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

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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Report on activities of the interim secretariat
during the period before entry into force of the
convention: activities at the regional and country
level to support implementation**

Progress report on the work of the interim secretariat

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 11 of its resolution on arrangements in the interim period before entry into force of the Convention (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/CONF/4, annex I), the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide interim secretariat services to support the Committee and its activities until the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In paragraph 12 of that resolution, the Conference also requests the interim secretariat to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other relevant actors, including the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in order to make full use of relevant experience and expertise. In paragraph 13, it further requests the Executive Director to facilitate activities at the regional and country levels to support implementation during the interim period in an effective and efficient manner. A summary of the activities undertaken by the interim secretariat in response to that request may be found in the note by the secretariat on support for ratification and early implementation of the Convention and for the work of the interim secretariat (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/22).

II. Subregional workshops

2. The following subregional workshops have been held during 2014:
- (a) Workshop for South-East Asia in Kuala Lumpur, from 19 to 21 March;
 - (b) First workshop for English-speaking Africa in Nairobi, from 23 to 25 April;
 - (c) Second workshop for English-speaking Africa in Nairobi, from 28 to 30 April;
 - (d) First workshop for French-speaking Africa in Dakar, from 9 to 11 July;

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

- (e) Second workshop for French-speaking Africa in Dakar, from 14 to 16 July;
- (f) Workshop for Arabic-speaking countries at the Dead Sea, Jordan, from 5 to 7 August;
- (g) Workshop for South America in Brasilia, from 2 to 4 September;
- (h) Workshop for Asian countries in New Delhi, from 18 to 20 September.

3. The objective of the workshops is to enhance participants' knowledge of the Minamata Convention and the processes for its signature, ratification and early implementation. The workshops are also aimed at providing participants with information on the available sources of support and at creating opportunities for exchange and action at the subregional level. The sharing of experiences by Governments, including the country presentations by means of which such experiences are shared, represent an important contribution to the success of the workshops. The workshops have also focused on facilitating the development, by participating Governments, of draft national road maps leading towards the signature, ratification and implementation of the Convention. A number of countries which had developed road maps with an initial focus on signature were able to sign the Convention prior to 9 October 2014, in line with their plans.

4. The regional workshops have been supported by the regional offices of UNEP. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, along with the regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm conventions, has also cooperated in the organization of the workshops, which have benefited from presentations on experiences gathered to date in implementing the multilateral environmental agreements and other global legally binding instruments adopted within their framework. Preparatory work for the workshops, including the organization of webinars to inform participants, has benefited from contributions by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in the form of technical support, access to the necessary facilities for the organization of the webinars and assistance with their organization.

5. The workshops have also been attended by member organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), and by the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility, and these entities have also made presentations on the support available to countries in the early implementation and ratification of the Minamata Convention. The structure of the workshops, in particular the decision to work in smaller groups, has enabled participants to explore topics of interest in greater detail than is possible in a plenary discussion, and has created an opportunity for all the agencies involved to work with countries in developing plans for future work.

6. Reports on each of the subregional workshops are available at www.mercuryconvention.org/AwarenessRaising/Workshops/tabid/3800/Default.aspx. Further workshops are planned for the remaining subregions, to be held later in 2014 or in 2015.

7. Following the initial round of subregional workshops, the interim secretariat is planning, in cooperation with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, additional follow-up workshops to be held on a regional basis back to back with regional meetings to prepare for the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the conventions scheduled for May 2015. These workshops, scheduled for March and April 2015, will provide an opportunity for countries to report on progress on the activities set out in their road maps and for the interim secretariat to disseminate additional information and guidance on key issues of concern within each region. Additional activities in support of the implementation of the Convention will also be undertaken in 2015, in response to expressed needs and depending on the availability of funding.

8. The Convention's outreach activities have also been boosted by the hosting of its website on the platform provided by the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, together with the technical support provided by that secretariat in the maintenance and further development of the website.

III. Organization of the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury

9. In addition to carrying out activities to support ratification and early implementation, the interim secretariat has undertaken to organize the sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. That process has included drafting and sending out invitation letters, organizing logistical matters, including identifying a meeting venue and arranging conference services support, organizing travel for funded participants, supporting the activities of the bureau and preparing meeting documents for consideration by the committee.

10. Logistical activities have been undertaken with the support of staff within the Chemicals Branch of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, and of the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok, which has been assisting with local arrangements, in particular for the sixth session. Chemicals Branch staff members have provided assistance with such logistical activities as support for the arrangement of travel for participants, and are also supporting the organization of side events at the sixth session. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has also provided support for the distribution of documents and, on the basis of the Convention website, which it is currently hosting, for the development of a document-sharing site to be used during the sixth session.

11. The preparation of technical material, in particular meeting documents, has been led by the interim secretariat of the Convention, with extensive support from the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (in particular the co-leads of certain partnership areas), and other relevant actors, in particular the World Health Organization (WHO).

12. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has provided substantive input to documents in areas where it has particular expertise, such as import and export controls, exemptions, storage, waste, contaminated sites and mechanisms for reporting. Experience gathered by the conventions themselves has also been drawn upon in the development of draft rules of procedure and draft financial rules for the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention,¹ which have been modelled on the rules formulated by the conferences of the parties to the three other conventions.

13. WHO has provided input to a number of documents within its area of specialization, relating in particular to the establishment of health-related limit values and the monitoring of mercury levels.

14. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has provided input to documents reporting on activities undertaken within the scope of the voluntary partnerships and other materials which could form the basis for guidance requested under the Minamata Convention. The co-leads of the partnership areas have reviewed the documents in question and provided their input.

15. In addition to the consultations with other relevant actors in developing meeting documents, each of the organizations contributing to the work of the interim secretariat, particularly in support of ratification and early implementation, has been invited to present progress reports on its work: a progress report on the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (see UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/3); a progress report on cooperation and coordination with other actors (see UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/5); and a report on activities of the Global Environment Facility in relation to the implementation of the Convention (see UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/INF/6).

¹ UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/13 and UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/14.

IV. Organization of the work of the group of technical experts to prepare the guidance called for under article 8 of the Convention

16. The interim secretariat has organized two meetings of the group of technical experts established by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries to prepare the guidance called for under article 8 of the Convention.

17. Immediately following the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, the secretariat contacted bureau members to request the nomination of experts on a regional basis. In addition, using the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and other networks as its platform, the secretariat called for nominations for observers to the group, representing civil society and interested industry groups.

18. Two meetings of the group have been held. The first was hosted by the Government of Canada, and was held in Ottawa from 25 to 28 February 2014. The second was supported by a contribution from the European Commission and was held in Montreux, Switzerland, from 8 to 11 September 2014.

19. The secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions has provided a resource person for each of the meetings of the group. This resource person has contributed to the discussions on the issue of guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices, providing input based both on technical expertise and also on the experience within the convention concerned in preparing such guidance material. In preparing input material for the meetings of the group, the secretariat also drew on relevant material prepared previously under the Stockholm Convention.

20. The work undertaken under the coal partnership area within the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has provided an extensive background for the development of guidance relevant to coal-burning power plants and coal-fired industrial boilers. The UNEP Global Mercury Toolkit is also recognized as a useful tool for the preparation of inventories.
