

# THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

L'ASSOCIATION MEDICALE MONDIALE, INC  
ASOCIACION MEDICA MUNDIAL, INC



Head, UNEP Chemicals Branch, DTIE  
11-13, chemin des Anémones  
CH-1219 Châtelaine  
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28 November 2008

Dear Madame,  
Dear Sir,

**Re.: Application of the World Medical Association to the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership**

On behalf of the World Medical Association, I would like herewith to apply to the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

The World Medical Association (WMA) is the global federation of National Medical Associations representing the millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

At its General Assembly in Seoul last October, the WMA adopted a **statement on reducing the Global Burden of Mercury**. Recognising the urgent need to reduce both the supply and demand of mercury in the health care sector, the WMA makes a range of recommendations, including that the National medical associations lobby their governments for the reduction of risks related to mercury in the environment and that physicians at the local level explore ways to eliminate mercury-containing products in their offices and clinical practices. WMA statement is attached for your information.

I believe that this statement reflects WMA clear commitment to achieving the partnership goal to protect human health and the global environment from the release of mercury and its compounds.

Through its members active in all the continents at local, regional and national levels, the WMA can be a powerful instrument for the reduction of the burden of mercury with the full involvement of physicians. We are particularly interested in the "Mercury in products" partnership area, as we believe that this where we could bring a clear added value as a new partner to the initiative, targeting our actions in hospitals and other medical settings, as well as in the framework of relationship with patients.

I sincerely hope that you will accept our application to the partnership.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Otmar Kloiber  
Secretary General of the WMA



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**World Medical Association Statement on reducing the Global Burden of Mercury**  
**Adopted by the WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008**

Mercury is a naturally occurring heavy metal that is a potent neurotoxin. The most likely routes of human exposure on a population basis are ingestion of methylmercury from contaminated fish. Less commonly, individuals are exposed via inhalation of inorganic mercury vapour after a spill or during a manufacturing process.

Mercury has been the ideal choice for use in medical devices that measure temperature and pressure. Therefore, a typical large hospital may have more than a hundred pounds of mercury onsite incorporated into various devices in separate locations.

Hospitals and clinics can avoid the occupational or environmental risk of mercury by using products that don't rely on mercury-based technology. Major healthcare institutions around the world have demonstrated that safe, effective alternative products exist, and can be safely used for most situations.

Although the rationale for instituting voluntary mercury replacement initiatives is compelling from both occupational and environmental perspectives, financial considerations may ultimately motivate hospitals to undertake a mercury replacement program. Hazardous waste clean-up costs, reporting requirements for spills, disruptions in services, and staff training are costly. The cost of cleaning up one significant contamination can be substantially higher than the cost of converting to mercury-free alternatives.

By implementing a "best practices" management method for mercury use, the need for increased government regulations in the future, may be avoided. Such regulations may create costly burdens that some facilities may not be able to meet.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on the urgent need to reduce both the supply and demand of mercury in the health care sector:

### *Global*

The World Medical Association and its member national medical associations should:

- Advocate for the United Nations and individual governments to voluntarily cooperate to implement key features of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Mercury Programme, which provides a framework for reducing the use, release, trade and risk related to mercury.
- Enhance the activity of existing partnerships.

*Regional/National*

National medical associations should advocate that their governments work to reduce risks related to mercury in the environment by:

- Reducing reliance on mercury mining in favour of environmentally-friendly sources of mercury, such as recycled mercury.
- Developing options and scientifically sound plans for the long-term safe storage of excess mercury supplies.
- Urging governments and other stakeholders to continue to enhance their support of the UNEP Mercury Programme partnerships, through the provision of technical and financial resources.
- Encouraging a phase-out of mercury use in the health care sector
- Designing and implementing regulations and/or requirements designed to significantly reduce mercury emissions from coal combustion and cement production by using specific mercury emission controls.

*Local*

Physicians should:

- Explore eliminating mercury-containing products in their offices and clinical practices, including thermometers, sphygmomanometers, gastrointestinal tubes, batteries, lamps, electrical supplies, thermostats, pressure gauges, and other laboratory reagents and devices.
- Ensure that local hospitals and medical facilities have a plan to identify sources of mercury in their workplace, a commitment to mercury reduction, and a mercury management policy regarding recycling, disposal and education.
- Encourage local hospitals and medical facilities to phase out mercury-containing products and switch to non-mercury equivalents.
- Counsel patients about local and national advisories related to fish consumption designed to limit exposure to mercury in children and women of childbearing age.

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# UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP

## INFORMATION ON BECOMING A PARTNER

This information sheet is intended to provide an overview of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Mercury Partnership for prospective partners. Further information is available at the following web address: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/default.htm>

### What is the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership?

The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is a voluntary and collaborative relationship amongst various parties, governmental, non-governmental, public and private, in which all participants agree to work together in a systematic way to achieve the goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership complements and supports the implementation of UNEP Governing Council Decision 24/3.

As of June 2008, the following partnership areas have been initiated:

- 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; and
- mercury waste management.

Other partnership areas are in the process of being considered and initiated.

### What is the Overall Goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership?

The overall goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is to protect human health and the global environment from the release of mercury and its

compounds by minimizing and, where feasible, ultimately eliminating global, anthropogenic mercury releases to air, water and land.

### What does joining the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership mean for prospective partners?

- Supporting the overall goal of the Partnership.
- Contributing resources or expertise to the development and implementation of partnership activities.
- Networking with other organizations/agencies/individuals addressing mercury issues.

### How does an organization join the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership?

To become a partner, interested entities or individuals should submit a letter to UNEP signifying their support for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and their commitment to achieving its goal, and specifying how they will contribute to meeting the goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. Such letters should be submitted to:

**Head, UNEP Chemicals Branch, DTIE  
11-13, chemin des Anémones  
CH-1219 Châtelaine - Geneva, Switzerland  
Fax: (+41 22) 797 3460  
E-mail: [mercury@chemicals.unep.ch](mailto:mercury@chemicals.unep.ch)**

In submitting this letter, UNEP asks partners to also complete the attached registration form. Participation to the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership will be confirmed by UNEP through a letter of confirmation. Your letter of support will be posted on the UNEP Chemicals web site.

# UNEP GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM \*

<b>Partnership Area</b>	<p>Please check partnership areas that your organization intends to contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> artisanal and small scale gold mining</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> mercury cell chlor alkali production</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> mercury air transport and fate research</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> mercury in products</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> mercury releases from coal combustion</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> mercury waste management</li> </ul> <p>Please indicate in your support letter how your organization intends to contribute to each of the indicated partnership areas.</p>
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<b>Organization Name</b>	WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
<b>Name, Functional Title of Representative</b>	Clarisse Delorme Advocacy Advisor World Medical Association (WMA)
<b>Address of Organization</b>	13 chemin du Levant, Keynes building 01210 Ferney-Voltaire FRANCE
<b>Tel. No</b>	+33 (0)4 50407575
<b>Email</b>	Clarisse.delorme@wma.net
<b>Fax No.</b>	+33 (0)4 50405937
<b>Website/URL</b>	www.wma.net
<b>Type of Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regional economic integration organization</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-government Organization</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____</li> </ul>

\* UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Registration Forms are to be accompanied by a letter to UNEP signifying support for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and commitment to achieving the partnership goal. The support letter should specify how the organization intends to contribute to meeting the goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. Please submit the support letter and registration form to:

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