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Speech by Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Delivered at the [online High-Panel](#): "8th Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund – Ambitions for the Chemicals and Waste Cluster"

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to both Franz and Carlos Manuel, and also of course to Diana, for having this discussion today.

I am glad to be a fellow speaker with you and Rolph, Sheila and Anil.

Congratulations to GEF for your 30th anniversary.

Our parties have been very clear and quite vocal on the importance of GEF-8 to the full implementation of the Minamata Convention, and to overcoming challenges in meeting Convention deadlines that are set to reduce or eliminate mercury use and emissions from across sectors.

And full implementation is realistic. The Minamata Convention is achievable. When its text was negotiated countries came together around a sensible and achievable set of obligations.

Convention implementation has excellent momentum in its early years: now is the time to fully invest and help parties get it right.

The work we must invest in has a dual imperative: nature and health.

Just last year, the WHO Director-General released new estimates on the public health impact of chemicals. The trend is going in the wrong direction. 2 million lives and 53 million disability-adjusted-life-years were lost in 2019 due to chemical exposures, and this is likely an undercount.

Mercury and other chemicals have numerous impacts and dependencies upon natural capital and ecosystem services which are not captured in traditional financial accounting. In order to conserve and enhance ecosystem services globally, the depletion of natural capital due to mercury and other chemicals must be assessed across the economic sectors. In this regard the eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund can play a key part in emphasizing the need to quantify and value the environmental and social cost of mercury emissions and releases.

In short, implementing the obligations of the Convention will produce socioeconomic benefits and will be essential to realizing the full potential of ecosystem services.

Our parties recognize the role that action on mercury can and must play in overcoming the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, including in the oceans, while improving the health of millions of people and addressing the drivers of environmental degradation.

An adequately financed GEF-8 will advance these interconnections to create meaningful and sustainable social, environmental and financial gains.

The GEF funding unlocks larger investments and co-benefits. This catalytic role was envisioned when the Convention text was adopted: The Convention tells us that domestic funding, bilateral and multilateral funding, and private sector involvement all play a role in this effort, and GEF-8 must realize its potential to unlock these.

One of my main points today is that a significantly increased allocation for chemicals and waste is needed and specifically to the Minamata Convention as we are moving from enabling activities and proof-of-concept programmes.

Parties had a detailed discussion on GEF-8 at the online segment of our COP-4 in November.

Thank you Carlos Manuel once more for your participation at the COP and I hope to welcome you at the in person segment of COP-4 on 21-25 March 2022 in Bali.

The secretariat shared party statements with the GEF Secretariat and Council members. I urged parties to engage in their national processes relative to the GEF, and GEF operational focal points, to ensure that the national needs related to the Convention are fully known to the participants in the replenishment meetings. This is the most important message I would like to send today to the countries – to use your national processes on GEF replenishment to the fullest.

We also had a lively side event on the financial mechanism at COP-4, and I took away a number of important points. One is that we must make the science-based rationale for the work clear and accessible to a wide range of decision makers across ministries, and a wide range of stakeholders. Going forward into GEF-8, it will be important to carefully consider what the GEF-8 projects will measure, and it will be important to share that information widely to demonstrate their successes.

We are now analyzing the first full national reports on the implementation of the Convention that were due at the end of December. These will provide a great deal of information on party needs that we can use to ensure that GEF investments lead to effective, integrated and inclusive responses that are well-grounded in national initiatives and whole-of-government approaches. We intend to be very active feeding this information into the programming of GEF-8 resources. This information will not provide monetary value on domestic investment currently being undertaken to implement the Convention, but will clearly indicate areas and countries where implementation has progressed well and issues where further efforts are needed. This information is what any young convention as the Minamata Convention would start with.

Parties need to meet numerous timebound obligations which will be prominent in GEF-8. These cut across many industrial sectors and product categories that are critical in the build back better era.

Let me give you an example: our parties are required, in Article 8 of the Convention, to control emissions of mercury to air from coal-fired power plants, coal-fired industrial boilers, non-ferrous metals production (lead, zinc, copper and industrial gold), cement production, and waste incineration.

So you can see these sectors represent a sizeable part of most countries' economies, and are vital to everyday life. What are parties required to do?

Establish emissions inventories no later than five years from when the country becomes a party.

Require the use of BAT/BEP in new sources within five years.

For existing sources, implement control measures within ten years.

Another looming deadline is the 2025 phase-out of mercury-based chlorine and caustic soda (chlor-alkali) production. Facilities that use non-mercury processes are more energy efficient than the outmoded mercury-based facilities, yet some countries face financing barriers to achieving this switch, and many need technical assistance to manage the transition cleanly.

And then there is our most "famous" sector: artisanal and small-scale gold mining. I am very proud that the Global Mercury Partnership and the Minamata Convention have drawn needed attention to this sector, and the GEF has made great progress working with parties and mining communities through the PlanetGOLD

program. The sector must continue to be addressed in a very thoughtful and careful manner to achieve full implementation for the dozens of countries for whom this sector presents real challenges, including impacts to vulnerable populations, including women and children, and indigenous communities.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention mercury as a commodity chemical – it is stored, traded and in some cases stockpiled. This can be well managed or poorly managed, and our parties very much want to manage it well. They are very intent to eliminate illegal trade of mercury, and this requires training and legal structures at the national and regional levels that are well integrated into broader supply chain management efforts.

Several elements of the programming directions draft that will be finalized next month in the replenishment meetings are important to the Minamata Convention.

Not only does the Chemical and Waste Focal Area need to be fully resourced, but other focal areas and the integrated programmes should not waste any opportunity to address hazardous chemicals in relevant sectors. To realize this in practice deeper knowledge in other areas of the value of chemicals and waste cluster should be promoted.

I would like to wrap up by saying that GEF Minamata Convention projects to date have achieved important results and GEF-8 holds the promise to achieve broader-scale impacts. This work is worth more than every dollar of the investment the world will make in GEF-8.