

Global mercury

supply, trade and demand



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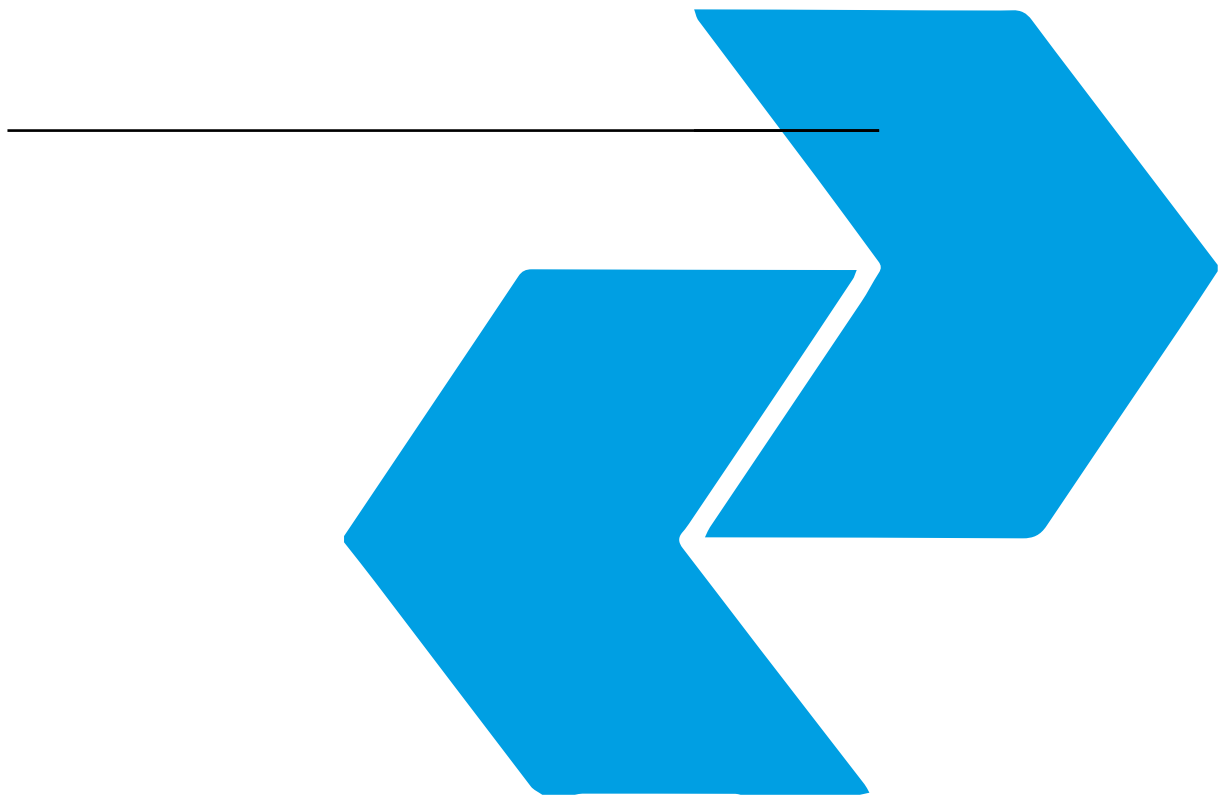


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Executive Summary

A response by the world's nations to the abundant evidence of the negative effects of mercury pollution on human health and the environment, the Minamata Convention on Mercury entered into force on 16 August 2017. The Convention includes provisions to control the supply, trade and use of mercury. This report provides an overview of the current state of these activities in order to assist governments and other stakeholders as the Convention moves into the implementation phase. The most important findings and observations are summarized here.

Mercury supply

Chlor-alkali residual mercury

One of the major changes in mercury supply since 2011 is the reduced volume of chlor-alkali residual mercury available on the open market, due in large part to restrictions imposed by export bans. In the European Union alone, an estimated 650 tonnes per year of chlor-alkali related mercury are no longer available. Despite such advances, many countries do not yet have plans to move away from the mercury process in this industry.

Mercury mining

A second fundamental change in mercury supply is the emergence of new mercury mining in Mexico and Indonesia, with production estimated at 800-1 100 tonnes in 2015. In neither of these cases is the extent or the rate of growth of production very clear. The Minamata Convention requires Parties to phase out existing mercury mining. Once such operations are established, however, and mining communities become accustomed to the economic benefits, it may be difficult to phase out these

appears to be past, but the free market price of mercury remains high in historical terms. Also as a result of the export bans, a two-tiered pricing system has emerged in the United States and European Union. With export bans in place, the domestic price of mercury in these two regions, where supply is plentiful and demand limited, has become significantly lower than the free market price. This low domestic price of mercury may act to discourage the collection and recycling of mercury-added products and "scrap".

The two-tiered pricing system also creates an incentive for less scrupulous operators to attempt to profit from the price difference. Some have already tried to circumvent export restrictions in an attempt to sell mercury for a higher price on the open market. Authorities aware of this possibility are in a better position to counter such activities.

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