

# PROGRESS REPORT 2020

*Overview of the Minamata Convention on Mercury  
activities*



**UN**   
environment  
programme



**MINAMATA**  
CONVENTION  
ON MERCURY

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# Foreword

When I think of the future of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, I am full of hope.

The Convention is a promise of a world where people and the environment are protected from the risks posed by mercury pollution. It not only presents a vision but also a concrete plan for how to achieve it.

In a future world, twenty or so years from now, excavation of mercury from the ground, which has been practiced for thousands of years, has ceased to exist.

Mercury is no longer used in most of our daily products and industrial processes.

All mercury excess, either from the decommissioning of industrial facilities or existing stocks, has been disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

Any new, currently unknown, major uses of mercury are decided to be efficiently addressed under the Convention.

Emissions of mercury are drastically reduced thanks to the phasing down of old industrial plants and the use of best available techniques and best environmental practices.

Strong global action on climate change supports countries in their implementation of the Minamata Convention goals, in particular regarding emissions.

Mercury is no longer widely used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Admittedly, achieving this goal is as challenging as a moon shot. However, the global community, through universal membership of the Convention, succeeds by engaging actors through the entire gold value chain.

Since there is no demand for mercury, there is no illegal trade.

And, of course, due to past pollution, legacy mercury is still cycling in the environment, but scientists can confirm that fish, other food sources and impacted species are now safe from mercury's harm.

This transformation to a better world is within reach and in the hands of the Parties to the Convention. I applaud all the Parties for taking on the commitment to make mercury history, for kickstarting the implementation of the Convention and for the political will to make it a success. And I thank all stakeholders for keeping the Convention a high priority and for their inspiring actions in the field.

This brief report helps illustrate the progress that our Parties, stakeholders and the Secretariat have made together this past year to put the pieces of this vision before us, and begin to make it happen.



**Monika Stankiewicz**

Executive Secretary  
Minamata Convention on Mercury

## Let's Start to Make Mercury History in COP-4

These times are special for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Important negotiations are coming up, such as related to the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26 UNFCCC), the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15 CBD) and the adoption of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-5) and the conclusion of arrangements for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, which will together define the direction to the future of our global environment. The Minamata Convention on Mercury is to hold the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Minamata Convention COP-4) in Bali, Indonesia, 1 to 5 November 2021.

It has been three years since the Minamata Convention on Mercury entered into force on 16 August 2017. Although relatively younger than other conventions, the Minamata Convention is as important as others. Why does the world pay particular attention to mercury? Mercury is among the top ten most dangerous chemicals. Mercury exposure can harm the immune system, brain, heart, kidneys and lungs of people of all ages.

The problem is that many in our society are not aware that mercury is dangerous. Indeed, mercury can be easily found everywhere. Some commercial products contain mercury, such as thermometers, light bulbs, batteries, cosmetics and dental amalgam. The exposure can cause illness, disability and eventually death. Exposure to mercury threatens our health. Since 1950s, millions of people have become victims to the mercury exposure around the world.

Considering the lingering danger of mercury, the world community took decisive action by agreeing on the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2013. The Convention aims at reducing and eliminating the use of mercury globally. As of now, there are 127 Parties that have ratified the Convention.

Indonesia is very committed to supporting global efforts in mercury reduction and elimination. Considering that mercury is a hazardous and toxic material, the President of the Republic of Indonesia issued a Presidential Regulation, No. 21 Year 2019, on the National Action Plan on Mercury Reduction and Elimination. With this, Indonesia is among the first countries to announce a national plan to phase out mercury. The Presidential Regulation sets targets of reducing the use of mercury in the manufacture sector by 50% and in the energy sector by 33.2% from the current levels by 2030, as well as of phasing out the use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector by 2025 and in health sector by end of 2020.



During COP-3 of the Minamata Convention in Geneva, November 2019, Indonesia was honored to be selected as host of the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-4) which will be held in Bali, Indonesia, 1 – 5 November 2021. The Government of Indonesia is fully aware that being a host needs a significant political, financial, social, and logistical commitment. In that context, Indonesia is committed to providing excellent facilities and ensuring security for a successful COP-4.

We should enhance our cooperation to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. Our commitments should remain strong, even in today's situation when the world is fighting a pandemic that greatly changes how we live. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia will maintain a close coordination and cooperation with the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Indonesia remains optimistic to be able to host COP-4 on the planned dates in accordance with health, safety and sanitary protocols. The COP-4 venue, Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC), is known to be a world class conference center. In response to the pandemic, BNDCC has implemented the Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE) measures to adapt to the new normal of the pandemic situation.

I am glad to witness that, despite the pandemic, parties are still hard at work. They have shown strong commitment to the implementation and enforcement of the Convention. One clear evidence is the fact that over 90 national reports on the progress in implementation had been received, reflecting a rate of nearly 80% for the reporting period. This strong reporting rate is a proof that the pandemic is not a burden to our collective commitment to eliminate mercury.

There are several pending issues which will be discussed at COP-4, including the review of Annexes A and B to the Convention, dental amalgam, custom codes, releases of mercury, mercury waste thresholds, and effectiveness evaluation of the Convention. Currently, experts from various regions work hard under three intersessional working groups schemes (review of annexes, mercury releases and mercury waste) to prepare draft documents to implement the Convention in more practical ways. Parties and observers will have the opportunity to contribute to these documents before COP-4.

Indonesia and other members of the COP-4 Bureau from different regions will work hard to reach consensus through dialogue during COP-4 negotiations. We will act as a "bridge builder" of different interests and positions. We would also like to ensure the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in COP-4, including civil societies, industries, local communities, academics, researchers and media. In coordination with the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, Indonesia will facilitate side-event discussions, exhibitions, and other activities where various stakeholders can voice their interest and showcase expertise and experience.

As President of COP-4, I would like to remind all of us that we have an obligation to ensure the health and wellbeing of our future generations. In that context, COP-4 is a strategic opportunity to act more quickly, practically and comprehensively to address the mercury problem. There will be more damage to the environment if we fail to act swiftly. Therefore, I urge the international community to do our best to strengthen the Convention. We must act now, not only to protect and preserve, but to improve the environment from mercury pollution. I believe that together we can create a sustainable life on Earth by making mercury history.



**Rosa Vivien Ratnawati**

President of COP 4 Bureau  
Director General for Solid Waste, Hazardous Waste  
and Hazardous Substance Management  
Ministry of Environment and Forestry  
Republic of Indonesia

*After just over three years since the Convention's entry into force, we count with 127 Parties working to implement it. This report presents a snapshot of selected activities carried out under the Minamata Convention on Mercury since the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties in November 2019 and until the end of 2020. The report has been prepared by the Secretariat to inform a wider audience of the ongoing processes under the Convention. We hope you find it useful and as full of hope as we do.*



# 1

## Scientific and technical activities

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is built, in no small part, on a wide range of technical and scientific knowledge. Its development and application, as well as key policy and advocacy work at international, national and local level, are fundamental for the successful implementation of the Convention everywhere. Some of its main intersessional activities from the past year are the following:

### 1.1 Products and processes using mercury (Review of Annexes A and B, dental amalgam, customs codes)

As set out in [Article 4 of the Convention](#), by 2020 Parties must take appropriate measures not to allow the manufacture, import or export of mercury-added products, listed in Annex A, including certain types of batteries and lamps, switches, cosmetics and others. Measures are also to be taken to phase down the use of dental amalgam. Annex B lists manufacturing processes for which Parties must stop using mercury or take measures to control the use and releases of mercury, pursuant to Article 5 of the Convention. These products and processes cover over 60% in the global use of mercury.



While actions are being taken to eliminate and reduce mercury use in the listed products and processes, the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties ([COP-3](#)) already decided to start the **review of Annexes A and B**. An ad-hoc group of experts, under chairpersonship of Mr. Darren Byrne (Ireland) and Ms. Gwenetta

Fordyce (Guyana), convened six online meetings and 10 group calls to collect and review new information on specific products and processes. The outcome from its [intersessional work](#), including the report on the availability, feasibility and environmental and health risks and benefits of mercury-added products and mercury-using processes, will be presented for consideration to COP-4.

Phasing down the use of **dental amalgam** (Article 4 of the Convention) is another important issue on mercury, since it covers 6% of the global use of mercury. COP-3 encouraged Parties to take more than two of the measures listed in Annex A, and requested Parties to submit information on the measures taken, as well as non-mercury alternatives to dental amalgam. The submitted information will be brought to the attention of COP-4. This work, which includes an overview of the economic, environmental and health risks and benefits, is currently being done in close cooperation with the [World Health Organization](#).

As requested by COP-3, the Secretariat has drafted a guidance document with possible customs codes that could be used by Parties to distinguish mercury-added products. Customs codes are numbers of six or more digits allocated to the goods traded internationally. The guidance document will also include examples of good practice of supplementing the use of customs codes with other control tools. This work is done in very close cooperation with the Mercury in Products Area of the [Global Mercury Partnership](#).



## 1.2 Mercury releases

Article 9 sets out that the Conference of the Parties is to adopt guidance on best available techniques and best available environmental practices (BAT/BEP) to address mercury releases to land and water from relevant point sources, and on the methodology for preparing inventories of releases.

A group of technical experts, established by [COP-2](#) in 2018, continued the work to prepare draft guidance on inventories, proposed categories of point sources and a road map for developing BAT/BEP guidance. The group met six times in 2020 under the chairmanship of Ms. Bianca Dlamini (Eswatini) and Mr. Greg Helms (United States).

The guidance is to support Parties to identify relevant point sources and control their mercury releases. It is expected that the COP-4 will adopt the inventory guidance and consider the road map to develop BAT/BEP guidance on releases.

COP-3 agreed on the definition of certain types of mercury waste and requested the group of technical experts established at COP-2, to work on the thresholds for waste contaminated with mercury and for mine tailings. The waste group, which is co-chaired by Mr. Andreas Gössnitzer (Switzerland) and Ms. Oluwatoyin Olabanji (Nigeria), met five times in 2020.

As requested by COP-3, the Secretariat was also working with the Global Mercury Partnership on guidance for the management of tailings from artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), for consideration and possible adoption at COP-4.

Work to update the guidelines for the environmentally sound management of mercury waste is currently underway under the [Basel Convention](#). In close cooperation between the two Secretariats, this update and the establishment of thresholds respond to the developing countries' needs for technical assistance on waste mercury management.

## 1.3 Mercury waste

Since mercury cannot be destroyed, and does not decompose, Parties are required to ensure that mercury waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner according to the [Basel Convention guidelines](#). To this end, Article 11 requires the Conference of the Parties to establish thresholds for defining mercury waste. Managing mercury waste is a long-term imperative of the Convention, and specifically recognized in almost all [Minamata Convention Initial Assessments](#) done by countries as a priority.



## 1.4 Exploratory studies on linkages to climate change and biodiversity

### Climate Report

Climate change and management of hazardous chemicals and wastes are key challenges that policy and decision makers are currently facing in their commitment to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Climate change affects the global cycle of mercury through the melting of ice and permafrost, increased forest fire and others. Common tools and information can be considered to address climate change and mercury pollution in a mutually benefitting way, such as emission inventories.



The Secretariats of the Minamata Convention and the [Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm](#) (BRS) Conventions joined forces to produce a report with scientific evidence and exploring links between chemicals and waste and climate change. The report will be released in 2021.

### Biodiversity report

Mercury impacts biodiversity hotspots and vulnerable ecosystems, compromising the ability of nature to support human life. One example is the impact of artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) on biodiversity. ASGM uses the greatest amount of mercury and also releases the greatest amount to the environment. Parties are making efforts to formalize this sector and bring it to regulatory control, supported by the [Global Environment Facility](#) as well as donors. These efforts also help combating biodiversity loss, land degradation and deforestation.

With mercury pollution and biodiversity loss being part of the broader sustainable development agenda, and in the context of the development of the global biodiversity framework, it became increasingly important to enhance

this interconnectivity, especially regarding policy collaboration, the lifecycle approach and targets and indicators among all four Conventions on chemicals and waste.

Therefore, the Secretariats of the Minamata Convention and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions worked together to [share information](#) and to develop an exploratory study highlighting the regulated pollutants and their impacts on biodiversity. Based on existing scientific knowledge, the sound management of these pollutants can effectively contribute to the [protection of ecosystems](#). The study will be released in 2021.



MINAMATA  
CONVENTION  
ON MERCURY



BASEL / ROTTERDAM / STOCKHOLM  
CONVENTIONS

# 2 Effectiveness evaluation

An effectiveness evaluation is fundamental to define the success, strengths and weaknesses of any treaty in achieving its objectives. The Convention provides for periodic reviews of its effectiveness according to Article 22, beginning no later than in 2023, and foresees establishing arrangements to obtain comparable monitoring data for this evaluation.

COP-3 invited Parties to submit their views on the proposed indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Minamata Convention. To support Parties in this effort, the Secretariat prepared a plan of work, which included holding dedicated online information sessions in September, following which Parties and others were invited to submit their initial views by 30 November 2020. The many submissions received are available on a [dedicated online workspace](#). In early 2021, the Secretariat will facilitate an [online exchange session](#) to further support Parties in the preparation of their formal submission of views by 31 March.

COP-3 also requested the Secretariat to draft the monitoring guidance, which is being done with expert consultants and identified Party and stakeholder specialists. The broader scientific community was also drawn in through online information sessions in [June](#) and [September](#), specifically through the [Global Mercury Partnership](#) and the [International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant](#).

In order to fulfill this goal, the Secretariat, in consultation with the COP-4 Bureau, prepared a [roadmap](#) and an [annotated outline](#) for developing monitoring guidance, and held the first [webinar with identified experts](#) on 15 September.

This draft guidance will be published on the website in early 2021 for comments and feedback, and the revised version is expected to be adopted by COP-4, where monitoring arrangements for the effectiveness evaluation will be further considered. The guidance will support the use of scientific monitoring data for the effectiveness evaluation.

As related activities, a review of monitoring methods for artisanal and small-scale gold mining sites is undertaken by the Secretariat in cooperation with the Global Mercury Partnership and funded by Norway, and the Secretariat plans to work on the drafting of a trade, supply and demand report, and an Article 21 synthesis report in 2021.



# 3 National reporting

Regular national reporting (Article 21) is one of the key obligations under the Minamata Convention. In the reports, Parties reflect on the measures implemented, as well as on their effectiveness and possible challenges in implementation, as [approved by COP-1](#).

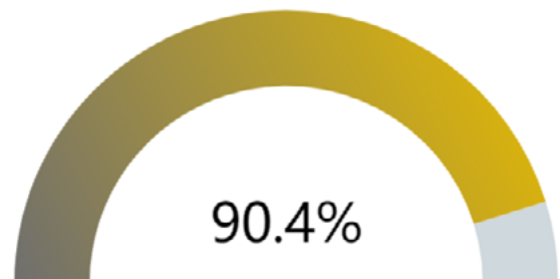


The **second biennial national reports** are due on 31 December 2021. This time, Parties will report on a much longer set of questions across the Articles of the Convention. To assist and support Parties for this reporting, the Secretariat is in the process of building on a fully-fledged online reporting system. The Secretariat is also preparing draft guidance to clarify the information that must be entered for the full reports as [requested by COP-3](#).

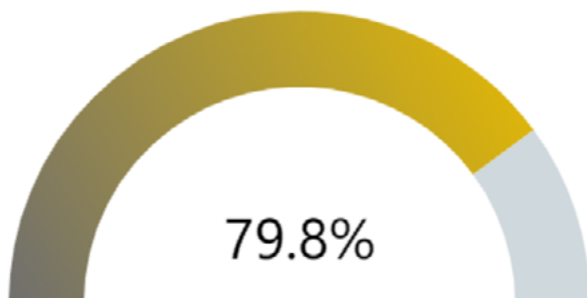
**National Focal Points** (Article 17) play a core information exchange role for and among Parties. All notified National Focal Points and their contact details are available on the website. The Convention enjoy a very high level of [notification of Focal Points](#) at 90.4%.

The **first biennial national reports** were due on 31 December 2019. At the time of writing, 91 national reports were submitted, representing a very high reporting rate (79.8% rate). All submitted national reports are available on the [Minamata website](#). Additional reports received will be posted. In the first biennial reports, Parties provided information on mercury mines in their territory (Article 3), information related to the trade of elemental mercury (Article 3), information on mercury stocks in their territory (Article 3), and on sites for final disposal of mercury wastes in their territory (Article 11). The reports received will be considered by the Implementation and Compliance Committee and COP-4 in 2021.

**National Focal Points Rate (27/11/2020)**



**Reporting Rate (02/10/2020)**





# 4 Legal and policy activity: Gender

The Minamata Convention has a special focus on the protection of vulnerable populations from exposure to mercury, “especially women, children, and through them future generations”, as noted on the [Convention text preamble](#) and several of its articles on health, public information, research and effectiveness evaluation. The principles of gender equality must be embedded in the projects delivered under the capacity-building and technical assistance programme of the Convention, as well as in [National Action Plans](#) submitted by Parties.

In 2020, the Secretariat made its approach towards gender more explicit through the development of several initiatives and products, which has been possible thanks to funding from Sweden:

The Secretariat is carrying out a **gender assessment** to gather relevant scientific, technical and policy information, specifically regarding women and children. The assessment will broaden the understanding of the impacts of mercury on these vulnerable populations and identify opportunities and challenges in mainstreaming gender in the implementation of the Convention.

The Secretariat is also developing **knowledge products** on gender, such as a synthesis report on major problem areas covered by the Convention, and communication products on gender and mercury. In this context, the Secretariat issued a [call for information](#) in November 2020 inviting Parties and interested stakeholders to submit scientific, technical and policy information on gender and mercury.

These knowledge products are aimed at supporting Parties in integrating gender in the implementation of the Convention through knowledge building and skill development as part of a continuous and long-term process. Parties will be empowered to define gender equality objectives, identify inequalities, take it into account when planning and implementing policies, and monitor progress and evaluate programmes from a gender perspective.

The Minamata Secretariat has also been developing a proposal for a gender roadmap with the objective of mainstreaming gender within its programme of work. To achieve this objective, the Secretariat will ensure that its programmes and projects are planned and implemented from a gender equality perspective, including capacity-building projects and programmes and cooperation with partners in the chemicals and waste cluster.



# 5

## Capacity-building and technical assistance

Delivering capacity-building and technical support to the Parties is one of the main duties of the Minamata Convention Secretariat. The pandemic restrictions in 2020 recontextualized these efforts, leading to engagement with the Parties, experts, donors and other stakeholders on how to best strengthen the Secretariat's ability to deliver more digital learning and knowledge exchange opportunities. One of the main results was [Minamata Online](#), a series of virtual sessions focused on providing a better understanding of the Convention's provisions, as well as policy and scientific aspects.

The role of the Secretariat, depending on resources, also includes collaborating with the many existing regional, sub-regional and national arrangements that deliver capacity-building and technical assistance to assist Parties in implementing their obligations (Article 14). Bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including public and private sector partnerships, have taken place worldwide to ensure that the Minamata Convention is properly and meaningfully implemented.

These are some of the Secretariat's main efforts from the past year.

### 5.1 Trade

The Minamata Convention covers the whole life cycle of mercury, and one of the key approaches to protect human health and the environment from mercury pollution is to establish control measures that limit its global supply. By setting restrictions on its trade and controlling its circulation, the use and demand of mercury is reduced, and with it its harmful impact.

Article 3 of the Convention addresses sources of supply and trade in mercury, and requires Parties to take measures to control this trade with other Parties and non-Parties. As part of the overall capacity-building and technical assistance programme, the Secretariat organized information sessions, several of them online, and workshops specific to the trade provisions of the Convention.

In 2019, the European Union [provided funding](#) amounting to 500,000 euros under its Global Public Goods and Challenges Programme for a project addressing mercury trade and mercury emissions. Under the umbrella of this project, the Secretariat organized that year a workshop in collaboration with the Government of Bolivia to exchange information on mercury trade among a key set of countries in the Latin American region and support the implementation of their obligations under Article 3. The workshop brought together Minamata National Focal Points, customs officers and other stakeholders from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru.



As follow-up to the workshop, the Secretariat signed in 2020 an agreement with the Ministry of Environment of Peru to contribute to a multi-donor project to strengthen institutional capacities for the management of seized mercury. The project aims to develop an integrated management system (including detection, seizure and post seizure processes) to promote traceability and reduce illegal trade, as well as exposure to mercury by customs officers and miners. With the support of the Secretariat, the Ministry will develop a protocol for customs officers on how to manage confiscated mercury in Peru. This protocol will also serve as guidance to other countries, especially in the Andean region, that face similar challenges.

## 5.2 Emissions

Mercury emissions know no borders, nor their toxic impact on the ecosystem and the human body. About 47% of global mercury emissions to air derive from point sources listed in Annex D of the Convention, coal combustion being the largest source. This is the reason why the Minamata Convention sets out in Article 8 the obligation to establish and maintain an inventory of emissions and to take measures to control emissions from these sources.



As part of the funding from the European Union, an Asian sub-regional workshop was convened focusing on reduction of mercury emissions from [coal combustion](#), in cooperation with the Global Mercury Partnership. Further activities are envisaged to address other Annex D sources, including non-ferrous metals and cement production.

Given the impossibility to travel to specific regions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minamata Convention Secretariat initiated in-depth digital sessions and panel discussions to support knowledge exchange on emissions as part of the [Minamata Online](#) series, including an [online session](#) on mercury emissions, projections and estimates.

[Sessions on mercury emissions](#) covered the existing global, regional and national emission inventories, and scenario analysis for future projection of chemicals pollution as well as other areas such as climate change.

Using the extended funding from the European Union mentioned above, the Secretariat is currently reworking and developing new electronic modules to enhance the

e-learning experience on several topics (such as trade and emissions) and bring the knowledge to all regions according to their differing sectors and needs.

## 5.3 Product 2020 deadline

2020 marked an important milestone: the [deadline to phase out](#) the manufacturing, import and export of mercury-added products listed in Annex A of the Convention, including every-day use products such as batteries, switches and relays, certain types of lamps and thermometers, cosmetics, pesticides and others.

The [Minamata Initial Assessments](#) carried out by many Parties revealed that the presence, use, and end-of-life management of mercury-added products was a significant concern in their countries, and identified them as priority areas in the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat facilitated an in-depth understanding of Convention requirements regarding the phase-out among Parties and stakeholders by organizing [online information sessions](#) on the 2020 deadline.

Furthermore, part of the [contribution of the European Union](#) on mercury-added products through the second project with the Convention, titled "Support to the implementation of the Minamata Convention through accelerating the intersessional processes", will support market surveys, as well as the development of training materials for policy-makers and customs and trade control officers, and pilot trainings at national or sub-regional levels.





Several mercury-added product activities were supported by the Convention's financial mechanism as well as those of other donors. Many of these activities benefit from strong collaboration with a wide range of expert members of the Global Mercury Partnership, the World Health Organization, regional and sub-regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions, and other organizations.

The capacity-building and technical assistance activities, both carried out by the Secretariat and by Parties and other organizations, were informed by and will inform the intersessional process on the review of Annexes A and B, will expand data available to Parties with respect to mercury-added products and their alternatives, and will improve their ability to report on their phase-out progress in their full national reporting on the implementation of the Convention scheduled for the end of 2021.

## 5.4 Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM)

The artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector is the largest user and emitter of mercury pollution in the world. It accounts for a third of all anthropogenic mercury emissions to air and affects over 15 million miners and their families.



As a main priority, the Secretariat further strengthened its coordination with the many entities who are committed to reduce mercury use in ASGM. This includes several Parties that completed their ASGM [National Action Plans](#) (NAPs), as well as the [Global Environment Facility](#) in its role as part of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention. Its pathbreaking programme, GEF GOLD, with its first set of country projects and global knowledge management, is now in full implementation

mode as [PlanetGOLD](#). The Secretariat recently [issued a blog post](#) covering the particular vulnerabilities of mining communities during the pandemic.

The Secretariat also participated virtually in several ASGM meetings and webinars, including inception meetings for NAP projects, regional meetings, and a webinar on "Women and Mercury: new ideas how to reduce the risk for women" focused on [gender impacts from mercury use](#), which are particularly evident in the ASGM sector. Furthermore, as requested by COP-3, the Secretariat sought comments from Parties and other stakeholders to inform the development of draft guidance on management of tailings from ASGM. Mercury-laden tailings can present health and environmental risks, and can be even more harmful when re-worked with cyanide to leach small amounts of remaining gold. Working with experts of the Global Mercury Partnership hosted by UNEP, the Secretariat will present draft guidance for consideration and possible adoption by COP-4.

## ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING



Produces up to **20% of world's gold**



Employs **15 million people** typically in remote **rural areas**



Involves **4 to 5 million women and children**



Takes place in **70 countries** and often in areas where there is **limited economic opportunity**



Releases **35% of all mercury** pollution to the environment



Is often considered as **informal sector**

# 6 Financial mechanism

The Minamata Convention's financial mechanism was established in its Article 13 to support developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. This mechanism is made up of the [Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF) and the [Specific International Programme](#) (SIP).

The GEF Council meeting in June 2020 approved a robust set of new mercury projects totaling \$112 million which benefitted from the Secretariat review and comment. The [December Council meeting](#) considered additional projects and agreed to launch discussions on the 8th Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund, to be concluded by April 2022. The Secretariat attended both meetings. During the December Council session with executive secretariats of MEAs, the [Executive Secretary reflected](#) on the status of negotiations and outlook for the upcoming COP in 2021, and on the financial needs of countries to fully implement the Convention consistent with [COP guidance](#) to GEF.

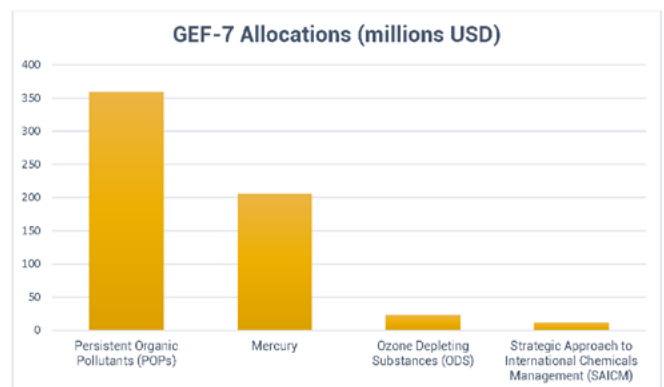
**\$206 million** GEF mercury investment, for 2018-2022, allotted to phase out, reduce and eliminate mercury

**\$112 million** approved by GEF for mercury projects so far

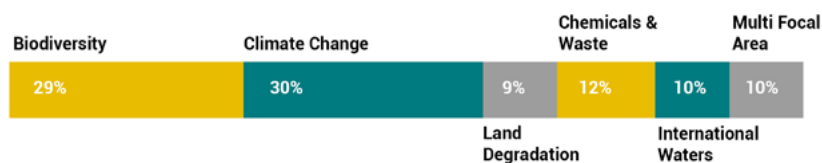
**\$5.6 million** contributed to the Specific International Programme so far

## 6.1 Global Environmental Facility

Regarding the Global Environment Facility, in 2020 the Secretariat strengthened its engagement and ongoing collaboration with the GEF Secretariat and implementing agencies in the project design phase, including through the GEF's Chemicals and Waste Task Force. The Secretariat brought its knowledge of the Convention and of Parties' specific needs to reinforce the impact of GEF mercury investments, which for the [7th replenishment period](#) (2018-2022) amounts to a total of \$206 million being allotted to phase out, reduce and eliminate mercury in priority sectors.



Portfolio distribution by resources to GEF-7 focal areas



## 6.2 Specific International Programme

Thanks to generous voluntary contributions to the [Specific Trust Fund](#) from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the [Specific International Programme](#) is implementing to date fifteen capacity-building and technical assistance projects for total funding of over \$3 million.

Administered by the Secretariat and overseen by the [Governing Board](#), the Programme welcomes contributions from the private sector, foundations, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academia, and civil society organizations, in addition to governments. The current Governing Board was confirmed by the COP at its third meeting and will serve until COP-4. Mr. Reggie Hernaus (The Netherlands) and Mr. Prasert Tapaneeyangkul (Thailand) were elected Co-Chairs for this term. The members of the Governing Board of the Programme are:

**For Africa:** Olubunmi Olusanya (Nigeria) and Aïta Sarr Seck (Senegal)

**For Asia and the Pacific:** Prasert Tapaneeyangkul (Thailand) and Mohsen Naziri Asl (Iran)

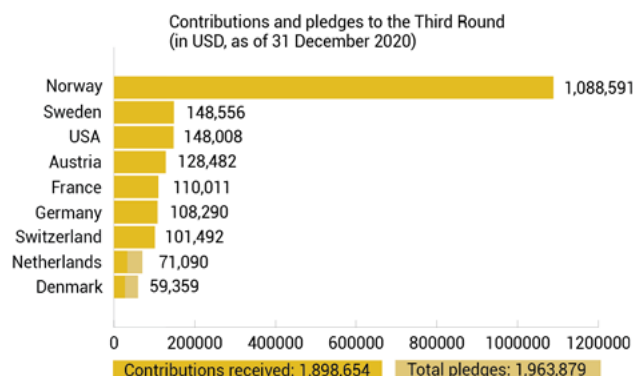
**For Central and Eastern Europe:** Kaupo Heinma (Estonia) and Anahit Aleksandryn (Armenia)

**For Latin America and the Caribbean:** Pedro Piacesi de Souza (Brazil) and Gina Griffith (Suriname)

**For Western Europe and Others:** Reggie Hernaus (The Netherlands) and Atle Fretheim (Norway)

Five projects funded in the [First Round](#) are being implemented by [Argentina](#), [Armenia](#), [Benin](#), [Iran](#) and [Lesotho](#), building their capacity to take on specific obligations of the Convention through activities such as phase-out campaigns on mercury thermometers, cataloging alternatives to mercury lamps, developing national guidelines on decommissioning mercury-cell chlor-alkali facilities, and training health facilities on mercury waste management.

In 2020, the Secretariat worked closely with the project managers of the ten projects selected by the Board for the [Second Round](#), namely Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Moldova, Nigeria, Peru, Sri Lanka and Zambia. The projects extend support to countries to work on a range of issues from mercury waste management to phasing out mercury-added products, strengthening the health sector, reducing the presence of mercury in vulnerable populations, improving mercury inventories, and developing “participatory model” approaches in artisanal and small-scale gold mining.



Following a digital Master Class on the Programme, the new Governing Board met in November 2020 to review the work of the Programme and the resources raised, and agreed to launch the Third Round of applications. The [Third Round is open for application](#) from eligible Party Governments from 15 December 2020 to 18 March 2021. The application guidelines are publicly accessible in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

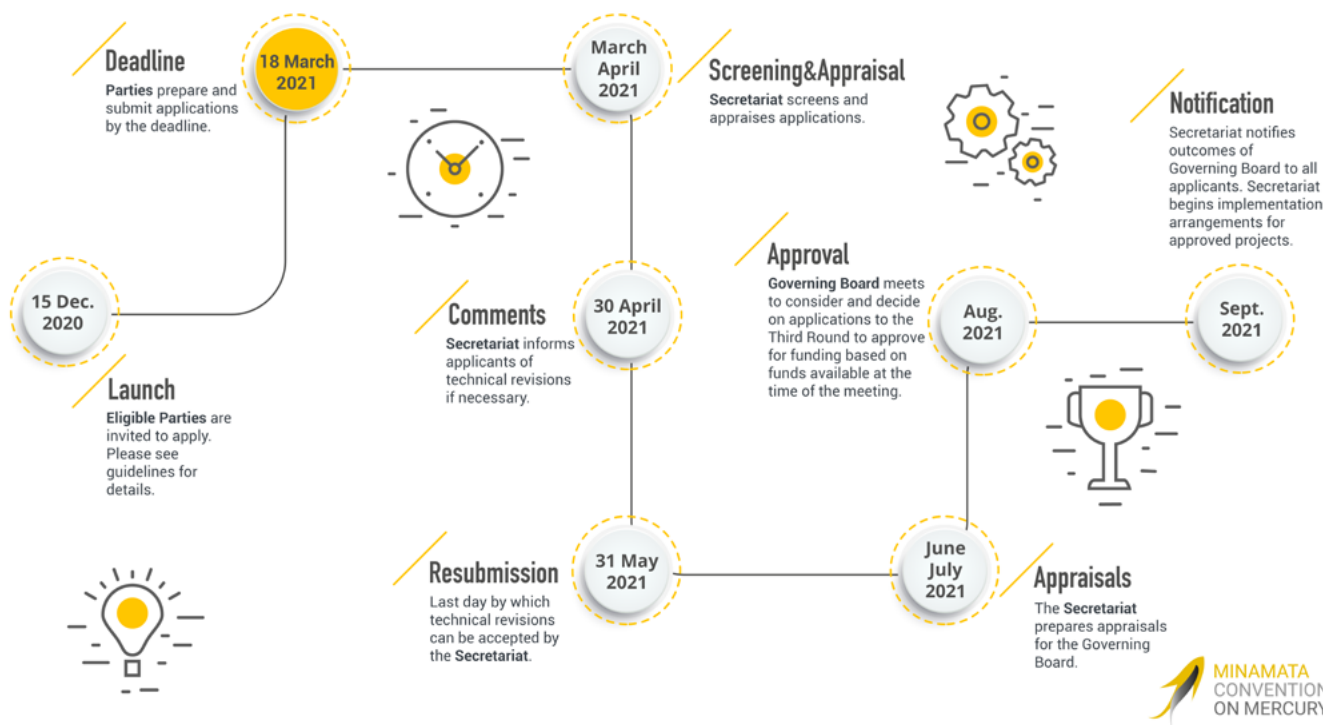
The Secretariat will continue engaging virtually with project managers through SIP Coffees, which are a series of periodic digital sessions to connect and lend support in an informal setting, checking in on progress made under the projects, addressing any challenges faced and exchanging information. The Secretariat will also share additional online training and awareness-raising materials with project partners as they engage stakeholders and take active steps to ensure COVID-19 safety in their project implementation.

For regular updates on the Specific International Programme, please check the FOCUS newsletter. The first edition was released in [November 2020](#), and the second in [January 2021](#).



### Specific International Programme

### Timeline for the 3rd Round of Applications





# 7 Communication and knowledge management

## 7.1 Communication

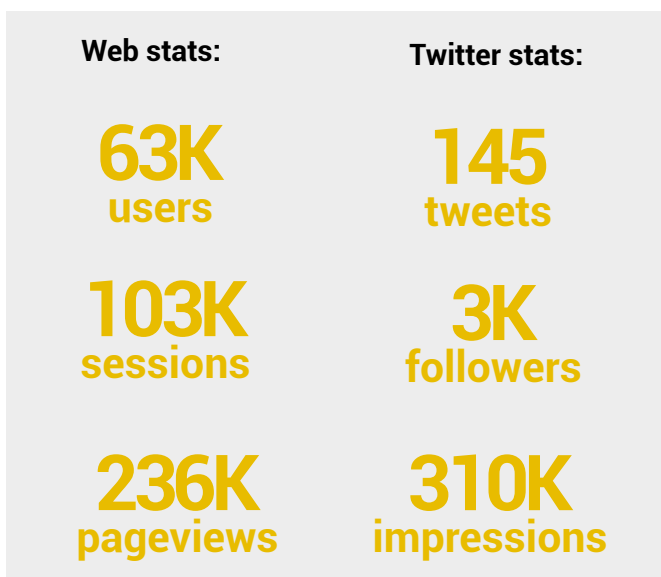
Among the main public information activities of the year, there were communication opportunities like the [Minamata Online](#), the [Specific International Programme](#), the [InforMEA e-learning course](#), and the third anniversary of the Convention. Also, the Secretariat participated in and covered several events that raised public awareness on mercury issues, including those with [Conservation X Labs](#), International Atomic Energy Agency, Global Observation System for Mercury and the [GENeva Environment Dialogues](#). International days, notifications by the Parties and the intersessional work towards COP-4 were all part of the main products prepared for outreach purposes, which included regular direct communication from the Executive Secretary to the Parties.

As a result, the website and social media audiences expanded, new publications were released (like the [Guidance on the Management of Contaminated Sites](#) in all 6 UN languages) and the cooperation with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), regional offices and UNEP grew closer, helping spread the messages and raise public awareness.

The [Convention website](#) included 52 news stories in English, Spanish and French, in addition to other regular updates to keep transparency and support the Parties and key constituencies. The website was visited by 63,000 users from all over the world, with 103,000 sessions and 236,000 pageviews. Besides the home page, the most visited content was the [Convention text](#), [Parties](#), [Intersessional work](#), [COP-3](#) and [Minamata Online](#).

The visual identity of the Convention was reviewed and updated in all 6 UN languages to modernize and maximize the impact of the messages of the Secretariat. Regarding social media in 2020, [Twitter](#) provided 310,400 impressions and a total of 3,062 followers (462 more than last year) for the 145 tweets (91 in 2019) crafted to inform and support the partners of the Convention that share the goal to #MakeMercuryHistory.

Like the Minamata National Focal Points, defining audiences was a continuous task of the Secretariat and an essential element for an effective communication strategy. The Secretariat built a structured database with over 2,500 segmented contacts engaged with the 14 campaigns sent out during 2020 with a 40% openness rate and 60% clicks on average, including the COP-3 report and the third anniversary of the Convention.



The anniversary (16 August) was a special occasion, a date that the Secretariat commemorated by launching during that week several products like the [COP-4 webpage](#), [Minamata Online](#), contributing to [Planet Gold](#) and [UNEP](#) with articles (the latter translated into [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [Russian](#)), and announcing the [collaboration with the European Union](#) to help on mercury-added products and effectiveness evaluation.

During that week, the Secretariat also produced [several videos](#), including messages from the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme Inger Andersen and from the COP-4 President, Ms. Rosa Ratnawati, as well as from people affected by the Minamata disease and from the Parties to the Convention that are working on and looking forward to COP-4.

## 7.2 Knowledge management

Effective knowledge management is a cornerstone of the Convention. It allows information exchange among Parties to support their implementation efforts at national and regional level, including lessons learned through collaboration. The Secretariat's current digital approach increases this capacity and fosters its monitoring.

After implementing the first online reporting system in all 6 UN languages for the short national reports, the Secretariat laid the foundations to raise a solid structure to support the future long reports, which include 43 questions on the different articles of the Convention. Additionally, it is currently developing a user-friendly long-term reporting system for the Parties that will set up the first full national report due by 31 December 2021.

The Secretariat extracted and made public on the Minamata Convention website all decisions from [COP-1](#), [COP-2](#) and [COP-3](#). It is now much easier to find, relate and track each and every decision the Conference of the Parties have taken so far.

In 2020, online collaboration among other MEAs became increasingly important due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat amplified its active participation in and expanded interoperability with [InforMEA](#) (the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements), making available the first national reports and all COP decisions. The Secretariat also spearheaded the development of a joint calendar and the initial steps to define dashboards.

The Secretariat is on track with revamping the Minamata Convention website, to be launched in time for COP-4. The future website will fully interoperate with InforMEA and feature data-driven information for enhanced user experience and accessibility. It will be hosted under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions. This synergy with BRS also involves the preparation for COP-4, covering the intranet and paperless solutions, in-session documentation, and support with the registration management system.

Another ongoing project ahead of the Conference is the participants registration. After careful investigation, the Secretariat teamed up with the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD) to bring into use KRONOS for registration and accrediting purposes. KRONOS is a flexible participant management system widely used by other MEAs that can, for example, serve online and hybrid meetings.



# 8

## Minamata Online

In 2020, with half of the world's population asked to stay at home to prevent the spread of the pandemic, the Minamata Secretariat kickstarted [Minamata Online](#), a new series of digital engagement sessions. From September to December, these webinars provided an opportunity for government officials, scientists, NGOs, and other stakeholders to explore the Minamata Convention's provisions, as well as policy and scientific aspects.

The webinars, designed to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, economic and legal information, including best practices at national and international level, were arranged according to three streams: implementation review and support, mercury science, and COP-4 preparations.

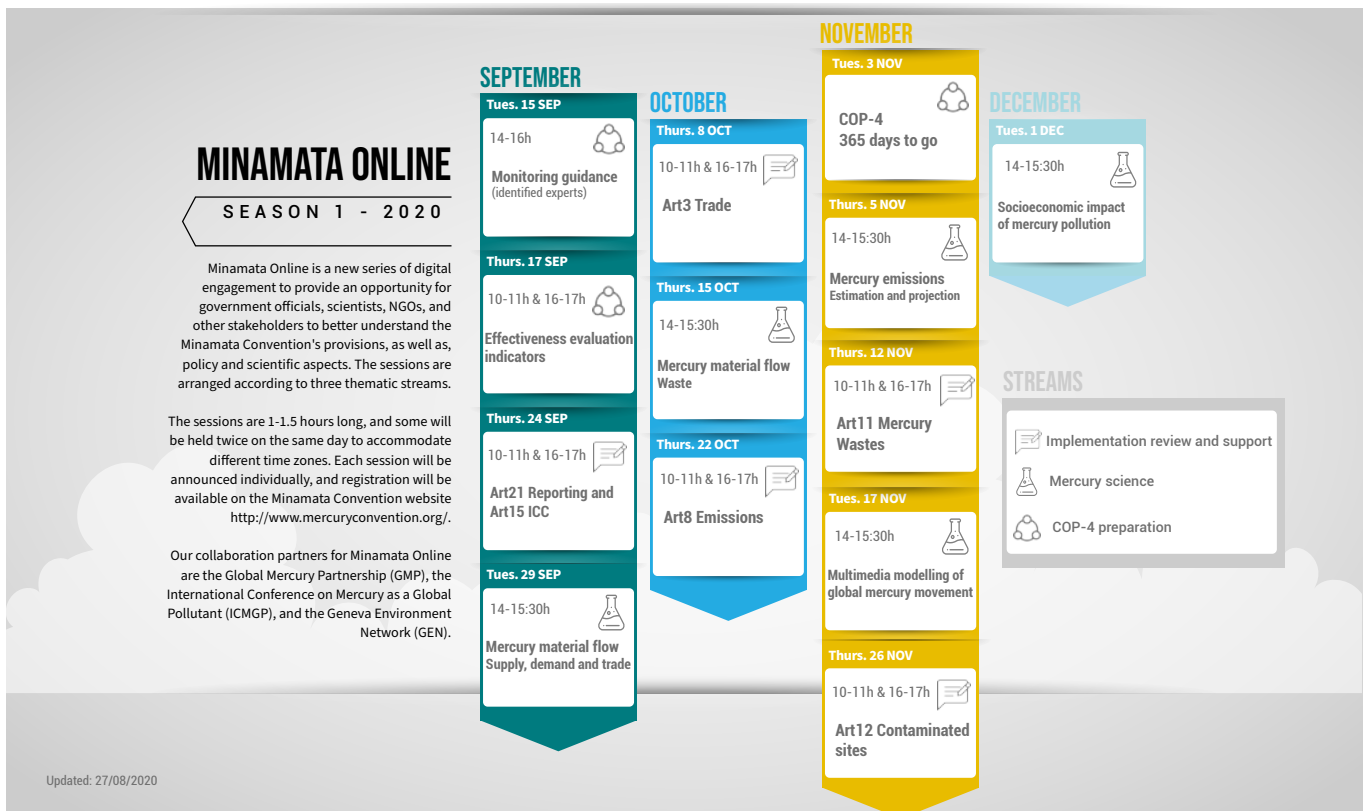
The 13 sessions, which were open access at no cost, lasted 1-1.5 hours each and sometimes were held twice on the same day to accommodate different time zones. In its entirety, the sum of hours of the series amounted to one full day of sessions (more than 23 hours) and a total attendance of over 1,700 participants from all over the world.

Collaboration partners for specific sessions were the [Global Mercury Partnership](#) (GMP), the [International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant](#) (ICMGP), and the [Geneva Environment Network](#) (GEN). In total, Minamata Online counted with the expertise and knowledge of around 50 panelists from the entire spectrum of mercury-related areas, institutions and projects.

This programme was built on the pilot sessions on mercury-added products held in July: the webinars on [the 2020 deadline for mercury-added products](#) and on the [intersessional work on products and processes](#).

An overview of the 2020 season's calendar, including the presentations and video recordings of the sessions, is publicly available on [our website](#).

A short survey to improve and build on our sessions, topics and overall structure of the series was shared among our member Parties and interested stakeholders, and it will be followed by a second season of Minamata Online in 2021.





# 9

## International cooperation and coordination

International cooperation and coordination with relevant bodies aim to enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention by ensuring consistency and coherence, sharing experiences and approaches, and increasing the efficiency of resources and experiences. The Convention states that the Conference of the Parties should promote cooperation and exchange of information with competent international organizations and inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies (Article 23). Article 24 indicates that the Secretariat shall coordinate with secretariats of relevant international bodies, particularly with other chemicals and waste conventions.

Decision [MC-1/11](#) requested that the Secretariat continues to cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with other relevant actors, including the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the relevant units of the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) in order to make full use of relevant experience and expertise. In line with [MC-3/11](#) the Secretariat has continued to cooperate as appropriate on relevant administrative, programmatic, technical assistance and technical matters.

In 2020, the Secretariat engaged in a range of activities which encompassed promoting knowledge on mercury issues and the Minamata Convention in the UN system, like the [High Level Political Forum](#), bringing Minamata Convention issues into the UN Environment Programme's processes including the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the MEA Management Team Meetings, the [MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative](#), as well as the UNEP Programme of Work and [Medium Term Strategy](#), engaging on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) as well as participating and contributing to the [UN Environment Management Group](#) (EMG).

The Secretariat is also following the meetings and discussions to put in place future arrangements for the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. The Secretariat is also contributing to the [post-2020 biodiversity process](#), both through input through UNEP and as part of the [Bern Process](#). Furthermore, the COP-4 President has also been invited to the Bern Process and has been represented by a Bureau member in this regard.



# 10 Financial contributions to the Convention

The Minamata Convention counts with three trust funds: the General Trust Fund to provide financial support to the work of the Convention Secretariat; the Special Trust Fund for the Secretariat's activities regarding capacity-building and technical assistance, among others; and the Specific Trust Fund for the Specific International Programme. The full status of contributions to all three trust funds is published on the [Minamata website](#) on a monthly basis.

During 2020, the following estimated contributions were received:

- The contributions for the General Trust Fund, including for 2020, prior years and future years, was: \$2,819,717.
- The contributions for the Special Trust Fund: \$1,335,961.
- For the Third Round of the Specific Trust Fund, including pledges: \$1,963,879.



Timely receipt of contributions to the General Trust Fund is important for a healthy cash balance of the Convention to ensure the needed liquidity to implement the Convention's programme of work. For the other two trust funds, the contributions assisted with the further implementation of capacity-building and technical assistance programme, as well as supported the [Specific International Programme](#).

# 11 Secretariat's Office

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat started working, from March 2020 onwards, largely remotely and embraced digital working. To ensure both safety and support to the Parties, expert working groups and Bureau meetings were moved online. The area of office maintenance, which includes operating costs and IT services, was reviewed and updated on a regular basis to allow the Secretariat a smooth transition to teleworking. Involving appropriate software, trainings and procedures according to UNEP guidance, the Secretariat successfully managed this transition, ensuring that the delivery of the 2020 programme of work continued to be implemented.

The Secretariat worked, in coordination with UNEP and the Secretariats of other MEAs, on a study exploring options, opportunities and barriers for continuing intergovernmental cooperation in a virtual setting. This common efforts included the exchange and sharing of experiences among MEAs on modernizing environmental diplomacy. Also, in order to reduce the carbon footprint, the Secretariat started creating virtual workspaces for its intersessional work and provided some guidelines and instructions for organizing online meetings.

These instructions, targeted to both internal staff and external partners, helped improve the digital skills of the Secretariat as well as foster a close cooperation among other MEAs.

The staff members were also a priority for the Secretariat. The addition of new personnel and the needs of the Convention were in focus: in 2020, almost all 13 positions available by core funding and programme support costs were filled, including 9 positions on a fixed-term basis, with the remaining two in process to be filled by early 2021. This led to the Secretariat increasing and solidifying a stable team to assist with the mandate of the Minamata Convention, its activities and upcoming COP-4.





# 12 About the Minamata Convention

The [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#) is a global treaty designed to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury. It was agreed and adopted in 2013, and it entered into force on 16 August 2017. Three years later, it counts with 128 signatories and 127 ratifications.

Named after the place in Japan where, in mid-twentieth century, thousands of people suffered mercury poisoning symptoms that became known as the “Minamata disease”, the Convention aims to draw attention and fight toxic mercury.

Controlling the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury throughout its lifecycle has been a key factor in shaping the obligations under the Convention, which include a ban on new mercury mines and the phase-out of existing ones, the phase-out and phase down of mercury use in a number of products and processes, control measures on emissions to air and on releases to land and water, and the regulation of the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.

As already covered, the Minamata Convention counts with a [financial mechanism](#) set up to support developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention, which is composed of the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund and the Specific International Programme. The Convention also counts with an [Implementation and Compliance Committee](#) as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, whose goal is to promote the implementation of, and review compliance with, all the provisions of the Convention.

The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-4) to the Minamata Convention, which is held every two years, is scheduled to take place from [1 to 5 November 2021 in Bali, Indonesia](#).

2020 edition

## THE FUTURE WE WANT MINAMATA CONVENTION

“ This multilateral environmental agreement is one of the world’s youngest, and like any youngster it holds massive potential. Everyone on the planet is exposed to mercury: only concerted, united action through this Convention and all of its allies can stop this toxic heavy metal endangering human and environmental health. ”  
Inger Andersen, UN Environment Executive Director



MULTILATERALISM MAKES MERCURY HISTORY

\* This list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather a small sample of the Convention's multilateral work.



mercuryconvention.org



**MINAMATA**  
CONVENTION  
ON MERCURY

## **Progress Report 2020**

February 2021

[www.mercuryconvention.org](http://www.mercuryconvention.org)