

SPEECH

Remarks by Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention, at the opening plenary in the High-Level Segment of the second part of the COP-15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity

15 December 2022

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for its COP presidency and hosting of the meeting of the High-Level Segment.

I am pleased to draw your attention to a [decision](#) of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which was held in March of 2022, where the interlinkage between mercury pollution and biodiversity loss was recognized. The COP also set out a process to enable contribution from the implementation of the Minamata Convention to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

In this landmark decision, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention has not only recognized the importance of addressing mercury pollution in the context of biodiversity but has also set a concrete pathway for achieving synergy and coherence across the Minamata Convention, the Convention on biological Diversity and other biodiversity-related conventions.

Mercury is an extremely toxic pollutant that accumulates in food webs. Also known as “quicksilver”, mercury was once hailed for its qualities as an essential component of research and medical instruments, as catalyst of industrial processes, gold amalgamator, and for many other uses. As a result, human activities have increased the atmospheric levels of mercury by about 450% above natural levels.

Mercury impacts the physiology and survival of animals across different taxa and puts further pressure on species that are already under pressure from other drivers. From the tropical forests where mercury is used in artisanal gold mining to the depths of our oceans, or from industrialized areas burning coal to the high Arctic, mercury also impacts a number of ecosystem functions and services such as the provision of food, air filtration, water purification, and traditional and cultural values, as well as the livelihoods and health of hundreds of millions of people.

Implementing Minamata Convention means controlling, reducing and eliminating mercury throughout its lifecycle and preventing further increases of mercury that circulates in the environment, which would continue to affect biodiversity for future decades. Due to its importance as a global pollutant and through the efforts of an ever-growing scientific community supporting the implementation of the Minamata Convention, networks exist that continuously monitor and model environmental levels of mercury around the globe. Such information can be readily provided to support monitoring efforts under the Global Biodiversity Framework.

There are multiple opportunities for effective collaboration across Conventions to achieve the ambitions of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. For example, this could include cooperation with UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD, on land degradation caused

by mercury used in artisanal gold mining; with Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, CMS, on mercury and migratory species; with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, on best practices to combat illegal trade of mercury.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will serve to amplify our common goals of protecting biodiversity and ending mercury pollution. To this end, the Minamata Convention stands ready to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework ambition and to a world of living in harmony with nature. I personally look forward to strengthening the ties with the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions.

I wish you all a very fruitful COP-15.

Monika Stankiewicz
Executive Secretary
Minamata Convention on Mercury