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**United Nations
Environment
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**Intergovernmental negotiating committee
to prepare a global legally binding instrument
on mercury
Seventh session**

Dead Sea, Jordan, 10–15 March 2016
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

**Work to prepare for the entry into force of the Minamata
Convention on Mercury and for the first meeting of the
Conference of the Parties to the Convention: matters
required by the Convention to be decided upon by the
Conference of the Parties at its first meeting**

**Compilation and analysis of the means of obtaining monitoring
data in relation to effectiveness evaluation**

Note by the secretariat

1. In paragraph 2 of article 22, the Minamata Convention on Mercury provides that the Conference of the Parties “shall, at its first meeting, initiate the establishment of arrangements for providing itself with comparable monitoring data on the presence and movement of mercury and mercury compounds in the environment as well as trends in levels of mercury and mercury compounds observed in biotic media and vulnerable populations.” In paragraph 3 of the same article, the Convention states further that the evaluation “shall be conducted on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical, financial and economic information, including:

- (a) Reports and other monitoring information provided to the Conference of the Parties pursuant to paragraph 2;
- (b) Reports submitted pursuant to Article 21;
- (c) Information and recommendations provided pursuant to Article 15; and
- (d) Reports and other relevant information on the operation of the financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building arrangements put in place under this Convention.”

2. At its sixth meeting, the intergovernmental negotiating committee considered a document prepared by the secretariat setting out a range of initiatives that could be considered relevant to gathering information that could be used in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention. Following its discussion the committee decided¹ that the secretariat should seek information on the availability of monitoring data from all Governments and relevant organizations and prepare a compilation and analysis of the means of obtaining monitoring data for consideration by the committee at its seventh session. In doing so the secretariat was to give emphasis to the

* UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.7/1.

¹ UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/INC.6/24, para. 123.

capacity-building needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the role played by regional activities and the value of partnerships.

3. In accordance with the committee's decision, the secretariat circulated a request to Governments and relevant organizations for information on the availability of monitoring data. During the submission phase, which was extended from 30 June to 31 August 2015 based on a request from the bureau of the committee, submissions relevant to article 22 were received from eleven countries, one regional economic integration organization, one non-governmental organization and one intergovernmental organization. The submissions are available at <http://mercuryconvention.org/Negotiations/INC7/INC7submissions/tabid/4754/Default.aspx>, and an analysis of the submissions prepared by the secretariat is set out in the annex to the present note.

4. The committee may wish to take note of the analysis prepared by the secretariat, in particular regarding the types of information that have been reported as being available, and it may wish to consider further the availability of monitoring data and the analysis of the means of obtaining monitoring data, including mechanisms for determining the comparability of data. The committee may also wish to request the secretariat to work with the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and other relevant partners, including the World Health Organization, to identify how the diverse mechanisms described in the submissions could contribute to the provision of comparable monitoring data, in particular considering the attributes of the monitoring required, the relevant methodologies for sampling and evaluation, and the core media. Working through established partnerships will allow the work to draw on the experience of a variety of relevant experts. The committee may further wish to request the secretariat to prepare a report on these matters for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting.

Annex

Analysis of submissions related to monitoring data

A. Background

1. Following a request from the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its sixth session, the secretariat circulated a request to Governments and relevant organizations for information on the availability of monitoring data. During the submission phase, which was extended from 30 June to 31 August 2015 based on a request from the bureau of the committee, eleven countries, one regional economic integration organization, one non-governmental organization and one intergovernmental organization responded to the request for information. The information submitted by those countries and organizations is available at <http://mercuryconvention.org/Negotiations/INC7/INC7submissions/tabid/4754/Default.aspx>.

B. Relevant aspects of the information submitted

2. One country indicated that, as it was at an early stage of implementation, it did not currently have information related to effectiveness evaluation.

3. Another country indicated that it undertook environmental monitoring through both environmental agencies and research groups. It did, however, anticipate that the work planned in connection with its Minamata Initial Assessment would include a detailed survey on existing capacity and effective assessment, which would identify gaps and needs in the country in relation to monitoring and effectiveness evaluation at the national level.

4. Another country indicated that it did not have a routine monitoring programme in place. Data was available, however, on identified mercury pollution hotspots; such pollution resulted primarily from sediment dredging, with the sediment subsequently applied to agricultural land.

5. A number of countries described extensive monitoring schemes administered under either voluntary or mandatory structures. Studies were undertaken on a national, provincial or local basis, and appeared to be targeted towards vulnerable populations in a number of cases.

6. Environmental monitoring included sampling and analysis of air, water and sediments and the sampling of a range of biota, including fish (both freshwater and marine), shellfish, birds (mainly involving egg sampling) and mammals. Human biomonitoring included sampling of hair, blood, urine and breast milk, generally conducted on a cyclical basis, sometimes with long follow-ups. In some cases, biomonitoring studies were accompanied by other data collection exercises such as analysis of specific health measures, food questionnaires, assessment of general health status and physical fitness and an evaluation of socio-economic status.

7. The World Health Organization (WHO) provided information on ongoing activities relating to human biomonitoring as well as additional information on the WHO Global Environment Monitoring System Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme (GEMS/Food) global online database, which contains fish monitoring data for mercury and provides both access to data and the ability to submit data via a public web interface since 2011.

8. The Institute of Atmospheric Pollution Research, one of the co-leads of the Mercury Air Transport and Fate Research partnership area under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, provided information on the Global Mercury Observation System, which is aimed at building a global observing system for detecting mercury contamination. The system aims to integrate ground-based monitoring sites, ocean data and lower stratospheric and tropospheric observations. To date, there are more than 40 ground-based sites in the system, including more than ten based in the southern hemisphere. Some additional data on the vertical distribution of mercury species in the troposphere and lower stratosphere has been obtained. A historical database has been developed, compiling data from previous monitoring programmes, campaign-based measurements and individual monitoring and measurement initiatives.

9. The Biodiversity Research Institute, the other co-lead of the Mercury Air Transport and Fate Research partnership area, described its work undertaking field studies to assess exposure to and impacts of mercury in the environment, as well as its work in becoming a central clearing-house for biotic mercury data for North America. The institute's work is now being built on to compile a global database (the Global Biotic Mercury Synthesis, or GBMS, database), which will have an initial emphasis on shellfish, fish and marine mammals. The data include sample results from over 72 countries based on data published in peer-reviewed journals.

C. Consideration of the information submitted

10. Article 22 of the Convention calls for the initiation of arrangements for providing the Conference of the Parties with comparable monitoring data on the presence and movement of mercury and mercury compounds in the environment and on trends in levels of mercury and mercury compounds observed in biotic media and vulnerable populations. The article also states that the effectiveness evaluation to be conducted by the Conference of the Parties “shall be conducted on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical, financial and economic information, including:

- (a) Reports and other monitoring information provided to the Conference of the Parties pursuant to paragraph 2;
- (b) Reports submitted pursuant to Article 21;
- (c) Information and recommendations provided pursuant to Article 15; and
- (d) Reports and other relevant information on the operation of the financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building arrangements put in place under this Convention.”

11. The information submitted by countries and organizations as described above is primarily of a scientific, environmental or technical nature. Information provided under articles 15 and 21 will be available once the Convention has entered into force and the parties begin to meet their reporting and other obligations under the Convention.

12. The information provided as described above reveals that there are already programmes in place in some countries and regions to generate data that will assist in the effectiveness evaluation. The coverage of the data is, however, limited. Some facts revealed by an analysis are discussed in the following paragraphs.

13. Three of the countries submitting information were developing countries, two of which have implemented environmental monitoring programmes through their environmental agencies or environmental administration. One of these countries emphasized that it was applying work undertaken under its Minamata Initial Assessment to prepare for implementation of the Convention to identify gaps and needs in relation to monitoring to contribute to the effectiveness evaluation at the national level. Further information on other monitoring programmes undertaken in countries and regions, including those carried out in accordance with trade requirements, would be needed to determine the need for capacity-building to contribute to effective monitoring.

14. Two of the relevant organizations that provided information described activities that were being undertaken at the global level. No specific submissions were made in reference to regional activities, but projects considering regional information were referred to in the information submitted by one country.

15. The work on mercury air transport and fate research being done under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership area is one example of work that can be done through partnerships, which includes in particular work that makes use of publicly available data. The partnerships undertaken in developing and maintaining the WHO GEMS/Food database serve as another example of the contributions of partnerships to the gathering and dissemination of data.

16. From the detailed information submitted by countries with regard to their monitoring and data collection projects, as well as the indications of data available in peer-reviewed journals, it is clear that there is a large amount of data available globally, with a key issue being how to make it available while ensuring that it is comparable and in a format that will allow its evaluation and the consideration of baseline levels of mercury and mercury compounds in the environment as well as changes in their levels over time.

17. It is noted that the majority of the detailed information submitted was drawn from the northern hemisphere, although some information was available from the southern hemisphere.

D. Further considerations

18. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties will need to have a point of reference against which to evaluate it, for example a baseline. The Convention itself does not address this issue. Information on mercury emissions prior to entry into force of the Convention is available, however, through, inter alia, the global mercury assessments requested by the UNEP Governing Council, two of which were published in 2009 and 2013, with a third to be published by 2018, as well as the Minamata Initial Assessments being undertaken by many countries. This information could be used to contribute to the establishment of a baseline against which to evaluate future performance of the Convention.

19. Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants has in place measures to enable the ongoing evaluation of the Convention in accordance with Article 16 of the Convention. Relevant experience with the evaluation of the Stockholm Convention could be taken into account for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of the Minamata Convention.
