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Thought starter on possible direction for the future work of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

Note by the Secretariat

Governing Council decision 27/12 welcomed the efforts by the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme and its partners to take immediate action on mercury through the Global Mercury Partnership. It urged all partners to continue their efforts and urged Governments and other stakeholders to continue to support, participate in, and contribute to the Global Mercury Partnership.

Article 14 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury refers to partnerships as an important mean to deliver the capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer needed by countries to implement the Convention. Furthermore, the Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury welcomed the actions taken through the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and urged all partners to continue their efforts and to support, participate in and contribute to the Partnership.

Since its inception, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has played a key role in:

- generating baseline information on mercury;
- providing a platform for dialogue and cohesive action between governments and non-government actors;
- advocacy, awareness raising and information exchange;
- developing guidance materials;
- strengthening national capacity to identify problems;
- implementing demonstration projects; and
- providing credible information on existing and emerging issues on mercury.

The secretariat of the Partnership presents as an annex to the present note a thought starter on a possible direction for the future work of the Partnership.

The Partnership Advisory Group may wish to discuss and provide advice on possible avenues for the Partnership to further its support towards the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, building on the existing experience and networks.

Annex

Thought starter on possible direction for the future work of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

Introduction

1. Governments initiated the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Partnership’) at Governing Council 23 in 2005, and have subsequently strengthened the role of partnerships to effectively manage mercury activities. The overall goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is to protect human health and the global environment from the release of mercury and its compounds by minimizing and, where feasible, ultimately eliminating global, anthropogenic mercury releases to air, water and land.
2. Work to establish the mercury partnership was initiated by UNEP’s Governing Council at its 23rd meeting. The partnerships were formalized in 2008 as the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. The 25th meeting of the Governing Council commended UNEP and its partners for their progress in developing and implementing the Partnership as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury; welcomed the progress made by the Partnership in creating an overarching framework for immediate action in the priority areas identified in decision 24/3, section IV and endorsed the continued involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme in the Partnership. UNEP Governing Council decision 27/12 further recognized the Partnership as one of the key mechanisms for the delivery of immediate actions on mercury.
3. The main features of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership include:
 - a. an overarching framework adopted by stakeholders to govern partnership operations;
 - b. eight Partnership areas: artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), mercury cell chlor alkali production, mercury air transport and fate research, mercury in products, mercury releases from coal combustion, mercury waste management, mercury releases from cement industry and mercury supply and storage;
 - c. a Partnership Advisory Group (PAG) that provides guidance to the Partnership areas; and
 - d. multi-stakeholder participation, with approximately 130 partners, including a number of associations representing numerous other entities.
4. The activities attributed to the Partnership include activities carried out by UNEP and other individual Partners within the Partnership, which include IGOs, NGOs, industry and others.
5. Since its establishment, the Partnership has been involved in the following key activities:
 - a. generating baseline information on mercury;
 - b. providing a platform for dialogue and cohesive action between government and non-government actors;
 - c. advocacy, awareness raising and information exchange;
 - d. developing of guidance materials;
 - e. strengthening national capacity to identify problems;
 - f. implementing demonstration projects; and
 - g. providing credible information on existing and emerging issues on mercury.
6. During the negotiations of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, many governments emphasized the key role of the Partnership in supporting the work of the Intergovernmental

Negotiating Committee (INC), and stressed the importance of continued support of the Partnership in implementing the Convention. Article 14 of the Convention mentions partnerships as one means of delivering the capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer needed by Parties to implement the Convention. Furthermore, the Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury welcomed the actions taken through the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and urged all partners to continue their efforts and to support, participate in and contribute to the Partnership.

7. The Partnership has been very effective in bringing together stakeholders and strengthening interagency collaboration. This has emerged as one of the major strengths of the Partnership and the way it is structured now will give the flexibility to play this role in the future.

Role of the Partnership before/during the INC

8. The Partnership areas cover a wide range of issues. Some of the activities/roles of the Partnership and its partners before and during the INC have been:
 - a. The Partnership has brought together a diverse set of experts and stakeholders with considerable expertise;
 - b. These experts have provided support to Governments in developing guidance on different topics for example the guidance on cost-effective strategies to reduce mercury emissions in coal fired power plants ('Process Optimizing Guidance'); guidance on mercury product and processes (chlor-alkali: alternatives based on the Economics of Conversion studies); and guidance on developing National Action Plans for reducing mercury use in ASGM;
 - c. The Partnership has provided technical information on issues to various stakeholders, especially Governments, for example through technical sessions during the INCs, development of technical documents such as "Good Practices for Management of Mercury Releases from Waste"; and improved world-wide overview of mercury distribution in the environment through Global Mercury Observation System (GMOS) project; and guidance on technical alternatives to reduce mercury use in ASGM;
 - d. The Partnership has developed key publications, including assessments, standardized guidelines, technical guidance, brochures and more. Some of them include 'Mercury: Time to Act', 'Mercury: Acting Now', 'Mercury awareness raising brochure', "Alternatives to Mercury-added Products";
 - e. The Partnership has provided a platform for discussing and collaborating on relevant and emerging issues of mercury among all stakeholders. Meetings like the Partnership Advisory Group, global forums on reducing mercury use in ASGM, expert meetings on mercury emission from coal, face-to-face meetings of the partnership areas such as Mercury in Products Partnership have brought together stakeholders and fostered dialogue amongst them; and
 - f. The Partnership has proved to be an important instrument for the facilitation of implementation of projects. The Partnership has supported countries by conducting pilot projects on a range of issues like demonstrating mercury reduction techniques to small-scale gold miners, demonstrating emissions reduction at coal-fired powered power plants in key countries, conducting studies on coals used and developing emission inventories for the coal-fired power sector, identifying solutions for environmentally sound management of mercury and mercury waste; and phasing down of dental amalgam in selected countries.

9. All the above activities of the Partnership have contributed to a better understanding of the issue of mercury for Governments and other stakeholders and have played a crucial role in the negotiations of the Minamata Convention.

Considerations for the PAG

10. Considering the above background, the PAG may wish to consider the below during its deliberations in guiding the future work of the Partnership.

Potential role during the interim period

11. Building on the above strengths the Partnership may continue to support the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in the interim period. The Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury welcomed the actions taken through the Partnership and urged all partners to continue their efforts and to support, participate in and contribute to the Partnership.
12. In its previous meeting, the Partnership Advisory Group considered that the Partnership may proactively provide guidance material and awareness raising, technical assistance and other type of support to the Governments in the implementation of the Convention. Also it should be able to analyse the needs of the INC/COP and present how the Partnership could assist in meeting those needs.
13. During the interim period the Partnership may continue to develop guidance and provide technical assistance to the relevant sectors, and in particular focus on assisting Governments by drawing on the pool of experts found within the Partnership to develop, update or provide input to:
 - a. information on mercury supply, sources and trade (Article 3)
 - b. recent advances on alternatives to mercury-added products including information on the geographic distribution of the manufacturing sector producing mercury-added products (Article 4);
 - c. information on manufacturing processes that use mercury alternatives (Article 5);
 - d. guidance on developing National Action Plan to reduce mercury use in ASGM (may be a requirement for many countries)(Article 7);
 - e. development of Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices for controlling emissions and on determining goals and emission limit values (Article 8);
 - f. guidance on the identification of sources of releases and the methodology for preparing inventories of releases (Article 9);
 - g. guidelines on the environmentally sound interim storage of mercury (Article 10);
 - h. identification of thresholds for mercury waste (Article 11);
 - i. guidance on the management of contaminated sites (Article 12);
14. How the Partnership may contribute to the implementation of the Convention is shown in Figure 1. While the Partnership continues to provide support towards implementation at the national level, the focus of the Partnership in this period will

also be on providing support at the global level by assisting in developing guidance material and BAT/BEP, mapping demand and supply trends etc.

Potential role after entry into force

15. Following the entry into force of the Minamata Convention, the Partnership may focus more specifically on supporting the countries to meet the individual requirements of the Convention through support to the implementation of activities at the national level. Further, Governments have the opportunity after the second meeting of the Conference of Parties to strengthen the Partnership's role in supporting countries with regard to capacity building and providing technical assistance when they are to review the performance of these issues (article 14). While activities of global nature may continue, the Partnership will further enhance its efforts to support national and regional implementation activities.
16. Some areas where the Partnership could contribute after entry into force include:
 - a. coordination of activities relating to:
 - a. monitoring; and
 - b. developing mercury inventories.
 - b. providing guidance and technical assistance to Governments and other stakeholders on reducing mercury emissions and releases including demonstration projects in relevant sectors. These may include:
 - a. assisting in the environmentally sound management of mercury products and waste using the life cycle approach;
 - b. reducing mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants;
 - c. assisting in developing National Action Plans for reducing mercury use in ASGM; and
 - d. developing mercury-free products and processes.
 - c. information exchange and clearing house activities with further collaboration with UNITAR and 'Mercury: Learn' Platform.
 - d. assist in avoiding duplication of efforts, contributing to providing coherent international policy and technical advice, in complementing the already existing work, and in improving the efficiency of resources and efforts.
 - e. working in close collaboration with the Regional Centres of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. UNEP has already successfully conducted capacity building projects like training these Centres in using the UNEP toolkit for identification and quantification of mercury releases.
 - f. assisting in effectiveness evaluation of the Convention and analysing country reports.

Endeavoring to secure funds

Background

17. In the past, Governments of the United States of America, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Spain and the European Commission among others have provided funds for the work of Partnership.
18. UNEP currently supports the work of the Partnership with two P4 and one P3 professional staff with funding from the UNEP Environment Fund as well as from extra budgetary resources.
19. UNEP has also taken other steps to secure funding, such as through raising limited funds through the Strategic Approach's Quick Start Programme (in particular for activities relating to artisanal and small-scale gold mining), through the UNEP-USEPA cooperative agreement, UNEP-US Department of State cooperative agreements and through Norway ODA funds. Although the partnership donor base has expanded, overall funding levels have decreased.
20. A common weakness identified in the partnership area evaluations includes the lack of funding for partnership area activities. Additional funding is required to implement activities under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership in line with priority actions established in the partnership area business plans. Taking this into consideration, business plans may be revised to include fundraising as a priority.
21. Overall, funding for specific projects is often easier to secure compared to funding for the running of the secretariat.

Possible options for the future to secure funds for the Partnership

22. The Minamata Convention has designated the GEF as an entity of its financial mechanism. GEF 6, Programme 4 specifically calls for projects for reduction or elimination of anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury to the environment.
23. One option of the Secretariat of the Partnership is to take a leading role in developing, implementing and possibly executing GEF projects using the human resources within the Partnership.
24. The GEF is also encouraging projects that combine multiple focal areas and trust

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