



Distr.: General
25 July 2019

Original: English



United Nations Environment Programme

Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury Third meeting

Geneva, 25–29 November 2019

Item 5 (k) of the provisional agenda*

Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties: emissions of mercury resulting from the open burning of waste

Information in relation to emissions of mercury resulting from the open burning of waste

Note by the secretariat

1. At its first meeting, held in Geneva from 24 to 29 September 2017, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury adopted decision MC-1/14 on mercury emissions related to the open burning of waste. In that decision, the Conference of the Parties recognized that open burning of waste could be a significant source of mercury emissions that had not been quantified, and that the guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices¹ held that open burning of waste was considered bad environmental practice and should be discouraged. The Conference also invited parties and other interested entities and organizations to submit to the secretariat information on mercury emissions from open burning of waste and requested the secretariat to continue to compile information, particularly from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including information from inventories and Minamata initial assessments, emission factors and actual measurements of emissions submitted by parties, and any relevant information developed by the conferences of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and to submit that information to the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting for its consideration of the need for further action.
2. The secretariat submitted the compiled information to the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting, held in Geneva from 19 to 23 November 2018. The Conference, noting the compiled information, agreed that support for developing countries on this important issue was crucial and requested the secretariat to continue to collect and make available relevant information. The Conference also requested the secretariat to continue to engage on the issue with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and to update the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting.
3. An invitation was made to parties and other stakeholders to submit information on mercury emissions resulting from the open burning of waste in a letter sent by the Executive Secretary on 3 December 2018 regarding action required to follow up on the second meeting of the Conference.

* UNEP/MC/COP.3/1.

¹ Guidance in relation to mercury emissions on best available techniques and best environmental practices taking into account any difference between new and existing sources and the need to minimize cross-media effects, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention at its first meeting (decision MC-1/4), to assist parties in meeting their obligations under article 8 (UNEP/MC/COP.1/7, annex II).

A submission was received from Nigeria, describing general waste management practice and estimated mercury emissions from the open burning of waste. The submission is set out in the annex to document UNEP/MC/COP.3/INF/16 and is also available on the website of the Minamata Convention at: www.mercuryconvention.org/Meetings/Intersessionalwork/tabid/7857/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

4. The secretariat, the International Environmental Technology Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Japanese Ministry of the Environment organized a workshop on synergies in mercury waste management in Osaka, Japan, on 30 and 31 May 2019. The workshop covered different types of open burning of waste, including intentional and unintentional open burning at dumpsites or in gardens. Participants recommended the strengthening of political commitments to establish a legislative framework, the establishment of a waste management plan to promote the transition from open burning of waste to sanitary landfills and incineration with appropriate pollution control measures, and the launching of a monitoring programme to measure mercury emissions. The report of the workshop will be available on the Convention website.

5. The United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, has updated the default input factor used for open burning of waste in the Toolkit for Identification and Quantification of Mercury Releases. Based on the research conducted, the default factor (5g Hg/t waste burned, range 1–10g Hg/t) was adjusted down to 1g Hg/t, with a range of 0.2–4g Hg/t. The new default factor is believed to better reflect the composition of waste openly burned in most of the countries that use the Toolkit. However, users are encouraged to consider and adjust the factor according to available knowledge and country-specific situations. The updated Toolkit will be published on the website of the United Nations Environment Programme.²

6. In an effort to further address the need for quantified data, as recognized by decision MC-1/14, the International Environmental Technology Centre has been conducting mercury monitoring of the open burning of waste and open dumping sites in collaboration with the Japanese Ministry of the Environment, as part of a project on environmentally sound management of mercury waste funded by Japan. Mercury monitoring was conducted at the Bantar Gebang landfill site in Indonesia in June 2018, Dandora landfill site in Kenya in November 2018 and Htein Pin landfill site in Myanmar in January 2019, and will be conducted at two more sites in 2019 and 2020. The results of the mercury monitoring will be released in 2020.

7. Information relevant to the issue of mercury emissions from the open burning of waste has also been developed in the context of the Basel and Stockholm conventions.³

8. At its fourteenth meeting in May 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention adopted the guidance on the ways in which to address the environmentally sound management of wastes in the informal sector (UNEP/CHW.14/INF/8). The guidance recognizes the adverse environmental impact of open burning and its associated health risks, as well as the risk to workers. The guidance, which recommends strengthening the informal sector by incentivizing the adoption of environmentally sound management practices, advises that the final disposal of residuals and non-recyclable waste should be done in an environmentally sound manner in state-of-the-art facilities and in accordance with the available technologies of each country or region, and that open burning, especially of hazardous waste, should be prohibited.

Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties

9. The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider the information contained in the present note, and request the secretariat to continue to collect relevant information and to make such information available on the Convention website.

² www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/mercury/mercury-inventory-toolkit.

³ For example, the Guidelines on best available techniques and provisional guidance on best environmental practices relevant to Article 5 and Annex C of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants state clearly that open burning is an environmentally unacceptable process.