

## Minamata Online: Mercury material flow: Supply, demand and trade

29 September 2020

### Questions and answers

#### A. Questions from the moderator

1. *What can the global community learn from the National Inventory Exercise in the US?*

- The mercury inventory will serve as the primary source of information regarding mercury supply, use, and trade in the United States, including observed trends in the reduction of use of mercury in products and manufacturing processes. We will also continue to incorporate data from other reporting systems, including federal and state programs.

The 2020 inventory is likely to be considered a baseline since it is the first nationwide in scope inventory supported by legally enforceable reporting requirements. We hope that as soon as 2023 the Agency will be in a good position to make recommendations for actions to further reduce mercury use, including future legal or regulatory actions in accordance with the statute.

A lesson learned might be that – even after being given the authority to create a nationwide inventory for mercury – the Agency went to great lengths to leverage the benefits of existing federal and state programs to ensure that data was not missed and so that potential reporters were spared as much burden and duplication of effort as possible. Our emphasis was on making use of the best parts of what data and systems were already in place.

Also – as much outreach as possible; early and often. We are still conducting QA/QC to ensure that all companies that should have reported have done so.

2. *We learnt that illicit trade of mercury is challenge. Do you have any advice on how to address information collection in illicit trade?*

- Informal nature of trade makes information collection hard. Recommend the following:
  - Recommend improving information on formal trade to have clearer data on ASGM sector and mercury trade in general.
  - Look into detail on formal uses of mercury and whether they are realistic or not (to understand if they are being diverted elsewhere). Huge imports for industrial purpose may be suspicious.
  - Increasing tracking system of mercury once it enters a country to see where it ends up and training officials to look for mercury is important. Seized mercury should also be stored in appropriate places to make sure that it does not re enter the market.

3. *Any advice to improve information on trade supply and demand?*

- Having a better feedback on how different countries are using information on supply,

trade and demand, including the 2017 report is important. How the report is being used and any feedbacks would be welcome. Knowing additional information that could be supplemented would be valuable.

## **B. Questions/ comments from the participants**

1. *Do you see any connection between the Illegal trade in wildlife and the illegal trade in mercury in Africa countries?*
  - We did not come across a direct link between illegal wildlife trade and illegal mercury trade. However, in a lot of regions the illegal mercury trade is definitely connected to other illegal networks, so I would not be surprised if some actors are involved in both
2. *Is there more information on secondary mercury supply, for example where the recycling is happening? Is it distributed globally or focused on certain countries/regions?*
  - UNEP report describes geographical aspect of mercury supply (<https://web.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/global-mercury-supply-trade-and-demand>)
  - Mercury recycling is focused on certain countries - primarily developed countries. There are large mercury recycling facilities in the US, Germany, Switzerland and the US, and likely others. Because of export bans, the US and European facilities now recover mercury and send it for final disposal, rather than selling it as a commodity.
3. *Since 2018, India is part of Minamata. In 2018 legal import to India (in volume) was 32,8%, now in 2020 -to date- it has fallen to only 15.3%. What is your opinion on this development? Just a tip: mercury trade in/from India is far larger (260 ton 01/2018 - 08/2020) than with USA. Wouldn't it be of more interest to investigate India rather than present the situation in USA?*
  - Secretariat would be happy to support Parties and COP to understand the mercury trade flow and to take appropriate action to implement the trade-related provisions of the Convention.
4. *Key question would be how to make the business case for mercury free ASGM seen from the miner's perspective*
  - Yes, that is a key question. On the plus side, properly run mercury-free process can recover more gold. But setting up these facilities requires capital. Not huge amounts, but some. And miners may be reluctant to invest absent land tenure, permits.
  - Another part is to improve markets for mercury-free gold so that miners can rely on being able to sell their mercury-free gold for a fair price after the initial investment that it cost them to use these mercury-free techniques