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**Ad hoc Open-ended Working Group on Mercury**

First meeting

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Report on activities under the UNEP mercury programme**

**Report on ongoing activities**

**I. Cooperation with the secretariat of the Basel Convention**

1. The Chemicals Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP Chemicals) has received communications from a number of developing countries stating that there is a need for specific guidance on the handling of mercury wastes. In the light of those communications, UNEP Chemicals raised the issue with the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and subsequently submitted an information document to Conference of the Parties of that Convention at its eighth meeting. That document highlighted the need for clear guidance on the appropriate handling of mercury-containing waste.

2. As a result, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention has agreed to include mercury as a priority area under the Convention, to develop guidelines for the handling of mercury containing-waste and to pilot test those guidelines.

3. UNEP Chemicals has been working with the secretariat of the Basel Convention to facilitate the development of the guidelines. An initial draft will be presented to the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention at its sixth meeting, which will take place from 3 to 7 September 2007. Further details will be presented in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/OEWG.1/INF 3.

**II. Enhancing outreach and risk communication for at-risk populations, including sensitive populations**

4. The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its decision 22/4 V, and particularly paragraph 1 (b) of the annex to that decision, requested UNEP to assist all countries, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, with, among other things, enhancing communication regarding the risks posed by mercury, and particularly communication with at-risk populations, including sensitive populations. As part of its implementation

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

of decision 22/4 V, UNEP Chemicals has prepared, in consultation with the World Health Organization, draft guidance to assist in identifying the at-risk populations contemplated by the decision.

5. The draft guidance, entitled “Identifying populations at risk due to exposure to mercury”, has been posted on the UNEP mercury programme website ([www.chem.unep.ch/mercury](http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury)), and is available to the Working Group as document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/OEWG.1/INF/4. Governments and interested stakeholders are invited to submit comments on the document to UNEP Chemicals as soon as possible and not later than 31 December.

6. UNEP Chemicals has also developed outreach materials, including a draft awareness-raising document for use by Governments, industry and the community. The draft document is available to the Working Group as document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/OEWG.1/INF/5. Governments and interested stakeholders are invited to submit comments on the document to UNEP Chemicals as soon as possible and not later than 31 December. Additionally, Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to use the materials in their awareness-raising programmes on mercury and to provide comments to UNEP Chemicals on their experience.

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