

Ref: MC/ES/2020/51

26 October 2020

Subject: Update on the intersessional work under the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am pleased to update you on some of the achievements and progress of work under the Minamata Convention in the intersessional period.

Preparations for the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-4)

On 13 October, the 3rd online meeting of the COP-4 Bureau was held, chaired by President Ms. Rosa Ratnawati. The Bureau members were updated on several thematic areas of work and upcoming meetings, they continued the overall consideration of the potential challenges and opportunities of holding online meetings under the Convention, and followed-up on the current status of contributions to the funds of the Convention. The report of the meeting will be published in the [Bureau section](#) of the Minamata Convention website.

I would like to inform and invite you to a [special briefing](#) on COP-4, organized within the Minamata Online series in collaboration with the Geneva Environment Network on 3 November at 14:00-15:30 CET. The briefing will be broadcast online and will include a panel discussion to mark the third anniversary of the Convention and present information about COP-4.

In line with the common practice, the Secretariat has taken steps to secure a back-up venue for COP-4 in case of any unexpected and extraordinary circumstances. I would like to inform you that this time it has not been possible to secure a backup venue for the agreed dates of COP-4. Instead, the booking has been made for the period of 16-20 May 2022, which was the closest available period. At the same time, I would like to inform Parties that the planning for COP-4, to be held on 1-5 November 2021 in Bali, Indonesia, is fully on track, and the Secretariat and the Government of Indonesia are in continuous contact to undertake the necessary steps for the successful organization of the COP meeting.

Minamata Online

As communicated earlier on 7 September 2020, a new series of online meetings under the concept of [Minamata Online](#) was launched. Minamata Online provides an opportunity for Parties and stakeholders to delve deeper into the Minamata Convention's provisions and insights on policy and scientific aspects. The 2020 series started with the first webinar of the experts and scientists contributing to the development of the monitoring guidance for the effectiveness evaluation, held on 15 September, and will be finalized with a session on socio-economic impacts of mercury pollution on 1 December. In total, since the last update on the intersessional work sent to you on 29 June 2020, more than 20 online expert group meetings and information sessions have been held.

In this regard, the Secretariat hopes you can join us for the upcoming online sessions and would highly appreciate receiving your feedback on the events, to help us to shape the next season of the Minamata Online.



Status of national reports (short format) received

Pursuant to Article 21 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, each Party shall report on the measures it has taken to implement the provisions of the Convention, on the effectiveness of such measures and on possible challenges in meeting the objectives of the Convention. The deadline for the first biennial national reports (short format) was 31 December 2019. In addition, as per decision MC-1/8 *Timing and format of reporting by Parties* (2017), the Secretariat is requested to provide information, including the reporting rate, to the Conference of the Parties to assist in its review of the implementation of the Convention (pursuant to para. 5 (c) of Art. 23) at the next COP.

I am pleased to inform you that by 21 September 2020, 90 national reports have been received (achieving a 78.9% reporting rate for the reporting period). The reports have been acknowledged, checked for completeness and checked for areas that may need clarifications, by the Secretariat. At the moment, the Secretariat is readying the submitted, complete national reports for upload to the website of the Minamata Convention in October 2020.

A few highlights of ongoing collaboration within UNEP and with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

During the online segment of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention (OEWG-12) that took place on 1-3 September 2020, the updated draft *Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with mercury or mercury compounds* (UNEP/CHW/OEWG.12/INF/13) was presented. The Secretariat had provided input to the draft so that the decision MC-3/4 be taken into account in updating the guidelines, and will continue to participate in the meetings of the small intersessional working group under the Basel Convention working to finalize them.

On 2 September, during the same online segment of OEWG-12, the Secretariat organized a side event *Evaluating the effectiveness of Conventions*. The panel discussion with the participation of various MEAs including Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and other representatives focused on the scientific support to the effectiveness evaluation. The recording of the session can be viewed following this [link](#).

On the occasion of the UN Summit on Biodiversity, a joint statement of the Minamata, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions was released on 30 September. The statement focuses on sound management of chemicals and waste as a prerequisite for turning the tide on biodiversity loss and protecting human health. The text of the press release can be read [here](#).

I am glad to inform you of the recently issued UNEP policy on financial support for developing countries and countries with economies in transition to attend virtual meetings. The policy provides for a coordinated approach on how to provide financial support for UNEP sponsored meeting participants to cover their communication costs, how to process the allowance and stipulates the amounts that can be reimbursed. It should be noted that these allowances should only be paid in cases where the participant attests that they will not be able to join the virtual meetings without UNEP's financial assistance. For more information, please contact us at MEA-MinamataSecretariat@un.org.

Secretariat team

It has been a great privilege for me to work with my skillful and dedicated colleagues in the Secretariat. I am glad to inform you that we have greatly advanced on the recruitment and completing the vacant positions. Since the beginning of the year, the large majority of posts, including posts previously filled on a temporary basis, have been filled, providing much-needed human resources and stability to the Secretariat work. The team is presented on the Convention website.



I thank you for your work on the implementation of the Minamata Convention and your commitment to [#MakeMercuryHistory](#).

Yours sincerely,

Monika Stankiewicz

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Executive Secretary

To: Governments through their official channels of communication to the UN Environment Programme

Cc: National Focal Points for the Minamata Convention on Mercury
Permanent Missions to the UN Environment Programme and to the UN in Geneva