

**Welcome Address by Mr. Abid Ali
Joint Secretary (International Cooperation)/SAICM National Focal Point**

Honorable Federal Minister for Environment Mr. Hameed Ullah Jan Afridi,
Dr. Mario Yarto, UNEP Chemicals Expert, Mexico
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I welcome you all at the opening ceremony of the Inception Workshop of National Stakeholders on “Management of Mercury and Mercury containing Waste Project in Pakistan” organized by the International Cooperation Wing of the Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)’s Chemical Branch, Geneva.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Mercury is a highly toxic chemical and used all over the world including Pakistan in many products and processes such as thermometers, electrical switches, lamps, dental amalgams, batteries, chlor-alkali plants and some pharmaceuticals.

Since the hazard of Mercury is a global environmental issue, UNEP has taken initiatives to mitigate this problem. In this regard, UNEP had initially selected six countries including Pakistan in the Asia Pacific region to identify and quantify the mercury releases in Pakistan. On the basis of the mercury inventory project, UNEP has ultimately selected three countries in this region including Pakistan for the mercury waste project.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The objectives of this Inception Workshop of National Stakeholders are to:-

- o Review and analysis of the national mercury inventory data.
- o Exchange of information with national stakeholders to prioritize mercury waste sources and sectors.
- o Development of a national mercury waste management plan.
- o Identification of possibilities for Environmental Sound Management (ESM) application in selected sources / sectors.
- o Sampling and analysis of relevant environmental and human samples

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am confident that this Inception Workshop will prove a milestone in achieving the objectives for the implementation of Mercury waste project in Pakistan. I am extremely grateful to the Honourable Federal Minister for Environment who has spared time out of his busy schedule to participate in this important workshop. I am also thankful to our distinguished foreign guest, Dr. Mario Yarto, UNEP Chemicals Expert, who has specially come to Pakistan from Mexico to share his knowledge and expertise with the national stakeholders to evolve a viable and effective strategy on the Mercury Waste Project in Pakistan. Besides, I am indebted to the delegates who have traveled to Lahore from various parts of the country to exchange their views and experience on this sensitive issue.

Thank you very much.

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