



HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

Ministerial Roundtables

28 September – 16.00 to 17.30

Context

Mercury, as a naturally occurring element, will always be present in the environment. The World Health Organization has concluded that there are no safe limits for mercury and its compounds. The Minamata Convention on Mercury aims to reduce and where feasible eliminate the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

Mercury is widespread and persistent. It is used in industrial processes, emitted from waste incineration and burning of fossil fuels, and is found in electrical appliances, medical instruments, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, dental amalgam and a variety of other products. From emissions to air, and releases to land and water, mercury contaminates various environmental media and can be transformed into methyl mercury by microbes. It can then be bioaccumulated and biomagnified through the food chain and is the main cause of human exposure, through consumption of contaminated fish. Mercury is subject to transboundary movement and can therefore affect the environment and populations far from the source of emission or release.

Addressing mercury, including through the sound management of chemicals and waste in general, is at the core of addressing national sustainable development issues. It is imperative that all stakeholders commit to meeting the requirements of the Minamata Convention as a means to a chemical-safe future for health, environment and economic development.

Under the auspices of the High-Level Segment of the First Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury hosted by Her Excellency Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation and Minister for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication, ministerial roundtable discussions will provide a platform for interactive dialogue offering an opportunity for input from all regions on all perspectives about actions that are needed to address mercury pollution at the global, regional and national level.

Objective

The objective of the ministerial roundtables is to provide a platform for ministers to exchange views and best practices on the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury with focus on mercury in the context of water, land and air.

The roundtables will benefit from the Thematic Sessions targeted at discussing mercury in land, air and water that will be held earlier in the week. While each thematic session is specific to one topic discussions at the ministerial roundtables will be expected to deal with all three topics.

Outcome

On Friday morning, ministers designated during the Thursday ministerial roundtables will provide feedback on the Action Messages for mercury resulting from their roundtable discussions. A consolidated summary of the Action Messages emerging from the roundtable discussions and further discussions during the High-Level Segment will form part of the Key Take-home Message from the High-Level Segment that will be presented by the President of COP1 at the closure of the High-Level Segment.



Organization and logistics (see also detailed concept note on organization of ministerial roundtables)

The ministerial roundtable discussions will take place on Thursday, 28 September 2017 from 16.00 to 17.30 at the Geneva International Conference Centre. Discussions at each roundtable will be guided by a moderator and will also have a rapporteur who will record the key elements of the discussions.

The discussions will be open to ministers and ministerial-level participants only. It is expected that there will be six to eight tables each with up to ten participants.

The language of discussion at each roundtable will be governed by the primary common language of the designated participants at each table. Given there is no interpretation, if necessary, ministers may be accompanied by an interpreter.

At each table, participants will be requested to invite a designated speaker from among the ministers to inform the Conference during the Friday morning session of the High-Level Segment on the Action Messages from their table.

—



Questions to be addressed by Ministers at the Roundtable Discussions

The objective of the Minamata Convention on Mercury is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

Mercury is a chemical of global concern owing to its long-range atmospheric transport, its persistence in the environment once anthropogenically introduced, its ability to bioaccumulate in ecosystems and its significant negative effects on human health and the environment. Through multiple pathways mercury is emitted to air and released to land and water resulting in adverse environmental effects; it persists in these media and bioaccumulates through the food chain causing harmful health effects. While mercury is a global issue, vulnerable populations in developing countries are the most likely to be affected by mercury use, as are the indigenous communities exposed to increased mercury intake ingested from traditional foods.

The sound management of chemicals and waste in general, and mercury in particular, is central to achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development and to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

To stimulate and bring focus to the discussions during the ministerial roundtables, the following questions could be addressed.

GENERAL

How can the objective of protecting human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury be integrated into public health and environmental strategies at the national and regional level?

What can stakeholders, working to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury, offer to address the broader development challenges linked to mercury?

How can policy coherence and institutional frameworks at all levels be strengthened to support the Convention and how can governance be inclusive of all sectors and all stakeholders?

How can sustained implementation of the mercury convention be ensured including through awareness raising on the benefits of such implementation?

How can measures applied for the sound management of other chemicals be applied to the management of mercury issues?

What are the pressing challenges to implementing the Convention at the local and national level?

How can the visibility of the Convention be increased?

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Keeping in mind the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, what is the role of decision-making partners in implementing the Minamata Convention at the national level?

Where do governments feel the Minamata Convention is situated in the overall context of the Sustainable Development Goals?

How can the cross sectoral aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals be addressed in a mutually supportive way that brings benefits from implementing the obligations under the Minamata Convention?

How can the objectives of the Minamata Convention be integrated and embedded into national sustainable development plans?



LAND

How can the underlying socio-economic challenges that are at the core of existing practices that use mercury or are affected by mercury such as ASGM and waste management that affects both land and water be addressed?

How can we ensure that strategies are developed and in place to prevent the diversion of mercury or mercury compounds from other allowed uses for use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing?

How can local communities be made aware of the negative impacts of using mercury containing products and of activities involving mercury use?

WATER

How can governments support communities relying on traditional consumption patterns, including mercury contaminated fish?

What options for control and monitoring are implementable to reduce mercury releases to water bodies?

AIR

How can best practices and techniques be introduced effectively to minimize the use of mercury and emissions to air?

How can measures for a multi-pollutant control strategy that would control other pollutants as well as delivering co-benefits for control of mercury emissions and releases be introduced

PARTNERSHIPS

How can we promote partnerships with public and private entities at the national level to assist in the implementation of obligations under the Convention and, as opportune, in the sharing of responsibility?

What are the opportunities for and challenges to engaging the private sector in the process of implementing the Convention at the local, national, regional and international level?