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**Review and assessment of options for enhanced voluntary measures
and new or existing international legal instruments**

**Information document on the UNEP Global Mercury
Partnership**

The secretariat has the honour to provide, in the annex to the present note, an information document submitted by the United States of America on the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership for the information of the Working Group at its second meeting. The document has been reproduced without formal editing.

* UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/OEWG.2/1.

Annex

Submission by the United States of America Information Document on the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership was created under the auspices of the UNEP Mercury Programme, pursuant to the 2005 UNEP Governing Council decision on chemicals management. The Partnership is a coalition of governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, academia, international organizations, and other interested stakeholders, which share resources and coordinate efforts to safeguard the environment and protect the public health from the risks posed by mercury contamination. The Partnership seeks to achieve immediate results where possible and lay the appropriate groundwork for future progress, and helps to implement the objectives of the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM).

The United States was very pleased with the results of the April 2008 UNEP Global Mercury Partnership meeting, which delivered the overarching Partnership framework requested by the Governing Council. Building on the groundwork laid during two years of initial partnership area work, we found noteworthy the agreement on the goal and the objectives, as well as the broad recognition that the partnership approach is a useful tool in achieving global reductions over the long term. The five partnership business plans standardize partnership efforts along common organizational lines, focusing efforts on preserving the flexibility and openness of the Partnership system to reduce mercury use and releases. This stronger, more specific organizational structure has allowed the Partnership to rapidly mobilize expertise to begin to address the challenges posed by these sectors.

The partnership approach has provided great flexibility and, at the same time, focus to address mercury both on the local and international levels. Partners have been able to capitalize on the versatility of the Partnership to develop solutions that aid in specific local issues, while knowledge and practices can often be transferred among industrial and commercial sectors, as well as among governments and NGOs for broader, more internationally focused work. An industrial technique, workplace practice, or scientific method developed for one country to address a local issue can be applied or modified to assist another country or region, while local work always provides global benefits due to the transboundary and persistent nature of mercury pollution. The multi-pollutant workshop scheduled for this November by the Coal Combustion Partnership is a good example of how knowledge and practices that have been successful in reducing mercury emissions in one locale can be transferred among partners to facilitate mercury reductions or address the information barriers to the adoption of practices that could result in such reductions.

Through the efforts of the Partners and UNEP, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has made specific, localized efforts toward public health and safety, and there have been broad global benefits, steps toward a greater mutual understanding which help facilitate local gains. The Chlor-alkali partnership area, for example, already achieved 2.5 tons per year of reductions of mercury releases and the Air Transport and Fate Research partnership area recently completed an extensive report addressing global emissions, air monitoring, and air modeling that is a significant contribution to the scientific literature and an important input to the UNEP Emissions Report. Below is a sample of U.S.-funded project accomplishments under the Global Mercury Partnership that demonstrate the versatility and flexibility of the Partnership as well as our continuing commitment to making and facilitating mercury reductions in this and other fora.

Products Partnership Area

One of the great successes of the product partnership area has been in the health care sector where collaborative efforts among governments, non-profits, and hospital administrators and staff have realized extremely promising reductions in mercury-containing products from participating hospitals and a consequent reduction in mercury-containing wastes from medical supplies. The basic steps toward a successful hospital mercury elimination project have been developed through years of domestic and international experience. These efforts can be as simple as educational workshops and training sessions among doctors and hospital staff about mercury clean-up procedures and spill prevention and available mercury-free alternatives. Reductions are typically significant and the training and knowledge transfer are very inexpensive, making this a cost-effective process. Where hospital mercury reduction projects makes the biggest impact, however, is in helping hospitals move away from using mercury-containing medical devices, so that they no longer have to be concerned about accidental exposure and mercury waste management.

The Products Partnership has shared its experience with nations through pilot projects in countries such as China, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Mexico. These pilots have thus far shown great promise. Jishuitan Hospital in Beijing reported that mercury spills were down by 50 percent over the course of the last year as a result of the Partnership's strong mercury awareness education campaign and staff training. Tiantan hospital in Beijing achieved a 50 percent reduction in total quantity of mercury contained in medical devices through substitution with mercury-free devices, and further made a financial commitment of 500,000 RMB to replace its mercury containing thermometers.

The administrators and doctors of Tiantan and Jishuitan hospitals can now educate their peers, local community leaders, and their government about addressing mercury contamination. A similar program began in the United States in 1999 has already resulted in the elimination of 99% of mercury contaminated hospital wastes.

Artisanal Mining Partnership Area

Although artisanal mining is a highly complex and difficult sector to make progress in, the Artisanal Mining Partnership area has had considerable success in a number of pilot programs. The economics behind small-scale gold mining combine with a general lack of local regulation and established safety practices to create serious problems for reduction efforts. The Partnership addresses these challenges by working with both local communities and national governments to develop a greater understanding of the dangers of mercury contamination and the considerable benefits to local public health and environmental quality gained through mercury reduction, and by seeking to make the global gold supply chain work to improve conditions for miners and the environment. The Partnership works on the ground to develop and implement locally acceptable, affordable technologies and practices for cost-effective mercury reduction solutions, helping local stakeholders to better understand mercury reduction as a concrete and actionable public good.

The Partnership has designed, tested and installed pilot technology to limit worker exposure and environmental contamination from mercury emitted in gold processing shops. In some locations, levels of mercury in gold shops are extremely high both inside and outside the shops, and preliminary atmospheric tests show that a portion is being transported long range. The first six pilot mercury vapor capture installations in the Brazilian Amazon each remove about 27kg of mercury from the atmosphere per year. The Partnership has recently completed a scoping mission in Peru to replicate this success. Widespread use of this locally-manufactured and cost-effective technology will have a significant impact on both the global transport and deposition of mercury

and on the health and safety of the local workers and their families. In Senegal, partners have followed the UNIDO Global Mercury Project model to empower local community-based organizations to share safe management techniques with miners and health officials. To date the project has trained over 800 miners to produce and use retorts to capture mercury vapor.

Looking Ahead

Partners are planning many activities in the future to help realize concrete reductions in the near term. One specific example, in artisanal mining, is the effort underway under UNIDO's capable leadership and with a range of partners to key up a regional approach in francophone West Africa. This approach would incorporate supply chain concepts, capitalizing on trends in environmentally sound jewelry, to increase economic and health benefits to miners, processors, and their communities, while addressing the global pollution implications in this important economic sector. UNEP has launched a similar effort in Asia through funding from the SAICM Quick Start Program. Another example is the work beginning with governmental and industry partners on management of mercury-containing wastes in chlorine and PVC production in Russia. Planned work will include regulatory analysis, monitoring, treatment demonstrations, and sound management of surplus mercury.

We encourage the involvement of donors and other new partners as the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership advances in achieving its vitally important goal and objectives.
