

**REPORT OF THE TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF
THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (INC) ON MERCURY
12 FEBRUARY 2014**

Participants

Mr. Yingxian Xia (China, for Asia-Pacific), Mr Mohammed Khashashneh (Jordan, for Asia Pacific), Mr. David Kapindula (Zambia, for Africa), Mr. Oumar Cisse (Mali, for Africa), Mr. Alojz Grabner (Slovenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Ms. Nina Cromnier (Sweden, for the Western European and Others Group), Ms. Sezaneh Seymour (United States of America, for the Western European and Others Group), Mr. Fernando Lugris (Uruguay, for Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Interim secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Mr. Vladimir Lenev (Russian Federation, for Central and Eastern Europe) and Ms. Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica, for Latin America and the Caribbean) were not able to attend the bureau teleconference.

1) Purpose of the teleconference

The INC Chair, Mr. Fernando Lugris welcomed the bureau members to the teleconference, and indicated the need for regular contact. He noted that the teleconference would serve as an opportunity to brief each other on the achievements since the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, as well as a first step in preparing for the future work of the INC and those items which must be finalized by COP1. He recalled the continued emphasis by many countries on the importance of early entry into force of the convention.

2) Welcome new members proposed by regional groups

The Chair welcomed the proposed new bureau members, Mr. David Kapindula (Zambia) replacing Ms. Abiola Olanipekun (Nigeria), Mr. Alojz Grabner (Slovenia) replacing Ms. Katerina Sebkova (Czech Republic) and Ms. Sezaneh Seymour (USA) replacing Mr. John Thompson (USA), noting that they would be formally endorsed as bureau members at the beginning of INC6. He also welcomed Ms. Fatoumata Keita-Ouane, the new Head of the Chemicals Branch, noting her keen interest in, and long familiarity with chemicals issues.

3) Update from the secretariat

a. Status of signatories and ratification

The secretariat informed the bureau members that, as of 12 February, there were 95 signatories and 1 Party to the Convention, with the recent signature by Paraguay.¹

b. Update on financial contributions for the work of the Convention and for awareness raising activities

The secretariat updated the bureau on financial contributions received to date, noting that almost US\$ 6.5 million has now been provided to support early implementation and work towards ratification, as well as to support the ongoing work of the secretariat and preparation for COP1. The secretariat also updated the bureau briefly on the progress under the GEF, highlighting the funding available for an early action pre-ratification programme for the Minamata Convention, including “Minamata Convention initial assessment activities” (MIA) and the development of ASGM National Action Plans, and the discussions on programming funds for GEF6.

The Chair highlighted the need to take the opportunity at the next bureau meeting to be held in Jordan from 8 to 9 April 2014 to discuss the preparations for the GEF replenishment. He also indicated that clear updates on all these issues was required to continue to manage the INC process effectively.

4) Update from Bureau members on progress towards ratification and implementation in their region

The Chair, on behalf of the GRULAC region, indicated that in the last summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) held in Cuba, clear reference was made in the declaration of the Heads of States and in the Programme of Action to early entry into force, signature and the need to speed up the ratification process of the convention. He noted the success reflected in the recent signature of Paraguay, and highlighted that Uruguay, in their position of presidency of MERCOSUR will continue their efforts to encourage early ratification among the countries in the region. For Uruguay, the message regarding ratification has been sent to the legislative powers, after which it needs to be endorsed, signed by the President and sent to Congress. It is expected that Uruguay will be able to ratify the convention shortly.

For Africa there were a number of countries working on mercury projects, including work on National Action Plans for ASGM. Zambia was undertaking a project on ratification with support

¹ Note that, as of the time of preparation of the report, Burundi has signed the Convention bringing the total to 96 signatories and 1 Party to the Convention as of 18 February 2014.

from UNITAR with a national workshop to be held on 19 February, with the aim of forwarding a cabinet memo on ratification for consideration soon.

From Asia and the Pacific, it is known that a number of countries have started their internal procedures for ratification. There will be a meeting of the Arab region next month, with ratification of the Convention on the agenda.

For Central and Eastern Europe there was no regional information available at this stage, however, the meeting was informed that Slovenia has started the ratification process and hoped to complete it before the end of the year.

For WEOG, there was an expectation that the EU would be able to ratify in 2015, as would many of the member states. For JUSSCANNZ there was no formal report, however, it was noted that the USA was focusing on support for ASGM.

The Chair encouraged all bureau members to continue to work towards ratification and implementation, and indicated that Uruguay would continue to play a strong role on this issue. He anticipated further discussions on this at the bureau meeting in April.

5) Preparations for the expert group meeting on emissions

The secretariat provided a brief report on the preparations for the first meeting of the group of technical experts on emissions, to be held from 25 to 28 February 2014 in Ottawa, Canada. The bureau was provided with information on membership of the expert group, structure of the meeting, and the topics to be discussed. It was agreed that a further update would be provided at the next bureau meeting, including information on the outcomes of the first meeting and plans for future meetings of the expert group.

6) Plan for awareness raising and capacity building activities

The secretariat provided an update on the planned activities on awareness raising and capacity building, particularly focused on a series of sub-regional workshops on ratification and early implementation. The workshops are focused on providing a good understanding of the key provisions, of the ratification and implementation process and an indication of support for countries. The aim is to foster ratification and implementation, and to encourage information exchange and action at the sub-regional level. The first sub-regional workshop for countries from South East Asia, which is funded by the Government of China, is scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur from 19 to 21 March 2014.

The Chair indicated that these workshops may also provide an opportunity for regional discussion to maintain level of understanding of all through the whole process. He indicated that he looks forward to discussing this further at the next bureau meeting, including considering how the process will continue until entry into force. He highlighted the need to strategize on plans to make activities very successful and not to duplicate efforts.

7) Expectations for INC6 in particular issues to be covered and expected documents

The Chair highlighted that there are only likely to be two INCs before the first meeting of the COP. This means there is a need to have an overview of the process to ensure that the necessary issues are ready for decision making at COP 1. There is a need to consider what would be solved at INC6, and what could be referred to INC7. The role of the bureau in the process also needs to be considered.

The secretariat highlighted that the resolutions led to the development of a list of documents for INC6. Some of these will set out procedural issues required by the Convention text, on items such as the format for reports and exemptions. Others will be short, highlighting progress and the need for further work. Some items will require further policy discussion and input, such as the relationship with the GEF, the development of the specific international programme, while there may be technical discussion on BAT/BEP. There are also likely to be a number of information documents, including reporting from the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, the UNEA and the GEF. The secretariat further noted that, in preparing for INC6, there was close collaboration with other organizations, including through a joint retreat with the BRS secretariat and the GEF secretariat. Further work with the BRS secretariat included joint organization of regional workshops in 2015 and work to identify areas of complementarity, as well as looking for mutual support. There are also collaborative actions underway with the WHO, in particular relating to the awareness raising sub-regional workshops. The secretariat is endeavouring to reach out to all stakeholders and collaborators for effective implementation.

The Chair then highlighted the need for further discussion of these preparations in Jordan.

8) Update on preparations for INC6

The secretariat provided a brief update on the preparations for INC6, indicating the plans to hold the meeting from 3 – 7 November, 2014 at the ESCAP center in Bangkok. Invitations will be send out in May 2014. 2 November is reserved for regional meetings. In contrast to the INC meetings during the negotiating process, there may be an option of having side events, however this could be discussed further in Jordan.

There are current plans to hold the 6th meeting of the Partnership Advisory Group of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (GMP) immediately before INC6, for practical reasons, and to foster a stronger relationship between the UNEP GMP and the Minamata Convention. There would be opportunities for leads in the partnership areas to demonstrate the close linkages between partnership activities and the relevant Convention areas. There is a need for additional resources for the meeting, and a fund raising letter will be sent.

The Chemicals Branch head then emphasized that some side events should be presented with an international context, focusing on the SDGs, as mercury is right at the junction of development issues and health and environment issues. There should be encouragement for countries to look at mercury in global development issues.

9) Next Bureau meeting in Jordan, 8 to 9 April 2014

The bureau member from Jordan expressed pleasure in being able to host the Bureau in Jordan, and informed that the meeting will be held in the Dead Sea area. The Government planned to host the bureau for a number of events, and that more details would be provided later.

The Chair expressed his thanks to the Government of Jordan, and expressed the wishes of all the bureau to visit Jordan. He highlighted the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to review the draft scenario note and consider the programme for INC6, as well as to strategise and consider important areas of work. He reflected on the need to work towards entry into force, and to generate ideas on awareness raising, financial support, regional needs, and to continue working effectively.

10) Any other issues raised by the Bureau

The US highlighted the need for countries to submit information on their measures to implement the Convention, and asked the secretariat to make the information submitted by the US available.

The meeting closed with an assurance that further information on the next bureau meeting and the invitation letter would be sent shortly.