

Global inventory of mercury cell chlor-alkali facilities

Note by the secretariat

1. At its first session, held from 7 to 11 June 2010, the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury requested the secretariat to prepare a global inventory of mercury cell chlor-alkali facilities, including information on capacity, locations and any plans for conversion or closure, drawing on information developed by the Global Mercury Partnership of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
 2. The chlor-alkali sector partnership area had previously developed an inventory of facilities in consultation with industry bodies and partners based on a recommendation by the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group at its first meeting, in April 2009. Subsequently, UNEP solicited input from stakeholders on the inventory through its website. The up-to-date inventory is available at www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Mercury/PrioritiesforAction/ChloralkaliSector/Reports/tabid/4495/language/en-US/Default.aspx.
 3. The inventory will continue to be updated and Governments are invited to submit any updates or corrections to the partnership area lead, the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America, via the following e-mail address: mercury@unep.org.
 4. According to data compiled, 100 facilities in 44 countries today have some industrial mercury cell chlorine production capacity. There remains approximately 6.5 million tonnes per year of mercury cell chlorine production capacity worldwide, compared to some 9 million tonnes per year in 2005. Twenty facilities in 10 countries have announced or are said to be contemplating plans to eliminate a total of 1.9 million tonnes per year of mercury cell chlorine production capacity over the coming five years. The European chlor-alkali industry, represented by EuroChlor, has made a voluntary pledge to phase out all mercury-cell chlor-alkali units by 2020. These pledged phase-outs are not included in the inventory, which only lists phase-outs planned for specific facilities from 2010 to 2015. In the United States, the four remaining mercury cell facilities are discussing a potential 31 December 2018 deadline for closure or conversion, depending upon pending congressional legislation and the economic viability of converting the plants. In India, all remaining mercury-cell chlorine production is scheduled to cease by 2012, according to an agreed timetable drawn up by the Government and industry bodies.
 5. After accounting for the voluntary pledge within the European Union, the proposed closure or conversion date in the United States, the Indian conversion plans and the other facilities already with closure or conversion plans as noted in the inventory, the number of plants remaining is 55, located in 24 countries, with an aggregate chlorine production capacity of about 1.7 million tonnes per year. Significantly, this remaining aggregate production capacity is less than the approximately 2.6 million tonnes actually decommissioned during the period 2005–2010, as noted above.
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