

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN MERCURY STORAGE PROJECT INCEPTION WORKSHOP

22-23 APRIL 2009
MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
CONCEPT NOTE

SIGNIFICANCE

Global mercury pollution is a serious problem. Reducing the global supply of mercury is one of the best ways to address this problem and storing excess mercury is seen as a priority instead of allowing this mercury to be sold in the global marketplace.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Chemicals Branch of the Division of Technology, Industry, Economics, and the Basel Convention Coordinating Center for Capacity Building and Transfer of Technology (BCCR) hosted by Uruguay, are organizing this workshop in accordance with decision 23/9, adopted by the twenty-third session of the Governing Council on 25 February 2005, at which the Governing Council (GC) requested Governments to "consider curbing primary production and the introduction into commerce of excess mercury supply".

Also, in accordance with decision 24/3 adopted by the twenty-fourth session of the GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum on 9 February 2007, the GC established mercury supply reduction as a global priority, and urged governments "to gather information on the options and solutions for the long-term storage of mercury".

GC 25/5 decision likewise called to continue and enhance capacity for mercury storage, concurrently with the work of the intergovernmental negotiation committee (INC) to elaborate a global legally binding instrument.

Elemental mercury apart from being toxic cannot be degraded nor destroyed and hence must be safely managed and stored in the long term. Towards this end, UNEP Chemicals with the support of Norwegian funds is implementing a project entitled "Reduce Mercury Supply and Investigate Mercury Storage Solutions" in 2 regions, in Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean. This inception workshop, a joint effort of UNEP Chemicals and the BCCR Uruguay will form part of the project.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Latin America and Caribbean mercury storage project inception workshop aims to reduce the eventual supply of mercury to the biosphere by initiating a regional process that will support the sequestration of excess mercury in Latin America and the Caribbean. Specifically, the workshop aims to

1. Review an expert report on the anticipated quantity of mercury in Latin America and the Caribbean that will require sequestration, and share information about sequestration efforts in other countries and regions.
2. Discuss the options and issues to be considered for long term safe storage of excess mercury and make recommendations on the next steps following the workshop such as an in depth feasibility study.
3. Organize a regional support structure such as Advisory Committee (to be represented by an Executive Committee) that will consider the development of regional options for the sequestration of mercury such as a regional terminal storage facility for mercury, and facilitate the development of national policies consistent with the development of such a facility.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

- Understanding of the sources and quantities of excess elemental mercury supply from 2010-2050 for the scoped Latin American and Caribbean countries
- Knowledge and information of current mercury storage facilities and enabling legislation globally, including the US and the EU
- Clear understanding of the UNEP Mercury Storage Project and agreement on next steps for the Latin American and Caribbean region, such as the criteria and management options for the safe long term storage of elemental mercury and support for the proposed feasibility study

- Creation of a Regional support structure such as a Latin American and Caribbean Advisory Committee (to be represented by an Executive committee) that will further explore options, provide guidance and policy to the Latin American and the Caribbean Mercury Storage Project
- Regional/ Subregional action plans that will outline next steps

OPERATING DETAILS

DATE: 22-23 APRIL 2009
PLACE: MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
(URUGUAYAN TECHNOLOGICAL LABORATORY)

Participants: The workshop entails policy and technical background on mercury. Government representatives dealing with policy and technical issues of mercury of the relevant Ministries/Agencies are strongly encouraged to participate. Invitation letters will be coursed through the SAICM national focal points or appropriate chemicals focal persons of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, Cuba, Nicaragua, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname

Countries are encouraged to conduct an initial stakeholder consultation on this concept of Latin American regional mercury storage project. More information is available at http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/storage/main_page.htm

Participation and registration will be coordinated by UNEP Chemicals Mercury Programme. Limited funding will be available to support the participation from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The Latin American and Caribbean mercury storage project inception workshop will be held in English, with simultaneous translation in Spanish.

The Latin American and Caribbean mercury storage project inception meeting is a joint effort by UNEP Chemicals and the Basel Convention Coordinating Center for Capacity Building and Transfer of Technology (BCCR) hosted by Uruguay

Inquiries or follow-ups for this LAC mercury storage project inception workshop should be sent to:
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