



Ministry of
Environment

Submission of information on mercury requested from INC7 by Republic of Korea

17 October, 2016

Mr. Jacob Duer
Interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury
Chemicals and Waste Branch
Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
United Nations Environment Programme
11-13 Chemin Des Anemones
CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr. Duer,

In respond to the request of UNEP dated 22 April, 2016 regarding the submission of information in response to the requests from INC7, please find the attached document which contains the national status on the issues of mercury storage, mercury waste management, contaminated sites and environmental mercury monitoring programs.

We are grateful to UNEP for the dedicated commitment to global mercury reduction and the efforts to prepare the 1st meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Minamata Convention successfully. We also look forward to our participation in the meeting as a Party and the contribution to the global implementation of the Convention.

Should you require further information or need clarification on our comments, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Jeong-Seop HONG
Director
Chemicals Policy Division
Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea

Submission from the Republic of Korea

In respond to the request of UNEP dated 22 April, 2016 regarding the submission of information in response to the requests from INC7

1. Information related to development of guidelines on the storage of mercury

In Korea, mercury and mercury compounds as well as other toxic chemicals are stored, labelled and handled according to the Chemicals Control Act. The Korean MOE recently adopted a guideline on environmentally sound storage and management of mercury and mercury compounds specifically. The guideline covers the management of storage facilities, containers, labelling, training, personal protection and spill & accident response. The guideline also includes best practices of decommissioning facilities which used to handle mercury and its compounds, since the number of the decommissioning facilities is increasing due to decreasing demands on mercury usages.

2. Information on the thresholds of mercury wastes in Article 11

Under the Korean legislation on waste management (Wastes Control Act), wastes containing more than 0.005 mg/L of total mercury by leaching test are classified as hazardous wastes and finally disposed in hazardous waste landfill sites. Disposed mercury-added products, such as used fluorescent lamps and batteries are recycled after recovering mercury in the products and the residues are disposed in general waste landfill if the mercury content is less than 0.005 mg/L by the leaching test.

3. Recommendation in relation to the management of sites contaminated with mercury

In Korea, there is no specific guideline for the management of sites contaminated with mercury. However, there are several thresholds on mercury concentrations in soil, which trigger control actions including site remediation. Polluters shall remediate and restore the sites if mercury concentration of the soils in site is above 12 mg/kg according to the guidelines of soil remediation under the Soil Environment Conservation Act.

4. Information on existing mercury monitoring program and how they can contribute to an overall monitoring approach, including availability of baseline information

Atmospheric Mercury Monitoring Program

Korea's national atmospheric mercury monitoring network has been operated by the National Institute of Environmental Research (NIER) in the Ministry of Environment since 2009. NIER is currently operating 12 monitoring sites for TGM using Tekran 2537, 1 site for GEM/GOM/HgP using Tekran 2537/1130/1135 and 4 sites for wet deposition of mercury.

Human Biomonitoring Programs

Korean National Environmental Health Survey (KoNEHS)

Korean National Environmental Health Survey (KoNEHS) is a human biomonitoring program at the national level, operated by the National Institute of Environmental Research (NIER) since 2009. More than 5,000 people over 3 years old are studied every 3 years, and 26 environmental pollutants including mercury are monitored in human blood and urine.

Korean Children's Environmental Health Study (Ko-CHENS)

Korean Children's Environmental Health Study (Ko-CHENS) is a birth cohort study, which is tracking 10,000 children during 22 years, started from 2015. In the study, samples (blood, urine and hair) of 5,000 children will be analyzed for 19 environmental pollutants including mercury.

Biota Monitoring Programs

Environmental Mercury Monitoring Program

The Ministry of Environment started an integrated mercury monitoring program to evaluate ecological responses and national trends from 2013. Mercury, methyl mercury and other parameters are intensively monitored in whole environmental media in 15 lake sites. In addition, mercury is also monitored nationwide under national environmental monitoring programs for water (2,188 sites), sediment (177 sites) and soil (2,000 sites).

Marine Environmental Monitoring Program

The National Institute of Fisheries Science (NIFS) in the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries operates the Korean Marine Environmental Monitoring Program since 2009. Geographic levels of mercury and other heavy metals are monitored once a year for seawater (126 sites), sediment (256 sites) and marine fish and shellfish (25 sites).