



MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Address by the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention Secretariat to the 54th GEF Council Meeting (Da Nang, Viet Nam, 24-26 June 2018) under Agenda Item 16: Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions

CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, Council Co-Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I would first like to thank the Council for the opportunity to address you in relation to the Minamata Convention on Mercury. I have recently taken up the role as Executive Secretary and it is, therefore, a great honour and pleasure for me to join you in this meeting.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been a long-standing partner for the Minamata Convention. The journey of the Minamata Convention has been one made hand in hand with the Global Environment Facility, and with the invaluable support and cooperation of the GEF Secretariat, for which we are very grateful.

As you are aware, 2017 was a very important year for the Minamata Convention. It entered into force on 16 August, and its first meeting of the Conference of the Parties took place in September. As part of the financial mechanism of the Minamata Convention, the Global Environment Facility fulfils a critical role in supporting the implementation of the Convention. The GEF has been an indispensable partner for countries to ratify the Convention and for the Convention to rapidly enter into force.

As of today, there are 93 Parties to the Minamata Convention, the latest ones being Iceland and India. Congratulations! After less than a year of the entry into force of the Convention, we can see a very good pace of ratifications in all regions, and I would like to recognize the role of the GEF in this regard!

The support of the GEF, which started with projects already under GEF-5, continued under GEF-6, to cover not only enabling activities on mercury but also a number of projects contributing positively to the reduction of mercury use, emissions and releases to protect the environment and human health. 141 million dollars were funded by GEF-6 for mercury-related projects.

GEF-6 has provided an opportunity to build a strong and solid foundation for the ongoing implementation of the Minamata Convention. It is exciting to see virtually all eligible countries undertaking enabling activities, in particular through the Minamata Initial Assessments (the GEF supported 105 countries to implement these assessments). Many countries have also commenced work in relation to artisanal and small-scale gold mining, with 32 countries developing their National Action Plans.

It is also exciting to see mercury being tackled in a number of larger projects worldwide, but even more promising is the development of a programmatic approach to work. The cooperation between implementing agencies and the opportunities for agencies to play to their strengths within a coordinated cluster of activities is indeed a good way forward. It reflects the cooperative and supportive spirit which has been key to the success of the Minamata Convention.

I am particularly pleased to refer to the GEF Programme called “the Global Opportunities for the Long-Term Development of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector (ASGM)” (known as the GEF GOLD Programme, not only because it relates to gold mining but because of the initials of its long title). What is so unique about GEF GOLD is that it truly shows how the Minamata Convention is not only a chemicals convention, but an environment and health convention, which is linked to several aspects of sustainable development. 4 GEF agencies are working together in this Programme (Conservation International, UNDP, the UN Environment Programme and UNIDO) and the Programme is currently benefitting 8 countries in various regions (Burkina Faso, Colombia, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mongolia, Peru, and the Philippines). To be highlighted as well here is that the GEF GOLD programme has strong private sector engagement, including major jewelers, electronics manufacturers, gold refiners, and potentially even commercial banks. It is an opportunity to further attract the private sector and create an environment where the public and private sector can work together to support communities working on ASGM. The programme anticipates a GEF grant of more than 32 million dollars, and co-financing of more than 135 million dollars. Cooperation from partners including the industry, governments and civil society, among them the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC), is also expected.

Under GEF-6 we addressed two of the largest priorities in the implementation of the convention (Artisanal and small-scale gold mining and vinyl chloride monomer production). Looking forward, for GEF 7, our priority is to have a balanced programme of activities which tackles key identified issues in support to the implementation of the Convention. We expect to address other key sectors which are large users, and thus sources of emissions of mercury, like primary mercury production, dental amalgam, chlor-alkali production, non-intentional releases, products containing large amounts of mercury (thermometers, blood pressure measuring devices, cosmetics, etc.).

Our joint focus on the successful implementation of the Convention will lead to reductions in mercury emissions and releases, therefore improving human health and environmental conditions. I am convinced that, with the support of the GEF, Parties will be able to make progress and, over time, make mercury history!

Thank you.