mandate to which rules of procedure apply.

- A Bureau member noted that there remained political sensitivity especially in organizing bigger and more complex online meetings, since some countries may face technical challenges. The member further expressed the view that online meetings should not be replacing in-person meetings and should not reduce the availability of funding for developing countries for physical meetings in the future.
- Several Bureau members proposed some amendments to the note to add precision to the text. The amended note will be circulated to the Bureau members.
- The President suggested that the Bureau considers the situation regarding COVID-19 and the scheduled meetings under the Minamata Convention again at the next meeting.

#### **4. Matters related to COP-4**

##### **a. Tentative list of issues for agenda of COP-4**

- The secretariat informed Bureau members of the status of preparations of the COP-4 regional preparatory meetings, including the joint planning of the Minamata and BRS secretariats to organize back-to-back informative sessions during their respective COP preparatory meetings.
- The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau of the steps taken by the Secretariat to book a back-up venue for the COP-4 as per common practice. Due to reconstruction in the Geneva conference center and as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the postponement and rescheduling of many global events, the Secretariat was able to book the CICG a back-up venue for 16-20 May 2022, which was the closest available period to the agreed COP-4 dates.
- The Secretariat presented a document in preparation for the agenda for COP-4. The document recalls the [rules of procedure](#) for the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury which also speak to how to prepare the provisional agenda for an ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties as well as include a tentative list of issues for possible inclusion in the provisional agenda. The Secretariat will prepare the provisional agenda in agreement with the President. The Bureau will be presented with a draft tentative agenda in one of their upcoming meetings.
- A member of the Bureau on behalf of the Jusscannz group requested the Secretariat to consider differentiating the agenda items between those that require decisions from the COP and those for information sharing to the Parties and also requested background information on the choice of some items. The Executive Secretary responded that the proposed list is tentative and suggested to come back to this issue at a future Bureau meeting, and invited further feedback from the members of the Bureau.
- The member of the Bureau on behalf of the Jusscannz group noted that the 8th replenishment cycle of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which covers the period July 2022 to June 2026 will be launched in December 2020 and completed at the next GEF Assembly in June 2022. Considering this timeline, the member shared the reflection that a possible guidance from COP-4 to the replenishment process would be quite late.



- A member of the Bureau also enquired about further information on a non-binding political declaration planned to be prepared by the Government of Indonesia. The President explained that the Government of Indonesia will share a draft with the Bureau as soon as it is available.

#### **b. Ongoing processes related to the effectiveness evaluation**

- The Executive Secretary updated the Bureau of the ongoing processes related to the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention, covering items listed under Article 22 of the Convention and in COP-3 decision MC-3/10 (PowerPoint Presentation). The presentation also included potential items for further COP consideration and decision: finalization of the ToR of the proposed Effectiveness Evaluation Committee; understanding of the overall monitoring arrangements, including data handling and analyzing the data for the first effectiveness evaluation; and identification of the reports to be prepared, in addition to the Art.21 Synthesis Report, and the Trade, Supply and Demand Report.
- The President concluded that setting up the arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of the Convention is an important matter for the Convention and that there are several issues that would need to be addressed and decided on by COP-4 in order to do the first effectiveness evaluation. She called on the Bureau members to support preparations for all the needed decisions at COP-4.

### **5. Status of Contributions to the Minamata Convention**

- The Secretariat presented the current status of contributions to the General Trust Fund, Special Trust Fund and the Specific Trust Fund as updated monthly on the Minamata website. As of 30 September 2020, for the General Trust Fund, 57.38% of contributions from 21.55% of Parties had been received. For the Special Trust Fund, USD 1,660,936 had been pledged / received and for the third round of the Specific International Programme, 1,136,620 USD had been pledged/received so far.
- Follow-up letters on outstanding contributions for 2018 and 2019 have been sent out and Parties with arrears of two years or more will be approached in early 2021 by the Executive Secretary to jointly agree on developing a payment schedule. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau on invoicing new Parties and that invoices for 2021 would be sent out electronically by 15 October 2020.
- Some Bureau members requested to share the relevant IBAN code to enable countries to transfer their contribution. The Secretariat will follow-up on this issue.
- Another Bureau member requested the Secretariat to copy Bureau members or national focal points when sending out invoices. The Secretariat will ensure that all invoices are shared with the national focal points.
- Another Bureau member informed that one Party will pay their contribution to the General Trust Fund shortly.
- Upon the closure of this agenda item, the President asked the Bureau members to encourage Parties to pay their contributions for the General Trust Fund as early as possible. She also made a call for all those in a position to do so to contribute to the Special Trust Fund to support the Secretariat's work on capacity-building and technical assistance, and to contribute to the Specific Trust Fund so that the Third Round can be launched soon for applications to the Specific International Programme.

### **6. Any other business**

#### **a. UNEP Strategy for Private Sector Engagement**

- The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau of the note on "Enhancing cooperation between UNEP/UNEA and the MEAs/COPs". The note was developed by UNEP in collaboration with MEAs and



was presented during the Committee of Permanent Representatives Subcommittee Meeting which took place on 2 July 2020 in Nairobi. As mandated by [UNEA decision 4/2](#), the Committee of Permanent Representatives is carrying out a review process with a view to providing concrete proposals for the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. The proposals in this note seek to promote cooperation, coherence and synergies between UNEP and MEAs, to be further taken up in the review process as appropriate.

- The Executive Secretary also informed that the slightly revised version of the note on the role and the functions of the Bureau is now available on the Minamata website.<sup>3</sup>

**b. Date of the following Bureau meeting**

- The Bureau took note of the proposal to hold its next meeting through video conference at the end of January or in February 2021. The Secretariat will consult with the President and Bureau members in this regard.