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Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury
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Agenda item 4 (a)

Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties: mercury supply sources and trade

Updates to the guidance on the identification of individual stocks of mercury or mercury compounds exceeding 50 metric tons and sources of mercury supply generating stocks exceeding 10 metric tons per year*

Note by the secretariat

At its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury adopted, in decision MC-6/1 on supply sources and trade, updated guidance on the identification of individual stocks of mercury or mercury compounds exceeding 50 metric tons and sources of mercury supply generating stocks exceeding 10 metric tons per year/ This guidance was previously set out in annex IV to document UNEP/MC/COP.1/5 and was amended as reflected in annex II of document UNEP/MC/COP.6/5. The text updating the guidance, as adopted, is set out in the annex to the present note. The full text of the guidance incorporating the update will be published by the secretariat in due course.

* This present document has not been formally edited.

Annex

Updates to the guidance on the identification of individual stocks of mercury or mercury compounds exceeding 50 metric tons and sources of mercury supply generating stocks exceeding 10 metric tons per year[1]

The following paragraphs are proposed for addition to the section entitled “Background”:

4. The Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 3 of its decision MC-4/8, requested parties to continue their ongoing efforts to endeavour to identify individual stocks and sources of mercury in accordance with paragraph 5 of article 3 of the Convention.

5. In paragraph 5 (a) of decision MC-5/2, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to draft an update to the existing guidance on stocks adopted in decision MC-1/2 to include types of action that could be taken to fulfil the continuing obligation to endeavour to identify stocks and sources as described in paragraph 5 (a) of article 3 of the Convention.

The following section is proposed for addition after paragraph 16:

Measures to fulfil the ongoing obligation to identify individual stocks of mercury or mercury compounds exceeding 50 metric tons and sources of mercury supply generating stocks exceeding 10 metric tons per year

19. Examples of actions that may assist Parties in the ongoing obligation to endeavour to identify stocks and sources of mercury may include:

(a) Identification and quantification of sources in national hazardous substances regulations or implementation plans under article 20 of the Convention;

(b) Updating or sustaining inventories conducted under the Minamata Initial Assessments;

(c) Conducting specific surveys for mercury inventories;

(d) Conducting additional verification of information related to inventories of mercury stocks and sources.

20. National hazardous substances regulations may contain provisions that require or relate to an ongoing task to identify stocks and sources. Following are examples:

(a) Environmental licensing and permits under national hazardous substances regulations, or controls enforced by state and territorial governments, may include provisions that directly inform mercury inventory and the identification of mercury stock and sources. Such provisions, such as reporting obligations and monitoring requirements, can help build a comprehensive inventory and assist in identifying mercury stock and supply sources. For example, under a party’s legislation, manufacturers storing mercury may be required to report on their mercury management. If national reporting rules or permit systems do not provide sufficient information or do not exist, parties may consider incorporating interim mercury data into existing environmental licensing systems. These reports can reveal stock trends and serve as valuable data sources for identifying and tracking mercury stocks and sources;

(b) A mercury inventory reporting rule may establish reporting requirements to support initial, interim, or sustained periodic inventory. This may generally include reporting information on mercury or mercury compounds manufactured, imported, stored, used, sold or exported, as well as on manufacturing processes or products in which mercury or mercury compounds are used or intentionally added;

[1] UNEP/MC/COP.1/5, annex IV.

(c) Information gathered through consultations during the development or implementation of domestic regulations related to the Convention may yield information on mercury stocks and sources. Such consultations could take various forms, such as key stakeholder engagement or public consultation questionnaires;

(d) In the framework of an implementation plan pursuant to article 20 of the Convention, a mercury inventory may be included, incorporating, for example, mercury trade flow analyses, reviews of point-of-sale registers and information exchange mechanisms. They may also involve public sector data sharing, reporting requirements and measures related to research, development and monitoring.

21. Minamata Initial Assessments helped establish mercury inventories and baselines for parties. Some parties have updated the inventories and submitted the results in their national reports. New data for the inventory may come from submitted reports from facilities, entities, territorial authorities or stakeholder consultations.

22. National inventories and surveys that are periodically updated may provide quantitative assessment of mercury use, and quantities of stocks, supply and flows to inform ongoing efforts in the identification of individual stocks and sources. Actions may include statistical surveys, sector- or industry-specific surveys, emissions and releases surveys (identification and quantification of mercury emissions and releases), mercury material flow analysis, digital tracking systems, trade and supply chain analysis, and mapping of locations of institutions or facilities with stocks and/or sources (e.g. geographic information system datasets, database reports, and other geographical resources). Inter-agency reports and digital platforms may facilitate information exchange and collaboration. In low-resource situations, simplified data collection methods may be used and supported as initial steps, with an eye towards gradual digital integration.

23. Additional verification of information may be conducted to contribute to ongoing efforts to identify stocks and sources of mercury, including the identification of potential informal or unregulated sources. These verification efforts may include stakeholder consultations, community-level engagement, review of mercury import and export data, routine inspections, review of local authority records, downstream impact assessments (e.g. environmental sampling), verification checks for accuracy and compliance with established administrative rules or formats, cross-field validation, error handling, data tracking (e.g. creation of timestamps and audit logs), and ground-truthing. Parties with limited verification infrastructure may prioritize desk reviews and stakeholder interviews while accessing technical support and training for field validation.

24. Mercury stocks can be dynamic. In determining inventory frequency, considerations may include frequency of data collection, the establishment of methods for tracking changes in stocks and supplies over time, reporting such data, and updating national inventories. The frequency and depth of identification activities may be tailored to national capacities.