

# UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

## Supply and Storage Area

*Partnership Area Leads:*

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### Issue

Mercury is a natural element, thus can not be destroyed nor converted into another substance. Strategies to decrease the production, use, import, and export of mercury must be accompanied by the environmentally sound and secure short and long term storage or disposal of mercury.

### Objective

Minimization and where feasible, elimination of mercury supply considering a hierarchy of sources, and the retirement of mercury from the market to environmentally sound management.

### Strategy

In order to reduce the amount of mercury available in the environment, there is a need to minimise the global mercury supply, and to develop technologies for the environmentally sound storage and disposal of surplus mercury.

### Contribution to the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

The partnership aims at supporting countries' ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention, assists with the development of a common and cohesive framework to effectively reduce the circulating quantities of mercury. In this view, stabilization/ solidification can be an effective tool to reduce the availability of mercury.

The reduction of the global supply of mercury is an important way to encourage reductions in mercury demand. This is particularly important for uses, such as the artisanal and small-scale gold mining, which have limited regulatory strategies and effectiveness to reduce the demand.

Activities under this partnership area can be relevant to different articles of the Minamata Convention:

**Art. 3:** Mercury supply sources and trade

**Art. 10:** Environmentally sound interim storage of mercury, other than waste mercury

**Art. 14:** Capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer

**Art. 17:** Information exchange

**Art. 18:** Public information, awareness and education

**Art. 19:** Research, development and monitoring



Container for the safe storage of mercury for long periods of time, result of the EU Project MERSADE (LIFE06 ENV/ES/PREP/03).

### Outreach activities

The Supply and Storage Partnership Area maintains the communication with the Basel and Stockholm conventions Regional Centers to inform them about objectives, priorities and activities of the Area. The aim is to share

knowledge and expertise, identify regional priorities, possible collaborations and, eventually, to actively involve the Regional Centers in the mercury issue.

### **Featured projects**

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The Government of Uruguay held a National Workshop on "Stabilization Technologies of Mercury Containing Waste" in Montevideo, on 21-22 October 2014, and a Pilot Project for the treatment of two types of mercury wastes from a chlor-alkali plant was presented, using two different technologies:

- small volume of wastes with high mercury content: stabilization/ solidification in a sulphur polymeric matrix (National Technological Centre for Mercury Decontamination, CTNDM, Spain)
- large volume of wastes with low mercury content: stabilization with sulphur microcements (Cement International Technologies, Spain).

The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) within the Mediterranean Action Plan of the Barcelona Convention (UNEP, MAP) prepared the "Guidelines on BEPs for the environmentally sound management of Mercury contaminated sites". This document, elaborated with the technical direction of the Spanish CTNDM, will be presented for approval at the 2015 Meeting of the Contracting Parties of this Convention.

### **Future work to support implementation of the Minamata Convention**

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- Identification and characterization of possible new primary mercury mining that have started their activity after 2010, beginning of the negotiations of the Minamata Convention.
- Collaboration with industry plans for the ESM and storage of mercury; sectors: chlor-alkali, non-ferrous, gas production.

- Assess options and availability of infrastructures and techniques for the management, storage and final disposal of surplus mercury.
- Review regulations, and strengthen interagency collaboration in order to facilitate the implementation of export bans in additional countries or regions.
- Promote the replication of the 2014 project "Stabilization Technologies of Mercury Containing Waste", held in Uruguay.
- Promote transparency and traceability throughout the whole lifecycle of mercury, including trade and export, to address potential illegal sources of mercury supply.

### **Collaboration with other Partnership Areas/relevant stakeholders**

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- Chlor-alkali Partnership Area and the World Chlorine Council: phasing out of mercury cell chlor-alkali facilities.
- ASGM Partnership Area: reduction of mercury demand.
- Waste Management Partnership Area: techniques for the management of surplus mercury.
- Products Partnership Area: projects to reduce the use of mercury containing equipment and products.

### **For More Information**

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visit our website:

<http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/Metals/GlobalMercuryPartnership/>

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