

UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP

Mercury waste management Area*

Partnership Area Leads:

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ISSUE

Mercury waste is generated from different sources as mercury is used in several types of products (e.g. batteries, lamps, medical devices) and processes (e.g. mercury-cell chlor-alkali facilities) and is also contained in minerals such as coal. The phase-out of mercury in products and processes along with strict controls on mercury emissions and releases is expected to generate large amount of mercury wastes, for which the Minamata Convention requires the environmentally sound management (ESM).

While ESM is a common challenge in many countries, especially developing ones, a number of key players, including governments, industry, civil society and academia, can provide useful techniques, support and guidance. The establishment of networks of stakeholders who can collaborate in managing mercury waste will also be key in ensuring ESM.



STRATEGY

The Partnership Area has identified the following priority actions to meet its objective:

- Identify and disseminate information on environmentally sound collection, transportation, treatment and disposal techniques and practices for different types of mercury wastes to reduce mercury releases from waste by following a Life Cycle Management approach;
- Assess environmental impacts of current waste management practices and processes, including providing support to countries to assess their national situation and needs; and
- Promote public awareness of the hazards associated with mercury wastes and their management and support community engagement in the activities of the Partnership Area.



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Partnership Area is to minimize and, where feasible, eliminate unintentional mercury releases to air, water, and land from waste containing mercury and mercury compounds by following a Life Cycle Management approach.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION

The Partnership Area identified a number of specific needs of countries, namely with respect to the review of existing laws and regulations as well as waste management infrastructure to meet the obligations of the Convention, and to information on technologies and costs associated with the environmentally sound management of mercury wastes. The Partnership Area aims at meeting such needs by providing information on good practices and case studies in both developed and developing countries.

The Partnership Area also aims at contributing to intersessional processes mandated by the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention.

RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY:

Article 11 (Mercury Wastes) addresses the issue of mercury wastes, their management in an environmentally sound manner as well as transboundary movement. In doing so, it recognizes the relationship between the Minamata Convention and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

* web.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/our-work/mercury-waste-management



FEATURED ACTIVITIES

- **“Catalogue of Technologies and Services on Mercury Waste Management”:** This tool was developed to disseminate in an effective manner information on mercury waste management technologies, products, and services of partners. The Catalogue in its 2019 version is now available on the Partnership website and will be updated continuously¹.
- **Resource Persons List:** A list of resource persons who could provide technical advice in relation to mercury waste management has been prepared and is regularly updated².
- **Knowledge sharing at relevant international meetings:** Experts from the Partnership Area attend relevant meetings, such as recently the 14th International Conference on Mercury as Global Pollutant (September 2019, Krakow, Poland) and the 2019 ISWA Congress (October 2019, Bilbao, Spain), to gain latest knowledge from the waste management sector and subsequently share technical information with other partners.

¹ web.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/catalogue-technologies-and-services-mercury-waste-management.

² web.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/our-work/mercury-waste-management.



FUTURE PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Key future planned activities include:

- Promoting information sharing among partners and other stakeholders;
- Compiling and disseminating technical information on mercury wastes management, in light of identified needs and challenges;
- Implementing project-based activities; and
- Contributing to intersessional work under the Basel and Minamata conventions.



COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PARTNERSHIP AREAS AND RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The Mercury Waste Management Partnership Area collaborates with other partnership areas through information sharing, as well as joint activities and projects.

Mercury waste generated from the decommissioning of chlor-alkali plants is one of the major concerns in waste management as the re-use of such mercury is discouraged under the Minamata Convention. The Partnership Area hence conducted with the Mercury Cell Chlor-Alkali Production Partnership Area, in March 2018, in Uruguay, a joint mission to identify the needs and challenges faced by the chlor-alkali producer and the Uruguayan government, both in the financing of the conversion process, and in addressing the management and disposal of mercury wastes. A second joint study is now under planning.



Read more about the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and how to become a Partner:

web.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership

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