



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

Geneva, 3–7 November 2025

Item 4 (j) (i) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the
Parties: cross-cutting matters: implementation of decision
MC-5/1**

Strengthening the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury adopted decision MC-5/1, in which it noted with concern that Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities are particularly vulnerable to mercury exposure and are among the first to face the serious health and environmental effects resulting from mercury pollution owing to their close relationship with the environment and its resources, and welcomed the role of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, and particularly the engagement of women and girls, who have faced the effects of mercury with resilience, in achieving the objective of the Convention.
2. In the decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to compile views and report to the Conference of the Parties, at its sixth meeting, on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities with regard to the effects of mercury on their health, livelihoods, culture and knowledge, with a view to future work on identifying possible solutions.
3. The present note includes information on activities to support implementation of decision MC-5/1 and a summary of the report on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in relation to the effects of mercury. The report is presented in full in document UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/24.

II. Implementation of decision MC-5/1

A. Broadening participation in projects and programmes

4. In decision MC-5/1, the Conference of Parties noted the importance of broadening the participation of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities in the implementation of projects and programmes conducted under the Convention, and encouraged parties to support, as appropriate,

* UNEP/MC/COP.6/1/Rev.1.

participation of Indigenous Peoples' organizations, as well as local communities and other relevant stakeholders, in meetings of the Conference of the Parties, and in other related processes.

5. The decision lays the groundwork for the meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities in decisions and implementation of the Convention that directly or indirectly affects their health, livelihoods, culture and knowledge.

6. In response to paragraph 2 of decision MC-5/1, the Government of Finland provided funding to enable participation by Indigenous Peoples in the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and the secretariat continues to work with parties to identify additional funding for the seven Indigenous sociocultural regions. The secretariat has also collaborated with the Global Environment Facility secretariat and reached out to private philanthropic organizations to explore avenues for additional funding for the same purpose.

7. Furthermore, the secretariat continued to enhance collaboration and build partnerships with United Nations entities specializing in Indigenous Peoples' issues as well as with other organizations and initiatives, including the Global Environment Facility.

8. In collaboration with those organizations, the secretariat conducted activities to inform Indigenous Peoples' organizations about the impacts of mercury on human health and the environment, the Convention's governance structure and processes, including information on the development and implementation of national action plans on artisanal and small-scale gold mining, and solicited inputs on effective engagement mechanisms and on mercury challenges faced by their communities. The activities included:

(a) Participation in the Aliança Munduruku, Kayapo and Yanomami meeting held during the seventeenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, held from 15 to 19 July 2024 in Geneva;

(b) Participation in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs international expert group meeting on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including those in voluntary isolation and initial contact, in the context of the extraction of critical minerals, convened online by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2 to 4 December 2024;

(c) An online presentation given at the "First Exchange of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples on Illegal Gold Mining and Mercury Contamination in Their Territories", held in Leticia, Colombia, from 10 to 12 July 2024; the event was organized by Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible (Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development), Alianza Amazónica para la Reducción de los Impactos de la Minería de Oro (Amazon Alliance for Reducing the Impacts of Gold Mining) and Observatorio de Minería Ilegal y Actividades Vinculadas en Áreas Claves de Biodiversidad (Observatory of Illegal Mining and Related Activities in Key Biodiversity Areas);

(d) Delivery of a targeted training session to 40 Indigenous fellows participating in the Indigenous Fellowship Programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Geneva, on 7 July 2025. The Indigenous Fellowship Programme is organized annually and aims at building the capacity and expertise of Indigenous representatives with regard to the United Nations system and mechanisms dealing with human rights in general and Indigenous issues in particular;

(e) An informal dialogue with several Indigenous members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the development of engagement mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples in multilateral environmental agreements, in Geneva, on 17 July 2025;

(f) Organization of a side event at the eighteenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, on 17 July 2025, entitled "Presentation of the survey results on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities on the impact of mercury";

(g) Joining the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, established to support and promote the mandate of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues within the United Nations system.

9. Through those activities, the secretariat has received feedback and gained insights about the engagement practices of Indigenous Peoples in the work of United Nations organizations, including other multilateral environmental agreements. Many United Nations mechanisms and entities have made significant efforts to support the participation of Indigenous Peoples and to enable their greater engagement and visibility. Several obstacles to the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples in the work of United Nations organizations have been identified, including lack of representation of all seven Indigenous sociocultural regions, rigid accreditation mechanisms and requirements that do not

recognize Indigenous governance structures, insufficient financial and logistical support, language barriers, fear of reprisals, and lack of institutional support.¹

10. Several advances have been made under the Minamata Convention on Mercury to overcome those obstacles, including the adoption of decision MC-5/1 and other relevant decisions, the inclusion of a dedicated item on the agenda of meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the establishment by the secretariat of the Indigenous Peoples Platform, and the designation of a secretariat focal point for Indigenous Peoples, local communities and civil society engagement. Efforts to secure sufficient funding to support the participation of representatives of Indigenous organizations from the seven Indigenous sociocultural regions in the sixth meeting are ongoing.

11. Notwithstanding that progress, consultations with Indigenous experts and organizations also revealed the following unresolved issues:

(a) Lack of a structured mechanism for selecting the funded representatives of Indigenous Peoples' organizations and institutions from among the representatives identified by them to attend meetings under the Convention;

(b) Lack of predictable and continued financial and logistical support to ensure the presence of Indigenous Peoples at meetings of the Conference of the Parties and other meetings and their capacity to convey their views during processes.

B. Indigenous Peoples Platform

12. In paragraph 3 of decision MC-5/1, the Conference of the Parties encouraged parties and other relevant stakeholders to promote policies that enable Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities to benefit from, as well as contribute to, the dissemination of information, awareness and education on emissions and releases of mercury, including through the Indigenous Peoples Platform of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

13. The Platform has been created by the secretariat and is currently part of the focus area "Indigenous Peoples and local communities" on the Convention website. The overall goal of the Platform is to support the development of inclusive and responsive policies for Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, with specific aims being to:

(a) Assemble information related to mercury and Indigenous Peoples, including on work in intersessional periods;

(b) Raise awareness among parties and Indigenous Peoples of the effects of mercury pollution on Indigenous Peoples' health, livelihoods, culture and traditional knowledge, and provide training on mercury and its impact on Indigenous Peoples;

(c) Support fundraising efforts for the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the meetings of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

14. The secretariat is also working with the Inclusive Conservation Initiative, a project of the Global Environment Facility implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Conservation International, on the development of an online course on mercury pollution for an Indigenous audience. Once completed, the online training course is expected to be added to the Indigenous Peoples Platform.

15. While the Indigenous Peoples Platform currently focuses only on Indigenous Peoples, it is expected that over time, and subject to the availability of resources, efforts will be made to extend the scope to include a section on local communities.

C. Survey on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities

16. In paragraph 4 of decision MC-5/1, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to compile views on, and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting on, the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities with regard to the effects of mercury on their health, livelihoods, culture and knowledge, with a view to future work on identifying possible solutions.

¹ A/HRC/57/35.

17. The secretariat developed a survey to compile the views of Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations on those topics. The survey was informed by the analysis in the note by the secretariat on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities with regard to the use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/8). The note provided an initial framework of priority intervention areas, which was further refined and elaborated in the survey to allow respondents to rank their specific priorities on the basis of their unique contexts.

18. On 18 December 2024, an invitation to participate in the survey was sent to Indigenous Peoples' organizations, local community organizations, relevant intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders. The survey, prepared in Bahasa Indonesia, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, was posted on the Minamata Convention on Mercury website. Respondents had until 28 February 2025 to complete the survey.

19. The survey listed a total of 35 Indigenous and community needs in relation to mercury pollution in the following 10 categories:

- (a) Food and water security;
- (b) Environmental protection and restoration;
- (c) Awareness-raising among community members, especially women of child-bearing age;
- (d) Medical and social services;
- (e) Income generation and livelihoods;
- (f) Law enforcement;
- (g) Human rights;
- (h) Knowledge and spiritual and cultural identity;
- (i) Effective participation and engagement in work under the Minamata Convention on Mercury;
- (j) Others.

20. A total of 171 responses from 32 countries were received by the deadline. The responses were from organizations in the following countries: Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Finland, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Suriname, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen, Zimbabwe. Of the total, 151 respondents were from Indigenous People's organizations and 18 were from local communities. Fifty-three per cent of respondents were from Mexico (66) and Brazil (25).

21. All the needs enumerated in the "human rights" category received the highest ranking, followed by those in the categories "knowledge and spiritual and cultural identity" and "effective participation and engagement in work under the Minamata Convention on Mercury".

22. The priorities ranked lower than those in the three categories mentioned in paragraph 21 above were closely clustered together. The marginal nature of those differences suggests that respondents perceive all the needs included in the survey as important, with a majority of respondents' rankings reflecting subtle variations.

23. The participation of only 18 local community respondents represents a limited sample size, highlighting the need for broader engagement with those communities.

III. Suggested action by the Conference of the Parties

24. In the light of the above information, the Conference of the Parties may wish to consider and adopt a decision along the lines of the draft decision set out in the annex to the present note.

Annex

Draft decision MC-6/[--]: Strengthening the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities

The Conference of the Parties,

Emphasizing that Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities play an important role in the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and underscoring that their full and effective engagement and participation in the Convention's meetings and processes is essential to achieving its objective,

Taking note of the results of the survey on the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities with regard to the effects of mercury on their health, livelihoods, culture and knowledge, and recognizing that effective engagement and participation in the work of the Convention is a high priority for those groups in addressing mercury pollution,

Welcoming the efforts of the secretariat to develop the Indigenous Peoples Platform and encouraging parties and other relevant stakeholders to continue to promote policies that enable Indigenous Peoples to benefit from and contribute to the dissemination of information, awareness and education on emissions and releases of mercury,

1. *Decides* to establish a voluntary Indigenous Peoples funding mechanism to provide dedicated financial support for the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the work and meetings of the Convention and requests the secretariat to develop a transparent and inclusive procedure for identifying and selecting recipients of such funding;
2. *Decides* that the funding mechanism will operate under the special trust fund of the Convention and be open to receive funding and in-kind contributions from parties, states not parties to the Convention, and governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other sources;
3. *Invites* parties to provide financial and technical support to facilitate the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, particularly those from developing countries and regions disproportionately impacted by mercury pollution;
4. *Requests* the secretariat to seek advice from an interim ad hoc advisory group, initially composed of seven self-nominated representatives from Indigenous Peoples' organizations accredited as observers to the Convention, on the following:
 - (a) Identifying Indigenous Peoples' organizations to participate in meetings of the Conference of Parties and other relevant meetings under the Convention and ensuring balanced representation of those organizations;
 - (b) Identifying support for travel and interpretation as needed to enable effective engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples' organizations;
 - (c) Proposing next steps on strengthening the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples in the work of the Convention;
5. *Decides* to review at its eighth meeting the mandate and continuation of the interim ad hoc advisory group, taking into account the outcomes reported by the secretariat in relation to the request in paragraph 4 above;
6. *Requests* the secretariat to share the survey results with relevant organizations and collaborate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant organizations to disseminate the results to Indigenous Peoples' organizations, as well as to local communities and other relevant stakeholders, to further promote their effective engagement in addressing mercury pollution.