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Summary of the survey results of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

Note by the Secretariat

The secretariat of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership conducted a survey to evaluate the Partnership since the last review in 2012. A summary of the results has been compiled in the annex to the present note.

The Partnership Advisory Group may wish to discuss and consider the outcome of the survey.

Annex:

Summary of the survey results of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

1. INTRODUCTION

This survey has been undertaken in order to review the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (herein after referred to as the Partnership) has performed since the last review (2012). The main thematic areas of this review include: information clearing through Partners, Partnership area leads and UNEP; membership and representation within partnership areas; finances and transparency; communication and outreach; and the Partnership's role in implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. This review was conducted using a questionnaire, which was sent to all Partners, and 15 targeted interviews. The full methodology can be found in section 2.

This report outlines the feedback from Partners concerning the overall performance of the Partnership. It therefore seeks to give more general feedback concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the whole Partnership and how all partnership areas can improve.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was sent out to all Partners within the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. The questionnaire was composed of 45 questions; 30 of which were quantitative tick boxes and 15 of which were qualitative short answer questions. Of the quantitative questions, 29 were composed of a statement followed by 5 scale points (i.e. very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, no opinion, satisfied, very satisfied), and 1 was composed of a multiple answer question concerning sectorial representation (industry, government, IGO, NGO, academia, other). Tick box questions were made to be mandatory, while quantitative questions were optional. This was done to simplify the survey for busier users, in order to get the maximum return rate of surveys. A total of 48 Partners out of approximately 131 (response rate of ~36 %) replied to the questionnaire; a breakdown of responses according to Partnership Area (PA) can be seen in Table 1.

Total Number of Responses	Air Fate & Transport	ASGM	Coal	Chlor-Alkali	Products	Supply & Storage	Waste
48	4	15	13	6	16	13	21

Table 1: Number of respondents in each partnership area.

The questions in both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were composed taking the literature review and the last Partnership report (2012) into consideration. Questions therefore covered:

- Information Clearing House Mechanism: Whether the Partnership has been acting efficiently as an information clearing-house, particularly with regards to the clarity, depth, availability and quality of publications.
- Finances: Whether financing is efficient and transparent, and the reasons why Partners decide whether or not to provide funding.
- Partnership: Whether there is enough Partner-Partner involvement, communication and collaboration within and between PAs.
- Awareness Raising: Whether the Partnership has done well to promote the awareness of the mercury issue to both Partners and the Public.
- Website: Whether the website is easily accessible and well organised. This also covers how easy it is to access relevant publications.
- Minamata Convention on Mercury: Whether the Partnership can and/or will act as an effective facilitator to governments in fulfilling the goals of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Using Excel, the results, graded by average level of stakeholder satisfaction (1-5), were divided by quartiles (upper, middle and lower 25% ranges). The Partnership's top ranked strengths and weaknesses were hence identified by the upper and lower quartiles (top 25% and lowest 25%, respectively). These topics will be the main focus areas of this review, with particular focus on the lowest-ranked issues, in order to ascertain how the Partnership needs to improve and progress.

2.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH PARTNERS

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as an additional means to collect data, in order to gain a further understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership. Open-ended questions with the same general outline as the questionnaire were designed in advance, so that all Partners would answer the same pool of questions. Based upon preliminary questionnaire results, interviews were further tailored to gain more information concerning why Partners have identified weakness areas. At least one Partner from each PA was interviewed, with a preferred mixture of a lead and a non-lead Partner. A total of 15 individuals were interviewed. This information was used to supplement and explain the results found in the questionnaire.

3. FINDINGS ON GENERAL ISSUES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP

3.1 KEY RESULTS BY ISSUE

The following graphs show the key results of the survey. Each bar represents the feedback for each question, where questions have been grouped by issue. The red line indicates the 3.25 satisfaction level, when all results falling below the line are those that have fallen into the lowest satisfaction quartile (lowest scoring 25% of answers).

Red arrows indicate areas in the lowest quartile (primary weakness), or those that are in need of the greatest level of improvement. The yellow arrows indicate areas that fall close to the threshold (secondary weakness); these areas have not been focused upon in this report, but are areas that also need to be considered.

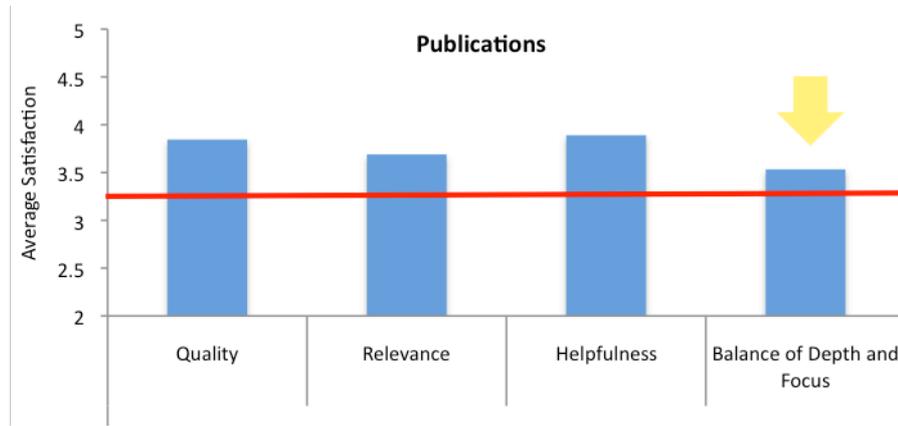


Figure 1: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards to publications

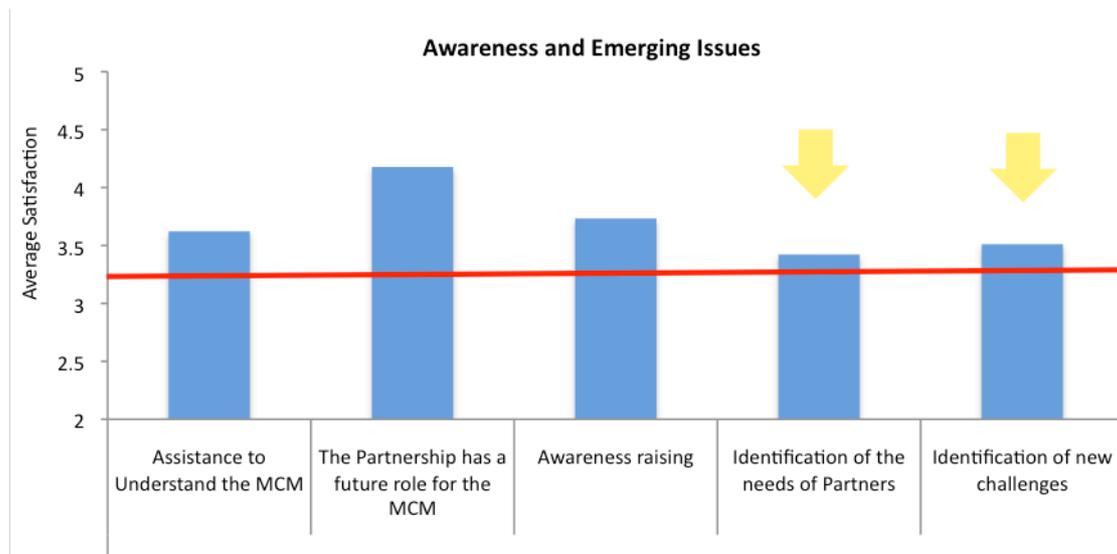


Figure 2: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards to awareness raising and emerging issues. Both the identification of Partner needs, and the identification of new challenges are secondary weaknesses.

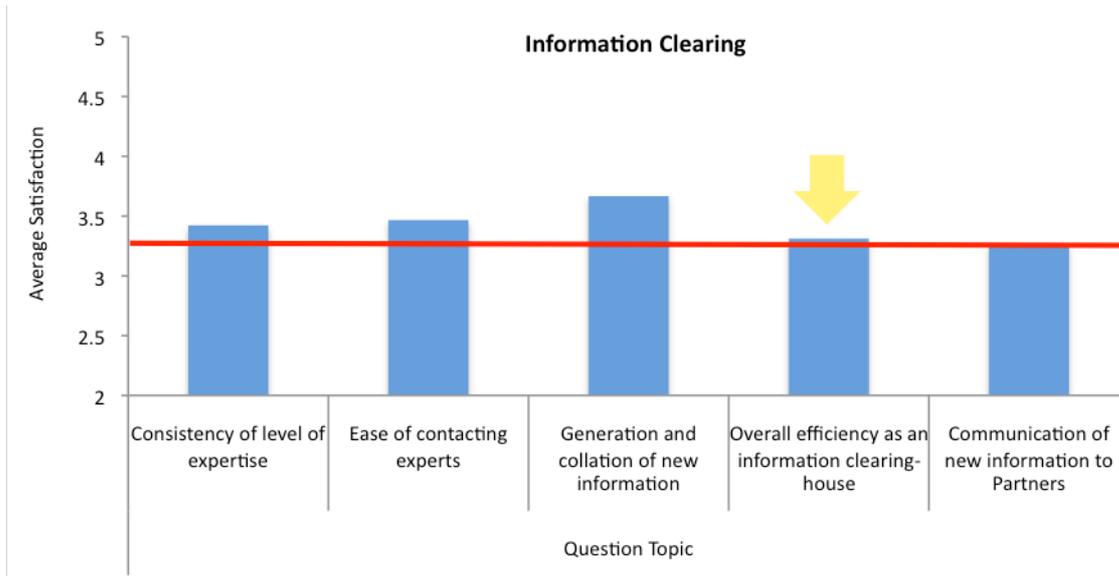


Figure 3: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards to UNEP, Leads and Partners clearing and communicating information to each other. The Partnership as a centralized body has not been perceived by Partners (secondary weakness) to efficiently distribute new information.

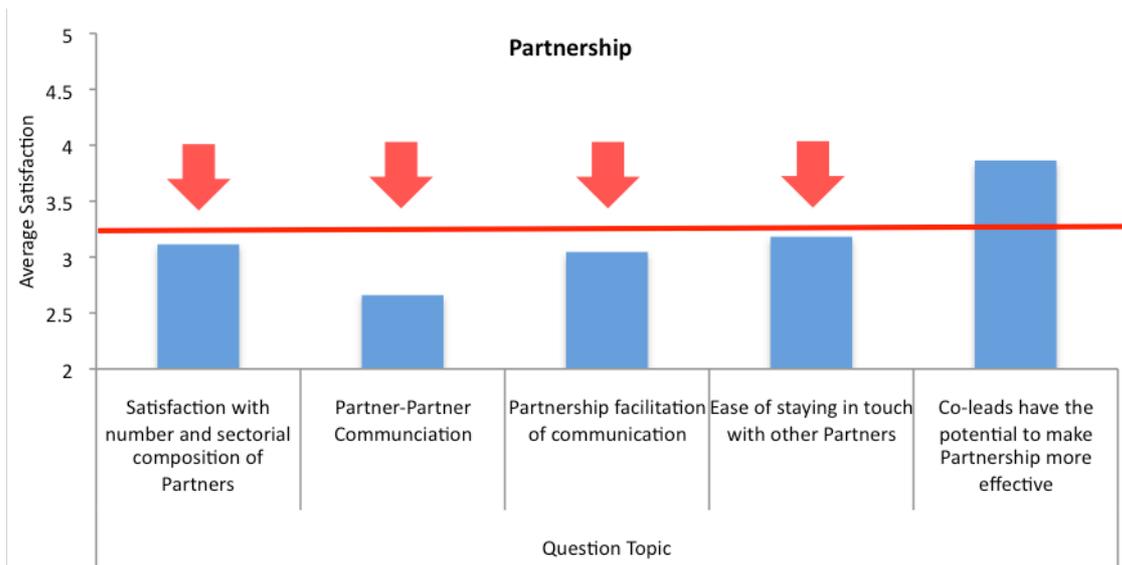


Figure 4: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards to Partnership and Partner-Partner communications. This issue was perceived by Partners to be the weakest. Representation within PAs, Partner-Partner communication, UNEP/Lead facilitation of communication, and ease of staying in touch with other Partners were all perceived to be primary weaknesses.

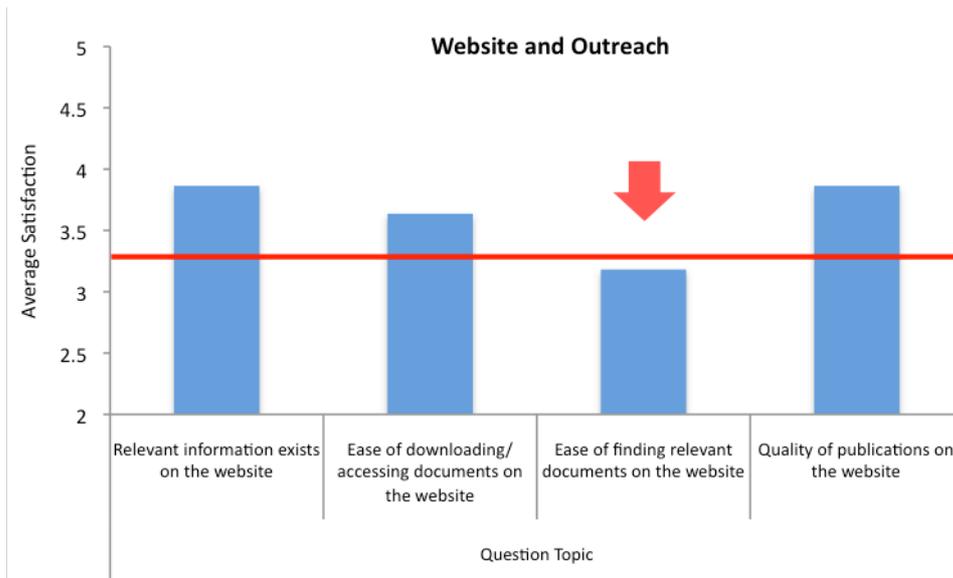


Figure 5: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards the Partnership Website and online resources. The ease of finding information on the website, due to structure and layout, was seen as a primary weakness.

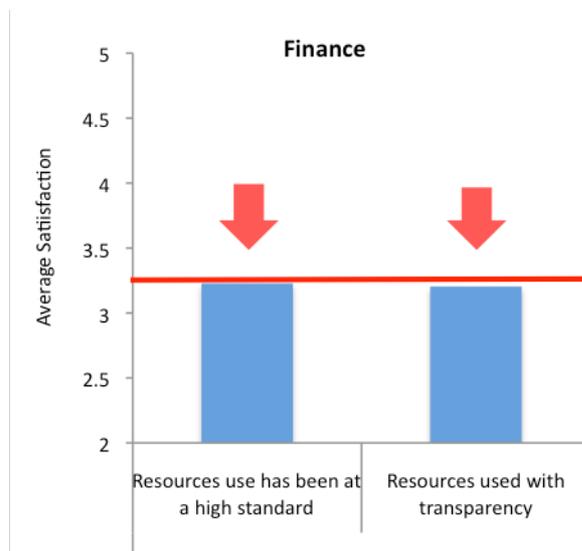


Figure 6: Average satisfaction of all Partners with regards to the use of Finances. Both the use of Partnership funds, and the transparency for how they are used, were identified as primary weaknesses.

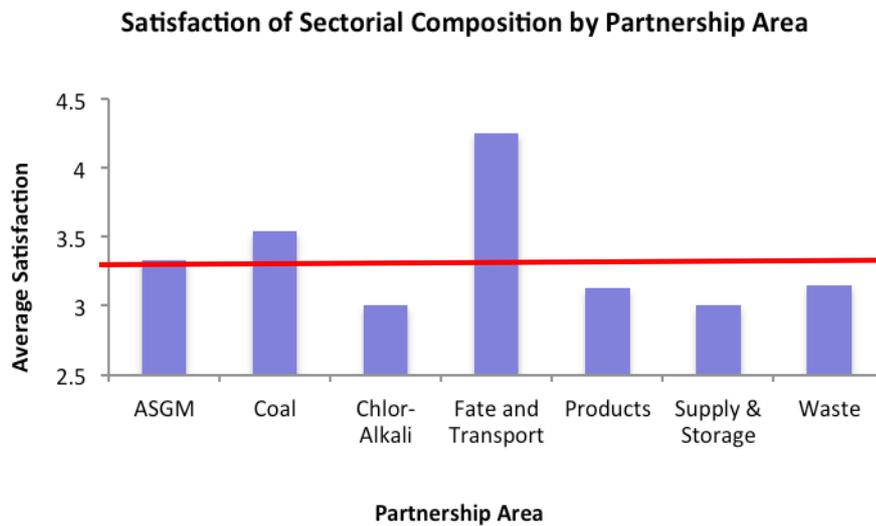


Figure 7: Average satisfaction of Partners with regards to the sectorial composition of their Partnership Area, where Partners have been grouped by Partnership Area.

3.2 CHALLENGES

Lack of representation of stakeholders from different backgrounds

Partners have shown a low level of satisfaction with regards to sectorial representation within their PAs. Of all the PAs, only Air Fate & Transport has high satisfaction with regards to the sectorial composition of Partners within their PA (above). In particular, Partners in Chlor-Alkali, Products, Supply & Storage and Waste have indicated their need for increased recruitment.

As indicated in Figure 8, the recruitment needs of PAs differ significantly. This is due to a number of reasons, which largely revolve around which stakeholders are the most likely to complement a PA's aims and objectives. Partners in all PAs have highlighted governments as the most desired sector for increased representation; 61% would like to see more governments. The main immediate focus for PAs seems to be governments, as they will be the ones who are required to fulfill their commitments to the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Industry follows as a close second (59%), followed by academia (45%). NGOs were not rated as highly (27%). Desire for "other" institutions, generally indicated through the qualitative section, was generally directed towards engaging Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Particularly in interviews, there has been considerable confusion surrounding why governments have not joined the Partnership, keeping in mind the promotion of visibility of the Partnership during the INC negotiations. Suggestions for why this

might have been the case included: a lack of visibility with regards to publications and online presence; a misunderstanding of the time/financial requirements of being a partner; not thinking that the Partnership is a worthwhile investment of staff time.

Another key point is that Partners, particularly in government, are often labeled as organisations instead of individuals. Once an active individual moves post, their previous organization is still listed as a Partner even if that organization no longer has an officer responsible for Partnership activity. This skews the way that representation is presented, as there are many Partners who are rendered inactive because of an

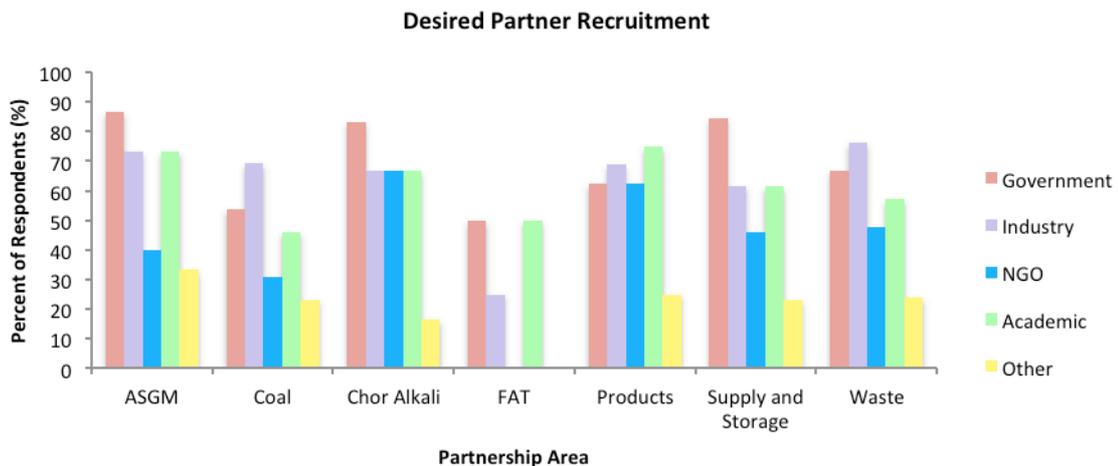


Figure 8: This graph shows which sector Partners would like to see more recruitment of, where Partners are grouped by their Partnership Area. The bars show the percentage of those within each sector (x axis) who would like to see recruitment in a given sector (colour coded bars). Effectively, this graph shows how each Partnership Area would like to direct recruiting.

individual leaving. There is currently no protocol in place to either engage the individual once they have moved or to have a legacy within the original Partner institution to ensure that the Partnership is not forgotten.

Many Partners have also indicated that the Partnership has very low visibility. There is not enough advertising of what the Partnership is, what it does and how one might become a Partner. Promoting the fact that the Partnership is free and that Partners can participate through an information-sharing role is essential when trying to attract new Partners from all sectors. Despite this being one of the key roles of the Partnership, it is unclear through the website and many publications that this is the case.

Need for better Partner-Partner communication

Considering the whole Partnership, communication is one of the Partnerships key weaknesses. Partner-Partner communication, specifically, is the greatest challenge to the Partnership, as it is the only question area where all PAs have performed below average. The Partnership should also, either through leads or UNEP, be facilitating communication between Partners, where necessary.

The qualitative results suggest that Partners find communication has been sporadic. Partners have been particularly dissatisfied with regards to communications of the latest activities and projects of both the Partnership and by other Partners. It seems

that there is not enough information sharing between Partners, particularly with regards to sharing experiences from successful projects.

Interviews gave very mixed results from between PAs. Although all Partners thought that communications needed to be improved, there were several PAs that need the most consideration. Some Partners in specific PAs have not received any correspondence in many months. Further to this, leads found that other Partners often would not reply to their correspondence. There seems to be communications problems in both directions, which may be due to a lack of clear responsibility roles between Partners, Leads and UNEP. Contact lists throughout the Partnership may need to be overhauled to ensure that active members are being contacted. Also notable was that some Partners mentioned that they were only in regular contact with other Partners who they had known before, or work with regularly in relation to their current work. A key goal of the Partnership is to have organic collaborations; how Partners communicate may need to be revisited in order for activities and projects to incorporate a wide breadth of Partners.

Poor website accessibility

Partners have found that the website has been difficult to navigate, and that relevant information is difficult to find. The website itself is reportedly difficult to find, even from the UNEP main page. Many Partners have said that they have to access the site through a search engine, and look for specific pages the same way. Although this may suffice for Partners who know what information they are looking for, this seriously disincentives the use of the main means of communication of the Partnership. Further, this means that prospective new Partners may not be able to find the Partnership, or may not be able to appreciate the resources that the Partnership has to offer.

Both qualitative results and interviews have suggested that useful information is often buried within other documents. Documents such as funding ideas, project wish lists, and topics of discussion at meetings are often lost in meeting documents. Much of this information is necessary when trying to form collaborative efforts and deciding priorities for PAs. There is no intuitive way of finding this information unless one is very well acquainted already with how the Partnership works. In addition to this, it is not clear how the structure of the website works. Information that is found in a certain place on one PA's webpage is not in the same place in another's. This has led some Partners to think that information may not exist, when it is cached somewhere unexpected. Finally, there is no way for Partners to upload their own material. This causes an information bottle-neck at the Lead level followed by the UNEP level, as UNEP staff is the only ones with administrative capabilities on the website. This inefficiency further disincentives Partners from sharing new information, as it is unclear if that information will make it to the web platform.

Low satisfaction with resource use efficacy and transparency

Overall, most PAs do not have a high satisfaction with regards to resource use (Figure 6). Qualitative results suggest that this may stem from two causes. Firstly, there seems to be confusion from Partners as to the primary functions of the Partnership. Some seem to think that the Partnership is meant to be a financing mechanism, and have ultimately been disappointed in the lack of opportunities to fund projects. Second, Partners have had very limited consultation in the processes to decide how UNEP resources are spent on projects.

Interviews also gave a general overview that elaborated upon the information in the survey. Perhaps stemming from a communication problem, some Partners are not aware of projects, particularly UNEP based projects, until the proposal has already been turned in or the project has been completed. There is a lack on consultation for how the funds should be allocated and used. Although the business plans have a general overview of the PAs priorities, Partners feel that there should be some way to have input on what projects are priorities at a given time before funding is allocated. Further to this, funds are not published anywhere; it is therefore difficult for Partners to see how money has been allocated, or for potential donors to see examples where investments have been cost effective.

3.3 STRENGTHS

Excellent quality and relevance of publications

Partners felt that the overall quality of Partnership Publications was very good. Publications have unanimously been identified as both helpful and relevant; particularly those that have a more practical application.

The quantitative section of the questionnaire indicated that Partners would like to see more publications. Practical information documents, guidance materials concerning Best Available Technique (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) were consistently mentioned as the most useful publications available. Further to this, it BAT/BEP were the areas that need to see the most expansion in order to fulfill the goals of the Minamata Convention of Mercury. Particular concern was given over the gaps in knowledge that were evident in some PAs.

The main constructive feedback was that some publications may be too technical for those outside of academia or industry, and was particularly difficult for use by those such as policy makers. Further to this, the fact that most publications are only available in English means that many stakeholders are unable to use publications. For BAT/BEP guidance, technical documents are not easily understood by those who speak English as a second language and have not had specialised training in the English terminology. Regarding model publications, Partners in the questionnaire and interviews mentioned the Process Optimization Guidance (POG) for coal plant mercury emissions that was released by the Coal PA. Likewise, ASGM has released

guidelines for governments with regards to formalising artisanal and small-scale mining and practical guides for miners.

Good and relevant information available to Partners through the Partnership

Partners have indicated that the Partnership is often a first point of call for information about mercury. Because the Partnership is a coalition of stakeholders that is housed by UNEP, information is perceived to be reliable and relatively robust. Partners also think, particularly on a PA basis, that information generally exists on the website or can be obtained through UNEP or another Partner.

Future role in the implementation and early ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury

Most Partners have been very positive about the Partnership having a role in future with regards to the implementation and early ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Partners have generally felt that the Partnership has a good network of Partners from different sectorial backgrounds to draw upon, which may be lost if the Minamata Convention Secretariat were the only body to work with implementation of the convention.

How the Partnership will progress in future was a subject of debate. Some Partners feel that the Partnership should have an implementation role, and work with its stakeholders to produce pilot and demonstration projects for governments and industry. Other Partners felt that the Partnership should develop a funding arm, so that funds can be made available to Partners to implement projects independently that help to implement the convention. Overall, Partners feel that having a Partnership is still important, and it is possible that the Partnership can serve a purpose that is different and complimentary to the work of the Minamata Convention Secretariat. The direction of the Partnership, however needs to be determined and well-defined as soon as possible.

4. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 PROPOSALS FROM PARTNERS TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

Revision of the Partnership structure

It is evident, particularly through interviews, that there problems are stemming from how the Partnership and its PAs are structured. No individuals can be held responsible for lower satisfaction in a given area; particularly considering the work load of those at UNEP and the fact that leads are voluntarily doing their work alongside full time jobs. Partners have highlighted a need for a clear definition of roles between UNEP, Partners and Leads in order to be sure that tasks are accomplished. Further to this, different PAs have had different types of successes. By giving leads, or if possible a greater number of Partners, an opportunity to meet regularly, the strengths of one area

could be translatable to others. It is consistent throughout the Partnership that Partners think that co-leadership schemes could be beneficial.

Considering the overlap between many PAs and the lack of collaboration, it may be worth seriously considering the structure of the Partnership. Many PAs have similar goals and overlapping processes that make projects that are exclusive to one PA often not inclusive of aspects of other PAs. For instance, many aspects of products, waste and supply & storage overlap, and yet collaboration to include all PAs is extremely rare. These overlapping goals are particularly evident when taking into consideration the objectives of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Further to this, the questionnaire has revealed that expertise in one area is often lacking in another. Several Partners have suggested considering merging PAs such as Chlor-Alkali, Products, Supply & Storage and Waste Management, it might be possible to use the expertise that is available more efficiently while simultaneously pooling available resources.

Facilitating the Minamata Convention was highlighted as a key aim; if the Partnership does not fill a complimentary role to the Convention, then it may face duplications of efforts, and a further deteriorating situation with regards to securing funds. Further to this, many PAs may be facing redundancy as their current goals are already accounted for in legally binding measures set out by the Convention. It has hence been suggested that an external consultant be hired in order to assess how the Partnership would be restructured in order to best facilitate the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Demonstration projects and best practice guidance may therefore be able to take a more holistic, product life-cycle approach to the mercury problem.

Improving communication and outreach

Communication between Partners is considered generally poor. This is true even within PAs. This may be due to a lack of clarity on roles. There is a need for a focal point for communication; whether this is the responsibility of Leads or UNEP needs to be clearly defined. Considering that Leads are working voluntarily alongside full time jobs, this may need to fall to the secretariat. It would be worth serious consideration as to whether hiring a dedicated communications coordinator with a formalised role would solve many of these problems. Tasks that need to be done better include over-hauling the website, gathering the latest information on what Partners are doing and sending it to the rest of the Partnership, alongside acting as the main focal point for communication and collaboration. Further to this, Partners have suggested considering regional networks. By having city (Geneva) or region based working groups by PA; face to face meetings can happen more often and may encourage collaboration.

Likewise, possible collaborations need to be facilitated, which has so far been relatively rare. There needs to be a way that Partners can find appropriate contacts depending on what they want to do (obtain/provide information, conduct/fund a

project, etc.). Partners have suggested having a web-based platform that could include information about the Partners, wish lists for projects, and contact details. Considering this, opening an online forum or platform where Partners can regulate their profile by themselves, could prove to be useful. Partners would be able to update their own profile, contact details and recent activities.

Following from this, respondents have highlighted that there is a considerable level of inactivity from many Partners. This may be because they play an observatory role, because they have joined just to obtain information, or because they have been unable to engage/ be engaged other Partners. Inactivity may be a problem because of poor communication. A suggestion to find out which partners are active is to have Partners re-new their membership once per year and simultaneously fill in a short survey on their activities within the partnership. This way, Partners who are no longer active at all can be removed from the system, and it can be determined which Partners fill observation roles and which have the potential to be engaged in activities and projects. This suggestion could also be incorporated into an online platform, where Partners would be required to take a short survey and update their profile at least once per year to keep their membership. Further to this, a Partner suggested that it might be worth considering membership “levels.” This way, those with an observational role or those who simply want access to information could be labelled as Members. Those who wish to have an active or implementation role could be labelled as Partners. This way there can be clearly defined roles and expectations for active members only; this may make contacting the right individuals easier, and may eliminate any disincentives concerning time commitments for joining the Partnership.

Improving representation in the Partnership

Partner recruitment is often a case of individual networking. Partnership Areas (PAs) need to collaborate in order to find and make the right connections; this may solve problems of unbalanced representation within PAs. As has been mentioned, restructuring PAs to have a person responsible by sector may encourage more active engagement of sectors that are not well represented in some PAs. Further to this, the Partnership is not very visible. Partners have suggested that publishing papers in industry journals. Advertising what the Partnership can do for organisations in targeted journals and online forums might be a way to have new organisations approach the Partnership. Advertising that information is available and is free would be a means by which to attract industry in particular. Partners have highlighted that stronger ties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury would certainly help, as would having any kind of platform on the Minamata Convention website so that individuals know what the Partnership can do for them. Having a link from the Minamata Convention website to the Partnership website at the least may help increase visibility and encourage recruitment, particularly from governments.

Improving resource use efficacy and transparency

Partners generally feel that resources have not been used very transparently. They feel that the way funds are handled at UNEP is unclear, and there is little to no dialogue with Partners for how money is used or which projects will be funded. Often Partners don't know about projects until they have already been approved or even completed. There needs to be a system where Partners are informed about how money is spent and on what activities. Partners would prefer a way by which they are consulted before new projects are decided upon and executed so that they have a say on how funds are best spent. This problem has led to low morale in many PAs. There have been further suggestions surrounding setting up a finance mechanism where funds can be earmarked to PAs, so that partners can have a say in how funds are allocated. Whether this is done in meetings, teleconferences or webinars would also be debatable.

4.2 PROPOSALS FROM UNEP TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

Revision of the Partnership structure

After completing the survey, co-leadership, or reorganizing the structure of Partners to allow for the delegation of tasks, may be considered in order to solve weaknesses. Leads are equipped with different skillsets; networking in particular with contacts from their works is a key asset. By delegating responsibility to several people, more can be done with regards to mobilizing partners and recruiting new ones. Depending on the focus of the PA, it may be appropriate to enlist new co-leads/officers that can help with getting scientific or industrial contacts/collaborators, or who can enlist the help of relevant NGO's for project implementation. Further to this, delegating these tasks to scientific/industry/government/NGO "officers" or "focal points" within PAs might relieve some of the stress from Leads, who are relied upon to do virtually all the coordination for their PA alongside their full-time jobs.

Improving communication and outreach

Having considered this feedback, stakeholder "mapping" may be a way by which to determine which Partners have the potential to be more active in the Partnership. By assessing which Partners are active and which would like to fill specific roles, the Partnership may be run more efficiently.

The Partnership website needs serious improvement. The fact that publications and information is generally considered excellent is almost completely negated by poor online accessibility; particularly for new and potential Partners. It should ideally be redesigned. Documents are generally also buried within the site. A standardized schematic of the site should be developed so that all documents are in the same place on a PAs page, relative to other PAs. Further to this, a huge amount of information is buried inside PAG documents. This information needs to be taken out and posted on

the site so that it is more evident where to find it. If an independent website is not possible, a tab-access page on the Minamata Convention on Mercury website could potentially be a solution. A single page where all of the key documents can be found may be very much beneficial, and having a platform that is linked to the Minamata Convention on Mercury would also boost the Partnership's visibility.

If a web-based platform were to be set up, the platform could relatively easily be linked to an automated system to give UNEP notifications of contact address changes. This would likewise provide a means by which the Partnership can determine why Partners are joining, what their current/recent activities are, and how/whether or not they are active. Finally, having a system where Partners can update their own profiles could be combined with an administrative position at UNEP, where posts are quality controlled and approved before going live on the site. This would reduce the pressure on Leads and UNEP for putting up new information, while ensuring that information is standardized and at a good quality before being published.

Improving resource use efficacy and transparency

Following from the feedback, it may be worth considering releasing how funds are spent within the Partnership to the Partners. This would engender more trust from the Partners, and exhibiting sound use of finances could encourage future funding. Things to be considered for release to Partners in biannual or annual reviews include administration costs and cost breakdowns for UNEP projects. Having this information available to Partners, in particular potential donors, means that they can determine whether projects have been cost effective. This may hence give donors more information to base decisions about what kind of projects should be replicated and funded.

5. Conclusions

Based on the above discussion, some conclusions can be drawn which may help the Partnership Advisory Group in planning the way forward:

1. Producing quality and relevant publications is considered to be the 'forte' of the Partnership. All Partners responding ranked this activity as the greatest strength and the Partners should continue developing and disseminating publications.
2. The Partnership has proven to be a good information clearing house. However, efforts should be directed towards making the website to be more easily navigated.
3. Partnership recruitment needs to be increased, including by:
 - identifying and "broadcasting" the value of participation of partners;
 - clarifying important information, e.g. financial implications for joining the Partnership, responsibilities of a Partner, how Partners contribute to the goals of the Partnership etc.;

- increasing visibility of the Partnership, including improvement of the Partnership website.
4. There is a need to map and review the roles and responsibilities of the Partners, Partnership area leads and UNEP secretariat.
 5. It would be worth exploring options for developing and implementing projects that balance the desire for timeliness and efficiency with a need for transparency and inclusiveness.
 6. The Partnership has a pool of experts from diverse sectorial backgrounds (discussed along with other strengths in the meeting document UNEP(DTIE)Hg/PAG.6/5: Thought starter on the possible direction for the future work of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership) that can assist Governments in implementation and early ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and should be promoted to convince Governments to join the Partnership.
 7. Communication within a Partnership area, among other Partnership areas and to stakeholders requires improvement. This issue is further explored in the meeting document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.6/7.