



**Conference of the Parties to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Fourth meeting**

Online, 1–5 November 2021*

Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

International cooperation and coordination**International cooperation and coordination****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The present note includes information on activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other entities, particularly in the chemicals and waste cluster. The report has been prepared by the secretariat and covers the period from January 2020 to June 2021.
2. The annex to the present note contains a proposal for a decision by the Conference of the Parties on international cooperation and coordination.
3. Additional information on cooperative activities undertaken by the secretariat is set out in the joint report on cooperation and coordination between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions document (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/17); the joint study by the secretariats entitled “Interlinkages between the chemicals and waste multilateral environmental agreements and biodiversity” (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/13); the joint study by the secretariats entitled “Chemicals, wastes and climate change: interlinkages and potential for coordinated action” (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/14); and the report on the implementation of decision MC-3/11 on enhanced cooperation between the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (UNEP/MC/COP.4/20). Reports by other relevant international organizations and initiatives are set out in documents UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/15, UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/16, UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/18, UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/19 and UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/20.

II. Implementation**A. United Nations Environment Programme**

4. During the period 2020–2021, the secretariat continued to engage with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the programmatic level, with a view to contributing to the implementation of certain aspects of the UNEP medium-term strategy 2018–2021, the UNEP programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021 and resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of relevance to the Minamata Convention. UNEP also provided programmatic support to

* The resumed fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury is to convene in person in Bali, Indonesia, and is tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

** UNEP/MC/COP.4/1.

the Minamata Convention for the implementation of its programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021.

5. The secretariat also contributed, through a series of consultations, to the process of developing the UNEP medium-term strategy 2022–2025, which was adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly during the first part of its fifth session, held online on 22 and 23 February 2021. The new UNEP medium-term strategy was then taken into account in developing the proposed programme of work of the Minamata Convention for the biennium 2022–2023 and budget activity sheets (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/22).

6. Furthermore, the secretariat contributed to and benefited from the ongoing efforts of UNEP to enhance cooperation and coordination with, and among, the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements. For example, the Executive Secretary regularly attended meetings of the UNEP Senior Management Team in 2020 and 2021, which were extended to include the heads of secretariats of UNEP-administered multilateral environmental agreements. This initiative by the Executive Director of UNEP enabled the regular, high-level exchange of information and dialogue on issues of common interest.

7. The exchange of information at the programmatic level was further facilitated by the involvement of the secretariat in the networks coordinated by UNEP. Through the network of focal points of multilateral environmental agreements, the secretariat was able to keep abreast of relevant activities and processes under way, particularly within the biodiversity and the chemicals and waste clusters. A network of gender officers and focal points of multilateral environmental agreements, established in 2020, created a common space for the sharing of gender-related information, including in relation to a draft gender road map for the Minamata Convention. At the request of the UNEP Senior Management Team, the secretariat also contributed, in May 2021, to the development of a list of decisions on gender taken by parties to multilateral environmental agreements, along with good examples of gender mainstreaming. Through participation in the network of focal points to the UNEP Legal Unit of the Corporate Services Division, the secretariat received guidance from UNEP on the use of standard legal agreements and the implementation of the UNEP Partnership Policy and Procedures.

8. The secretariat participated in the Green Customs Initiative, convened by the UNEP Law Division, in which secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, the International Criminal Police Organization, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization cooperate to prevent illegal trade in environmentally sensitive commodities and substances and to facilitate their legal trade. In particular, the secretariat contributed to the development of an update to include the Minamata Convention in the *Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements*.

9. In the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the secretariat contributed to a study by UNEP on virtual meetings. The study, and its subsequent updates, explored how interactive intergovernmental meetings could take place in a virtual setting in a manner that respected the legal framework for such meetings. As follow up, on 18 March 2021, the secretariat organized an information session with other secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements around the world to enable the exchange of information on and lessons learned when organizing virtual conferences of the parties.

10. The secretariat cooperated with the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements in terms of knowledge management through InforMEA, the UNEP-hosted United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The new Minamata Convention website is fully inter-operable with the InforMEA portal to enable the seamless integration of selected content from the website, such as decisions by the Conference of the Parties, national reports and the calendar. In addition, the course on the Minamata Convention on the InforMEA e-learning platform was updated, and the Executive Secretary and secretariat staff attended the eleventh meeting of the InforMEA Initiative Steering Committee on 26 November 2020. The secretariat's Communication and Knowledge Management Officer led the working group on outreach and actively participated in all the other working group meetings, building a stronger network for collaboration with other technical officers in the same domain.

11. The secretariat also continued cooperation at the programmatic level with other UNEP-administered initiatives, most notably the Global Mercury Partnership and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as described in the sections below.

B. United Nations Environment Assembly

12. The first part of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was held online on 22 and 23 February 2021, with a limited agenda, while the second part is due to be convened face to face in February 2022, at which time the Assembly will consider the adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.

13. The Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention participated in the leadership dialogue entitled “Contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world” that took place during the first part of the fifth session of the Assembly. A total of 87 ministers and high-level representatives, including heads of secretariats of multilateral environment agreements, participated in the leadership dialogue over the course of two days. Furthermore, a senior staff member from the secretariat spoke at the Youth Environment Assembly, held in February 2021 in the run-up to the session of the Environment Assembly, about the launch of the Chemicals and Waste Platform that aims to assist countries in the ratification and implementation of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention.

14. The secretariat contributed, through UNEP, to the follow-up to the report of the ad hoc open-ended working group established pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/277 of 10 May 2018, entitled “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment”.¹ In resolution 73/333 of 30 August 2019, entitled “Follow-up to the report of the ad hoc open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/277”, the General Assembly, among other things, welcomed the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group and endorsed all its recommendations, as set out in the annex to the resolution. Following informal consultations with regional and political groups, members of the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP jointly agreed to forward those recommendations to the Environment Assembly for its consideration. In its decision 5/3, the Environment Assembly decided that, at the resumed meeting of its fifth session, in February 2022, it would finalize the mandate entrusted to it in General Assembly resolution 73/333 to prepare a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting and invited the General Assembly to consider the appropriate event for the adoption of such a declaration, including the option of adopting it as one of the outcomes of the special session of the Environment Assembly to be held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm in June 1972. The secretariat responded to the call by UNEP for comments on the recommendations addressed specifically to the governing bodies and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements set out in General Assembly resolution 73/333.

15. The report by the Executive Director of UNEP to the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fourth meeting (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/15) sets out further details of the activities undertaken by UNEP in relation to work on mercury and to the decisions taken at the first, second and third meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

C. UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

16. The secretariat coordinated, in several ways, with the multi-stakeholder UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and its secretariat housed in the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch. The Partnership provided support to intersessional work in preparation for the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, including on customs codes and tailings from artisanal and small-scale gold mining. As part of its involvement in the cross-secretariat task team (comprising members of the secretariats of the Minamata Convention, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Mercury Partnership and the Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening for the Chemicals Cluster) to provide input into the review and appraisal of the third round of applications to the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, the secretariat of the Global Mercury Partnership provided applicants with valuable advice and information resources as part of its comments during the technical review. The Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention provided introductory remarks at the eleventh meeting of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group, held on 15 and 16 December 2020, in which senior staff of the secretariat also participated. The secretariat also took part in several

¹ More information on the process as it relates to UNEP can be found on the UNEP website, available at www.unep.org/environmentassembly/follow-up-on-ga-res-73-333.

meetings on partnership areas and in selected activities of the Partnership under the knowledge management component of the planetGOLD programme, funded by GEF.

17. In 2020, when both secretariats worked to continue to deliver information resources and expertise to parties and stakeholders despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Partnership contributed to several events under the Minamata Online initiative, while the secretariat of the Minamata Convention participated in several Partnership webinars. These included the sessions of Minamata Online entitled “Mercury material flow: waste” on 15 October 2020, “Article 8 emissions” on 22 October 2020, “Article 11 mercury wastes” on 12 November 2020 and “Multimedia modelling of global mercury movement” on 17 November 2020; and the Partnership webinars entitled “Mercury-added medical measuring devices: tools and implementation” on 13 October 2020, “Mercury in skin-lightening products: towards the 2020 deadline” on 30 November 2020 and “Integrating gender dimensions into national action plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining” on 17 June 2021.

18. Further details of the activities undertaken by the Global Mercury Partnership are set out in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/16, submitted by the Partnership, and in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/15.

D. Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and considerations beyond 2020

19. The secretariat continued to cooperate with the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, providing relevant input into the Strategic Approach and taking part in the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. The Minamata Convention secretariat is also a member of the related UNEP internal task force on the intersessional process. Information on the Strategic Approach and the intersessional process, submitted by the secretariat of the Strategic Approach, is provided in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/20.

E. World Health Organization and International Labour Organization

20. The secretariat continued and strengthened its programmatic cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) by convening tripartite meetings and exchanging information with a view to identifying and carrying out concrete actions to enhance implementation in areas of common interest. The key priority areas for such cooperation with WHO and ILO include artisanal and small-scale gold mining, medical devices, dental amalgam, human biomonitoring and public information about, awareness of and education on the effects of mercury on human health.

21. A webinar was co-organized by the secretariat and WHO on 2 June 2021 to launch the WHO *Step-by-step guide for developing a public health strategy for artisanal and small-scale gold mining in the context of the Minamata Convention on Mercury* and to share findings and lessons learned from country-based pilot projects implementing the guidance. Further cooperative activities included the participation of WHO and/or ILO in the ad hoc group of experts on the review of Annexes A and B of the Minamata Convention, in the expert consultations for the development of guidance on mercury monitoring in the context of the first evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention and in the work of the secretariat on dental amalgam. The secretariat continues to engage with WHO and ILO through the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), which is the international coordinating mechanism for chemicals management.

22. Information submitted by WHO and ILO on their activities contributing to the implementation of the Minamata Convention is set out in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/18.

F. Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals

23. As part of the UNEP delegation, the secretariat is a regular participant in the meetings of IOMC. UNEP is one of the nine participating organizations of IOMC, which was created more than 25 years ago as an inter-agency coordination platform to support work on the sound management of chemicals. The nine participating organizations are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ILO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), WHO and the World Bank. IOMC also has various observers, including the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). IOMC meets twice a year, uniting all representatives from all the entities, and also invites observers to the meeting. Much of the attention of IOMC during the reporting period was given to

consideration of targets and indicators in relation to the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. At the IOMC regular meetings, the secretariat was called upon to provide updates on ongoing work, intersessional processes and the preparations for the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The secretariat also shared information on the work on indicators ongoing under the Minamata Convention.

24. Under the umbrella of IOMC, a mercury group met regularly to exchange information regarding Minamata Convention initial assessments, national action plans on artisanal and small-scale gold mining and other projects funded by GEF or through other multilateral or bilateral arrangements. The GEF secretariat, ILO, OECD, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, WHO and the World Bank participate in the group. The group shared information, including on mercury inventories in Minamata initial assessments, so that GEF implementing agencies and executing partners could learn from one another. Participating organizations also cooperated, through the group, to develop publicity materials on their activities. The secretariat participated in this information exchange.

25. The secretariat also collaborated directly with IOMC participating and observer organizations. OECD, ECE, UNIDO and UNITAR participated as observers in meetings of the expert groups on the review of Annexes A and B of the Minamata Convention, on mercury releases and on mercury waste thresholds. The secretariat participated in meetings of the OECD Chemicals Committee and the eighth meeting of the working group of parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) to provide updates on the activities of the Minamata Convention.

G. Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions

26. In accordance with paragraph 4 of article 24 of the Minamata Convention and decision MC-3/11 of the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat continued to cooperate with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions,² including under the overall direction of the joint task force on programmatic cooperation. The joint task force produced a report, which was drafted by its co-chairs in December 2020 and endorsed by the heads of the three member entities (the secretariats and the UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch) in March 2021, describing the joint framework for collaboration agreed between the three entities, including in the context of the implementation of decision MC-3/11. The report is available in the annex to document UNEP/MC/COP.4/20.

27. The respective executive secretaries agreed to prepare a joint report on cooperation and coordination between the secretariats of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions for their respective conferences of the Parties to provide details on the activities undertaken in several programmatic, technical and administrative areas. The joint report is available in document UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/17.

H. Cooperation with indigenous groups

28. In the context of the preambular text of the Convention, “noting the particular vulnerabilities of ... indigenous communities because of the biomagnification of mercury and contamination of traditional foods, and concerned about indigenous communities more generally with respect to the effects of mercury”, the secretariat initiated more active engagement with indigenous groups during the intersessional period. On 30 June 2021, the secretariat met with the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group and the secretariat of GEF to identify concrete areas in which collaboration with the two entities could be enhanced to support the implementation of the Minamata Convention. Facilitation of the full and effective engagement of indigenous peoples in the work and meetings of the Convention was among the priority areas identified.

29. The Inuit Circumpolar Council liaised with the secretariat and participated actively in the development of the guidance on mercury monitoring in the context of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention. Thanks to the generous funding provided by Norway, the secretariat, together with the Global Mercury Partnership, also engaged with the Center for Amazonian Scientific Innovation (CINCIA) in Peru to develop a monitoring report on the environmental and health impact, particularly on indigenous communities, of the use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in the Amazon region.

² “Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions” is understood to mean the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions administered by UNEP, which are under joint management.

I. Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global biodiversity agenda

30. The United Nations General Assembly convened virtually on 30 September 2020 for the Global Biodiversity Summit. The summit was part of global preparations for adoption of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Kunming, China. As part of those preparations, the secretariat and the President of the Bureau of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention were invited to participate in a Swiss-led process to bring together biodiversity- and chemical-related conventions. Given that the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is taking place under a global mandate, secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, including the secretariat of the Minamata Convention, were invited to provide UNEP with technical and other input.

31. To highlight the contribution of the Minamata Convention to the broader environmental agenda, the secretariat of the Convention together with the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions jointly carried out exploratory studies on the relationship between chemicals and waste and biodiversity, on the one hand, and climate change, on the other.

32. The joint study entitled “Interlinkages between the chemicals and waste multilateral environmental agreements and biodiversity” (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/13) explores how, by promoting the sound management of chemicals and waste, the four conventions contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the services provided by ecosystems. The study also assesses the relationship between the four conventions and the focus areas of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, in particular in relation to the ongoing discussions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The joint study will also be presented to the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions³ as an information document. In the context of the global biodiversity agenda, some actions for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties have been included in the proposed draft decision set out in the annex to the present note.

33. The joint report entitled “Chemicals, wastes and climate change: interlinkages and potential for coordinated action” (UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/14) explores the links between climate change and releases and transportation of hazardous chemicals; the relationship between the production and use of hazardous chemicals and climate change; synergies and trade-offs between greenhouse-gas emissions and options for mitigating the effects of hazardous chemicals; and the links between the environmentally sound management of waste and climate change. It also provides an overview of opportunities for aligning greenhouse-gas emissions accounting and inventories of hazardous chemicals. A set of conclusions and technical recommendations to guide policymakers and decision makers in streamlining action on such issues is included in the report. Some actions for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties have been included in the proposed draft decision set out in the annex to the present note.

34. The secretariat has continued to work with UNEP, the United Nations Statistics Division and other organizations to provide data, in particular regarding the indicators for measuring achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 on ensuring responsible consumption and production patterns, including indicator 12.4.1, which is the number of parties to international multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous waste and other chemicals that meet their commitments and obligations in transmitting information as required by each relevant agreement.

35. The secretariat also provided input to prepare the focal points of the hub for Sustainable Development Goal 12, which will track progress in the achievement of that goal. The hub for Goal 12 was launched at the meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2021.⁴

J. Other cooperation, coordination and information exchange

36. The secretariat cooperated with other intergovernmental organizations on a number of thematic issues, including with the World Customs Organization on custom codes and the International Atomic Energy Agency on monitoring for the effectiveness evaluation.

³ UNEP/CHW.15/INF/44–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.10/INF/29–UNEP/POPS/COP.10/INF/48 and UNEP/CHW.15/INF/45–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.10/INF/27–UNEP/POPS/COP.10/INF/49.

⁴ More information on the hub for Sustainable Development Goal 12 is available at <https://sdg12hub.org/>.

37. As a part of its effort to strengthen the interface between scientific and policy communities, the secretariat worked with the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, the fifteenth meeting of which is planned for July 2022. Specific cooperation included the participation of the secretariat in the Workshop Committee of the International Conference and the joint organization of the mercury science stream of Minamata Online.

III. Proposed action

38. The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider the information contained in the present note and adopt a decision as suggested in the annex thereto.

Annex

Draft decision MC-4/[--]: International cooperation and coordination

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling subparagraph 5 (b) of article 23 of the Minamata Convention, which states that the Conference of the Parties shall cooperate, where appropriate, with competent international organizations and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies, and paragraph 2 of article 24 of the Convention, which specifies the function of the secretariat to coordinate, as appropriate, with the secretariats of relevant international bodies, particularly other chemicals and waste conventions,

Recalling also the resolutions and other outcomes of sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly that contribute to the implementation of the Convention and decisions by its Conference of the Parties,

Emphasizing that the implementation of the Convention to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to addressing the three planetary crises of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change,

1. *Agrees* to keep under review the contribution made by the implementation of the Convention to the implementation of relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Environment Assembly;
2. *Welcomes* the activities of international organizations and initiatives undertaken during 2020–2021 to foster ratification and implementation of the Convention as reported to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting;
3. *Invites* parties, non-parties and other stakeholders to engage further with the Global Mercury Partnership, hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme, and its partnership areas, to support achievement of the goals of the Convention;
4. *Takes note* of the study entitled “Interlinkages between the chemicals and waste multilateral environmental agreements and biodiversity”,¹ and the study entitled “Chemicals, wastes and climate change: interlinkages and potential for coordinated action”² prepared jointly by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention and the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions;
5. *Requests* the secretariat to continue gathering knowledge about, raising awareness of and demonstrating, through appropriate means, the contribution of implementation of the Minamata Convention to other relevant international regulations and policies, including those related to pollution, biodiversity and climate change;
6. *Also requests* the secretariat to prepare, subject to the availability of resources, a report, including possible recommendations, on how the Convention could contribute to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, once adopted, for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting;
7. *Further requests* the secretariat to report on the implementation of the present decision to the Conference of the Parties at its future meetings, as appropriate.

¹ UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/13.

² UNEP/MC/COP.4/INF/14.