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

Geneva, 30 October–3 November 2023  
Item 4 (h) of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference  
of the Parties: capacity-building, technical assistance  
and technology transfer****Capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. In the Minamata Convention on Mercury, paragraph 1 of article 14, on capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer, states that parties shall cooperate to provide, within their respective capabilities, timely and appropriate capacity-building and technical assistance to developing-country parties, in particular parties that are least developed countries or small island developing States, and parties with economies in transition, to assist them in implementing their obligations under the Convention. Paragraph 2 of article 14 says that such capacity-building and technical assistance may be delivered through regional, subregional and national arrangements, including existing regional and subregional centres, through other multilateral and bilateral means and through partnerships, including partnerships involving the private sector. Paragraph 2 further says that cooperation and coordination with other multilateral environmental agreements in the field of chemicals and wastes should be sought to increase the effectiveness of technical assistance and its delivery.

2. Paragraph 3 of article 14 states that developed country parties and other parties within their capabilities shall promote and facilitate, supported by the private sector and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate, development, transfer and diffusion of, and access to, up-to-date environmentally sound alternative technologies to developing-country parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and parties with economies in transition, to strengthen their capacity to effectively implement the Convention. Paragraph 4 of article 14 calls upon the Conference of the Parties of the Minamata Convention, by its second meeting and thereafter on a regular basis, to consider information on existing initiatives and progress made in relation to alternative technologies; consider the needs of parties, particularly developing-country parties, for alternative technologies; and identify challenges experienced by parties, particularly developing-country parties, in technology transfer. In doing this, the Conference of the Parties is to take into account submissions and reports from parties, including those as provided for in article 21, on reporting, and information provided by other stakeholders. Paragraph 5 calls upon the Conference

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\*\* UNEP/MC/COP.5/1.

of the Parties to make recommendations on how capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer could be further enhanced under article 14.

3. Section II of the present note provides information relevant to the consideration of alternative technologies by the Conference of the Parties. Section III sets out information about the activities of the secretariat related to capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer, along with consideration of how capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer could be undertaken in the next biennium and further enhanced. Section IV outlines suggested action by the Conference of the Parties.

## **II. Consideration of information on existing initiatives and the needs of parties relative to alternative technologies**

4. At its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties considered the note by the secretariat on submissions and reports received in relation to alternative technologies and technology transfer as referred to in paragraph 4 of article 14 (UNEP/MC/COP.2/10) and the compilation of the submissions and reports (UNEP/MC/COP.2/INF/5) received from three parties and two non-governmental organizations. In its decision MC-2/11, on article 14: capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer, the Conference of the Parties emphasized the relevance of using regional, subregional and national arrangements in the delivery of capacity-building and technical assistance and requested the secretariat to collect information received from the existing arrangements on their capacity-building and technical assistance to support parties in implementing their obligations under the Convention, and to report thereon to the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting.

5. Every four years, in their full national reports, to be submitted pursuant to article 21, parties are to answer question 14.3 on whether they have promoted and facilitated the development, transfer and diffusion of, and access to, up-to-date environmentally sound alternative technologies. Parties that responded in the affirmative in the first full national reports, which were due by 31 December 2021, mentioned support to other parties in the form of training and seminars, project funding, websites and platforms, school programmes, communication plans and awareness-raising activities and project implementation. At least one party noted that it was both a beneficiary of technology transfer and a developer and promoter of up-to-date environmentally sound alternative technologies. Other parties described the challenges that they had experienced in accessing and transferring technology. Some parties responded that they were carrying out the promotion, transfer and dissemination of alternative technologies at the national level.

6. National reports contain valuable information on existing initiatives and progress made in the development, diffusion and transfer of up-to-date environmentally sound alternative technologies, including non-mercury extraction technologies for artisanal gold miners and non-mercury technologies in the dentistry sector. A number of developing-country parties have also articulated a need for specific alternative technologies that are viable and economically accessible.

7. Furthermore, a significant amount of information on technologies relevant to reducing and eliminating mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining has been compiled by the planetGOLD programme, which is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), on the basis of experience gained during the programme's initial implementation phase. Document UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/7 provides a summary of information stemming from the experience gained to date in the first eight country projects of the planetGOLD programme.

8. Notwithstanding this important information, a desk study to compile relevant information from national reports, available information on existing initiatives and progress made in terms of cooperation in relation to alternative technologies, including private-sector engagement, and available information on the related needs of parties, particularly developing-country parties, would provide valuable insights and a more structured understanding of the transfer and diffusion of, and access to, up-to-date environmentally sound alternative technologies at the global level. Information and case studies for use in such a desk study could be sought from members of the Global Mercury Partnership, hosted by the Chemicals and Health Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the regional and subregional centres of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, Indigenous Peoples' organizations and relevant international organizations. These entities could provide the Conference of the Parties with a more comprehensive picture of environmentally sound alternative technologies, informed by practical experience and by traditional and local knowledge.

9. The programme of work and budget activity fact sheet for capacity-building and technical assistance (activity 4) (UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/36) includes such a desk study among the activities to be funded by the Special Trust Fund in the biennium 2024–2025. Such an endeavour would require the support of a consultant and could not be undertaken within the scope of existing staff resources.

### **III. Enhancing capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer in the next biennium**

10. In both their national reporting and their interaction with the secretariat, parties have expressed appreciation for the capacity-building and technical assistance that they have received and have noted both its importance and the need for additional such capacity-building and technical assistance to assist them in implementing their obligations under the Convention. Analysis of the responses, in the first full national reports, to question 14.1, on whether the party has cooperated to provide capacity-building or technical assistance to another party, showed that a wide range of parties had cooperated to provide capacity-building or technical assistance to other parties. The reports revealed that cooperation activities included funding support, the organization and hosting of workshops and training sessions, project collaboration, the provision of specific technical assistance and general support and collaboration, with specific emphasis on areas such as mercury risks and control measures, technologies for the prevention and disposal of mercury pollution, illegal trade in mercury, accession to the Minamata Convention, mercury-added products, development of action plans for mercury reduction and elimination, and artisanal and small scale gold mining.

11. The importance of capacity-building has also been noted by participants in several intersessional processes, including meetings of the Open-ended Scientific Group, established in decision MC-4/11, on the first effectiveness evaluation. Furthermore, the report on the second review of the financial mechanism (UNEP/MC/COP.5/12)<sup>1</sup> found that there is often high turnover among Minamata Convention national focal points and that the focal points should be assisted with tools for fast learning to enable them better to perform their tasks with regard to the Convention and its financial mechanism.

12. The Implementation and Compliance Committee, in its report to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting (UNEP/MC/COP.5/14), has made recommendations for enhanced capacity-building for the implementation of article 4, on mercury-added products (to encourage other multilateral, regional and bilateral sources of financial and technical assistance, as well as capacity-building and technology transfer, to support developing-country parties in their implementation of the Convention, as stated in paragraph 3 of article 13); of article 7, on artisanal and small-scale gold mining (to call upon parties to continue cooperating to provide support in capacity-building, financial and technical assistance and technology transfer, in the development of and access to sustainable mercury-free alternative technologies for artisanal and small-scale gold mining, recognizing the measures taken by parties to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate the use of mercury and mercury compounds in artisanal and small-scale gold mining); of article 11, on mercury wastes (to invite parties to participate in targeted capacity-building and financial and technical assistance activities related to mercury waste, including those offered by the secretariat); and of article 14 (to call upon parties, within their respective capabilities, to continue efforts to collaborate to support developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition on all issues of implementation of the Convention through the provision of capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer). These recommendations have been incorporated into the draft decision text set out in the annex to the present note for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

13. Subparagraph 2 (b) of article 24 of the Convention, on the secretariat, states that one of the functions of the secretariat is to facilitate assistance to parties, particularly developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition, on request, in the implementation of the Convention. The secretariat has made efforts to increase the development and deployment of training and information materials; has initiated the development of online training modules on trade (article 3), mercury-added products (article 4), processes (article 5), emissions (article 8) and national reporting (article 21), with the generous financial support of the European Union; and is considering the development of other online learning tools, subject to the provision of voluntary resources. The advantage of online training materials is that participants can complete the courses at their convenience and at their own pace, and can adapt and deploy the courses at the national and local levels.

<sup>1</sup> The executive summary of the draft report of the second review of the financial mechanism outlines the lessons learned from the activities funded by the financial mechanism of the Minamata Convention during the period August 2019–July 2022.

14. Since 2020, the secretariat has organized three seasons of online training sessions entitled “Minamata Online”, available from the website and the YouTube channel of the Minamata Convention, with the aim of providing scientific and technical information, information relevant to implementation of the articles of the Convention and information on issues to be considered by the Conference of the Parties. Participants have been able to ask questions and to interact with the secretariat, and all the presentation materials and videos have been accessible on the Convention website.
15. The secretariat has sought opportunities to hold workshops and meetings in person – a third learning format – for example, on the margins of regional or other meetings. As part of a project funded by the European Union, in June 2023 it organized a global workshop on the phase-out of mercury-added products to support participants from developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition in fulfilling their obligations under article 4 of the Convention.
16. As part of season two of Minamata Online, the secretariat held a session on promoting gender equality in the implementation of the Convention. Pursuant to decision MC-4/10, on gender mainstreaming, the secretariat developed a draft gender action plan to mainstream gender into the implementation of the Minamata Convention and has proposed priority activities for the biennium 2024–2025 (UNEP/MC/COP.5/18) for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting.
17. All secretariat staff members engage in capacity-building and technical assistance in addition to their primary duties. The Programme Management Officer for Capacity-building and Technical Assistance is also responsible for the secretariat’s work related to the financial mechanism of the Convention (the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance and GEF). The activities carried out by the secretariat on capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer, other than those of a facilitative nature and those undertaken through the financial mechanism, are implemented using voluntary contributions to the Special Trust Fund. For the biennium 2024–2025, the programme of work and budget activity fact sheet on capacity-building and technical assistance provides an overview of the work proposed to be undertaken by the secretariat, with consultant support, using contributions to the Special Trust Fund.
18. These proposed activities include the development and deployment of tools and training materials to strengthen the ability of parties to implement their obligations under the Convention; capacity-building activities to enhance national capacities to implement the provisions of the Convention related to best available techniques/best environmental practices, trade, mercury-added products and mercury waste guidelines; the provision of quick-response capacity-building support upon request to address emerging and key implementation challenges at the national, subregional and regional levels; and cross-cutting activities, including training on gender and trade.
19. The secretariat collaborates with the Global Mercury Partnership to support capacity-building and technical assistance activities related to mercury and implementation of the Minamata Convention. As described in the report on the activities undertaken in the context of the Partnership since the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/32), the Partnership has eight active partnership areas: artisanal and small-scale gold mining; mercury cell chlor-alkali production; mercury air transport and fate research; mercury in products; mercury releases from coal combustion; mercury waste management; mercury supply and storage; and mercury releases from the cement industry. Entities or individuals interested in becoming a partner may submit a letter to UNEP signifying their support for the Global Mercury Partnership and their commitment to achieving its goal. There is no fee to become a partner in any of the partnership areas.<sup>2</sup>
20. The report of the second review of the financial mechanism found that the support and availability of committed teams, such as the Minamata Convention secretariat, the GEF secretariat and the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, have been a catalyst for the acquisition of significant resources in terms of knowledge and coordination, which have been an asset for the implementation of many projects.
21. The Global Mercury Partnership brings together experts from governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international organizations to share knowledge and information to advance its objectives, which mirror the objective of the Minamata Convention. Some Partnership areas are undertaking innovative work to match needs to available expertise. The secretariat of the Partnership also supports the ongoing operations of the financial mechanism of the Convention. In that respect, it carried out technical review of applications to the Specific International Programme and is engaged,

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is available at [www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/](http://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/).

along with its partners, in several GEF mercury-related programmes and projects. The Partnership is therefore very relevant to the ongoing and future capacity-building and technical assistance activities of the secretariat.

#### **IV. Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties**

22. In the light of the provision of the Convention that the Conference of the Parties is to consider, on a regular basis, information on existing initiatives and progress made in relation to alternative technologies and the needs of parties for alternative technologies, and to identify challenges experienced by parties in technology transfer, and in the light of ongoing needs for capacity-building and technical assistance, the Conference of the Parties may wish to consider the information contained in the present note and to adopt a decision along the lines of the text contained in the annex hereto, which takes into consideration the recommendations of the Implementation and Compliance Committee.

## Annex

### Draft decision MC-5/[--]: Capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Considering* article 14 of the Minamata Convention on capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer,

1. *Requests* the secretariat, pursuant to paragraph 4 of article 14 and subject to the availability of resources, to undertake, using information in national reporting, reporting under projects of the Global Environment Facility and existing information provided by stakeholders, including the Global Mercury Partnership, the regional centres of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, Indigenous Peoples' organizations and relevant international organizations, a desk study and to develop case studies on:

(a) Existing initiatives and progress made in relation to alternative technologies, including private-sector engagement;

(b) The needs of parties, particularly developing-country parties, for alternative technologies;

(c) Any challenges experienced by parties;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat to make the desk study and case studies described in paragraph 1 above available to the Conference of the Parties for its consideration at its sixth meeting, pursuant to paragraph 4 of article 14;

3. *Further requests* the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to develop and disseminate tools and training materials related to the implementation of parties' obligations under the Convention, including materials that respond to emerging and key implementation challenges at the national, subregional and regional levels and, in particular, to the recommendations of the Implementation and Compliance Committee regarding implementation of articles 4, 7 and 11 of the Convention, and to undertake cross-cutting capacity-building activities, including training on gender and trade;

4. *Calls upon* parties in a position to do so to contribute to the Special Trust Fund to enable the studies and capacity-building activities described in paragraphs 1 to 3 above and in the programme of work and budget activity fact sheet for capacity-building and technical assistance (activity 4) to be carried out;

5. *Calls upon* parties, in the light of paragraph 1 of article 14 and within the scope of their respective capabilities, to continue efforts to collaborate to support developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition on all issues relating to the implementation of the Convention through the provision of capacity -building, technical assistance and technology transfer;

6. *Encourages* multilateral, regional and bilateral sources of financial and technical assistance, capacity-building and technology transfer, to support developing-country parties in their implementation of the Convention, pursuant to paragraph 3 of article 13, on financial resources and mechanism;<sup>1</sup>

7. *Calls upon* parties to continue cooperating to provide support in capacity-building, financial and technical assistance and technology transfer for the development of and improved access to sustainable mercury-free alternative technologies for artisanal and small-scale gold mining, recognizing the measures taken by parties to reduce and where feasible eliminate the use of mercury and mercury compounds in artisanal and small-scale gold mining;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph has been prepared by the secretariat on the basis of relevant recommendations in the report on the work of the Implementation and Compliance Committee (UNEP/MC/COP.5/14).

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph has been prepared by the secretariat on the basis of relevant recommendations in the report on the work of the Implementation and Compliance Committee (UNEP/MC/COP.5/14).

8. *Invites* parties to participate in targeted capacity-building, financial and technical assistance activities relating to mercury waste, including those offered by the secretariat;<sup>3</sup>

9. *Requests* the secretariat to continue and enhance cooperation with the Global Mercury Partnership, and to engage with the Partnership in the consideration of options for strengthening the capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer programme of the secretariat and for enhancing support to parties as they cooperate to provide capacity-building and technical assistance pursuant to paragraph 1 of article 14.

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<sup>3</sup> This paragraph has been prepared by the secretariat on the basis of relevant recommendations in the report on the work of the Implementation and Compliance Committee (UNEP/MC/COP.5/14).