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**Conference of the Parties to the  
Minamata Convention on Mercury  
Fourth meeting**

Online, 1–5 November 2021\*

Item 4 (l) of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Matters for consideration or action by  
the Conference of the Parties: gender****Mainstreaming gender****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The preamble to the Minamata Convention on Mercury notes the parties' awareness of "health concerns, especially in developing countries, resulting from exposure to mercury of vulnerable populations, especially women, children, and, through them, future generations". In addition, article 16 on health aspects, article 18 on public information, awareness and education, article 19 on research, development and monitoring and article 22 on effectiveness evaluation all refer to the needs of vulnerable populations.

2. Furthermore, paragraph 1 (i) of annex C to the Convention indicates that national action plans to address artisanal and small-scale gold mining are to include strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of childbearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Decision MC-1/13, on guidance on the preparation of national action plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting, provides further guidance on how to prevent exposure of vulnerable populations to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

3. At its third meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided to include gender as a focus area of the Convention's programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021. In particular, activity 13 of the programme of work includes the development of a gender strategy with the objective of mainstreaming gender into the programme of work. To achieve this objective, the secretariat was to ensure that its programmes and projects were planned and implemented from a gender equality perspective by including gender issues in the secretariat's capacity-building projects and programmes and cooperation with other internal and external partners on gender-related issues at the international, regional and national levels.<sup>1</sup>

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\* The resumed fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury is to convene in person in Bali, Indonesia, and is tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

\*\* UNEP/MC/COP.4/1.

<sup>1</sup> More information on activity 13 is contained in the budget activity fact sheets submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting as information document UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/9 and updated by the secretariat based on the decisions taken at the third meeting. The updated fact sheets are available at [https://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/Programme\\_of\\_work%20\\_activity\\_fact\\_sheets.pdf](https://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/Programme_of_work%20_activity_fact_sheets.pdf).

4. On 25 September 2015, in its resolution 70/1, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”), and recognized that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was crucial.
5. In March 2019, in resolution 4/17, entitled “Promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance”, the United Nations Environment Assembly reaffirmed the importance of States respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights obligations, including women’s rights, when implementing environmental legislation and policies and invited Member States to prioritize the implementation of gender policies and action plans developed under the multilateral environmental agreements to which they were a party.<sup>2</sup>
6. In December 2020, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) initiated the creation of a network of multilateral environmental agreement gender officers and focal points to enable information-sharing on gender-related matters such as seminars, publication announcements and capacity-building opportunities in an informal setting.<sup>3</sup>

## II. Implementation

7. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is one of the two entities of the financial mechanism of the Convention, together with the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance. GEF is committed to ensuring gender equality and promoting women’s empowerment across its operations and to applying a gender-responsive approach throughout the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GEF-financed programmes and projects.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in the document entitled “GEF 2020: Strategy for the GEF”, GEF emphasizes gender mainstreaming commitments, including that “GEF will continue to strengthen its focus on gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment”, “GEF will emphasize the use of gender analysis as part of socio-economic assessments” and “gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data will be used in GEF projects to demonstrate concrete results and progress related to gender equality”.<sup>5</sup>
8. Furthermore, the Specific International Programme has, since its inception, included gender as part of the application criteria for funding.<sup>6</sup> The secretariat’s application guidelines and forms for each round of applications to the Specific International Programme include a requirement that project applicants explain how they will incorporate gender mainstreaming.
9. In addition, in accordance with activity 13 of the Convention’s programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021 and thanks to the generous financial support of Sweden, the secretariat has carried out several activities geared towards mainstreaming gender into its work.<sup>7</sup> In particular, in January 2021, the secretariat developed the “Gender road map of the Minamata Convention on Mercury”, which analyses current initiatives undertaken by other multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations bodies in the field of gender and identifies priority actions to be undertaken by the secretariat, parties and other stakeholders to further mainstreaming gender into their activities. The road map was developed in accordance with applicable gender-related rules, regulations

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions-unea-4>.

<sup>3</sup> The network includes gender focal points from the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals; the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions; the Minamata Convention on Mercury; the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer / Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol (through the Ozone Secretariat) ; the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region; the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean; the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF%20Guidance%20on%20Gender.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-2020Strategies-March2015\\_CRA\\_WEB\\_2.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-2020Strategies-March2015_CRA_WEB_2.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mercuryconvention.org/Implementation/SpecificInternationalProgramme/tabid/6334/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> On 6 May 2021, the secretariat shared with parties an information note on the work of the secretariat in the field of gender, available at [https://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/ES\\_Information\\_on\\_the\\_work\\_of\\_the\\_Secretariat\\_in\\_the\\_field\\_of\\_gender.pdf](https://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/ES_Information_on_the_work_of_the_Secretariat_in_the_field_of_gender.pdf).

and policies of the United Nations<sup>8</sup> and the United Nations Environment Programme.<sup>9</sup> The draft road map was shared with the network of multilateral environmental agreement gender officers and focal points for review.

10. The gender road map includes a list of prioritized actions to be undertaken by the secretariat to ensure that principles of gender equality are firmly embedded in the activities, projects and programmes it undertakes. Two top priorities were identified in the road map: the development of a gender plan of action under the Convention for mainstreaming gender considerations into all aspects of the work under the Convention, with clear indicators for monitoring progress; and, closely connected to this, the appointment of a gender focal point within the secretariat to coordinate, monitor and evaluate gender mainstreaming activities carried out under the Convention.

11. The road map also identifies specific actions to be undertaken in the medium and long term to ensure that the principles of gender equality are firmly embedded in activities undertaken by the secretariat, the parties and other stakeholders under the Convention.

12. As a first step in implementing the gender road map, the Executive Secretary appointed Ms. Lara Ognibene, Legal and Programme Officer, to act as the gender focal point within the secretariat team. Ms. Ognibene has been coordinating gender activities since November 2020 and is the secretariat representative in the network of multilateral environmental agreement gender focal points established by UNEP in December 2020. The gender road map is set out in annex II to this note.

### III. Proposed action

13. The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider and adopt a decision as proposed in annex I.

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<sup>8</sup> See the Secretary-General's "System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity", focusing primarily on staffing and personnel mandates for gender parity, available at <https://www.un.org/gender/content/strategy>; and the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, providing an accountability mechanism for gender mainstreaming across entities, policies and programmes, available at <https://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-swap-0>.

<sup>9</sup> UNEP. *Gender Equality and the Environment: Policy and Strategy*. Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7655>.

## Annex I

### **Draft decision MC-4/[--]: Gender mainstreaming**

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 in its resolution 70/1, entitled “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,

*Recalling also* United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/5 of 27 May 2016, entitled “Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which, among other things, stresses the importance of respecting, protecting and promoting gender equality in delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

*Recognizing* that, notwithstanding the efforts of parties and the secretariat to promote gender equality, efforts are still needed to ensure that women, men, girls and boys from all parties are equally involved in the implementation of the Convention and are represented in its bodies and processes and thus inform and participate in decision-making on gender-responsive policies related to mercury,

1. *Takes note* of the gender road map of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and welcomes the secretariat’s efforts to mainstream gender into its activities, projects and programmes;
2. *Notes* the importance of gender mainstreaming to ensure that men and women benefit equally from all activities, projects and programmes undertaken under the Convention and calls on parties to further promote gender equality in the implementation of the Convention;
3. *Invites* parties to support the secretariat in its efforts to mainstream gender into all activities to be undertaken by the secretariat as well as by parties and other stakeholders, including through the development of a gender action plan for the Minamata Convention during the biennium 2022–2023;
4. *Requests* the secretariat to continue collaborating with the United Nations Environment Programme, the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements and relevant partners in the field of gender;
5. *Also requests* the secretariat to report on the progress made in mainstreaming gender into the activities carried out under the Convention.

## Annex II

### Gender road map of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

1. The success of gender mainstreaming rests on a three-legged stool of building capacity and knowledge, building visibility and collaboration, and creating enabling conditions for measurable outcomes. These three activity domains could form the organizing principle for the gender action plan. The road map here uses a different, actor-specific organizing principle (secretariat/parties/programmes) but the cross tabs should inform the gender action plan itself.

2. Some of the recommendations below can be acted on with little expansion of resources but most may require substantial expansion in organizational capacity and financial resources. While this can be daunting, heightened donor awareness opens up new opportunities.

SECRETARIAT	PARTIES, CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS
<b>HIGHEST PRIORITY</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit/appoint a gender focal point</li> <li>Establish a secretariat-based gender working group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize capacity-building/training workshops for parties' representatives on gender mainstreaming principles, United Nations and related mandates, and content-based understanding of gender and mercury</li> <li>Liaise with UN-Women for training events</li> </ul>	Strengthen inclusion of gender in national action plans
Initiate decision-making on the process/actors/timeline to develop a gender action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish expectations for gender parity in all Conference of the Parties' and parties' activities</li> <li>Quotas</li> </ul>	Develop gender mainstreaming toolkits for project principals and developers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain/extend "enlightened leadership" and support for gender processes at a high level of visibility</li> <li>Join the International Gender Champions network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively solicit and encourage gender-based observer group participation in meetings of the Conference of the Parties</li> <li>Signal encouragement for a gender caucus</li> </ul>	Prioritize gender-disaggregated data collection as a "basic knowledge" activity across all projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a media plan around the appointment of a gender focal point and planning for the gender action plan</li> <li>Leverage external media events</li> <li>Develop a media plan for ongoing efforts on public engagement/awareness</li> </ul>	Establish gender side events at meetings of the Conference of the Parties	
Develop codes of conduct and anti-discrimination policies	Cultivate a network of party "allies" and champions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize capacity-building training events/workshops for secretariat staff on: gender mainstreaming principles, United Nations and related mandates and content-based understanding of gender and mercury</li> <li>Liaise with UN-Women for training events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the engaged constituency base by building alliances with non-governmental organizations and civil society actors engaged in chemicals and waste and mercury-specific activities and advocacy, academics and researchers</li> <li>Encourage/become goodwill ambassadors</li> </ul>	

SECRETARIAT	PARTIES, CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS
Incorporate gender activities into workplans, main strategic planning documents and budget plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forge alliances with academics and researchers to extend the engaged constituency and develop joint research activities</li> <li>• Sequester even modest funding to support targeted research</li> <li>• Establish a research database on gender and mercury</li> <li>• Prioritize gender-disaggregated data collection as a “basic knowledge” activity</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require gender reporting in parties’ national reports under article 21 of the Convention.</li> </ul>	
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		
Develop a “targeted funding” plan for gender activities	Develop a “targeted funding” plan for gender activities in connection with meetings of the Conference of the Parties and to support gender-relevant participation at meetings of the Conference of the Parties	Solicit dedicated funding for gender inclusion in projects and for capacity-building of project principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage gender focal points to liaise with their multilateral environmental agreement peers</li> <li>• Create and sustain a gender focal point network</li> </ul>	Prepare and circulate accessible documentation/briefs/primers	Make gender a visible category in the secretariat project database (website)
Review all secretariat documents and reporting protocols for gender visibility (and gender-neutral language)	Encourage all organizations represented at meetings of the Conference of the Parties to have explicit policy on gender equality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all public-facing materials</li> <li>• Update the website to reflect gender efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate and publicize allies and champions</li> <li>• Establish an award/recognition programme</li> </ul>	
<b>NORMALIZE WITHIN WORKPLAN</b>		
Monitor and maintain gender parity in staffing	Prepare a gender synthesis document and circulate it on an occasional basis	Prepare and circulate a periodic “synthesis” document to project principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize periodic training and capacity-building events on: gender mainstreaming principles, content-based understanding of gender and mercury</li> <li>• Liaise with UN-Women for training events</li> </ul>	Update and circulate accessible documentation/briefs/primers	Make gender-related projects visible on the secretariat website
Sustain/refresh/accelerate media and communications plans to engage wide constituencies on gender and mercury issues	Build alliances with international intergovernmental organizations and United Nations entities, including the World Health Organization and UN-Women	
Prepare an annual report to parties on gender activities	Track and make public gender data for participation in meetings of the Conference of the Parties and related events.	

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<b>SECRETARIAT</b>	<b>PARTIES, CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS</b>
Prepare and circulate a periodic "synthesis" document		
Prepare an annual or periodic review of the status and implementation of the gender action plan		

*Abbreviations:* UN-Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

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