

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Commodity-Grade Mercury

Current International Context



Commodity-Grade Mercury Stakeholder Meeting
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Purpose

- Identify ongoing international programs on mercury that relate to supply, demand, and trade.
- Discuss U.S. efforts to participate in international efforts to reduce global demand.



Overview

- Partnership Efforts to Reduce Global Mercury Demand
 - Mercury Reduction in Products
 - Mercury Reduction in the Chlor-alkali Sector
 - Mercury Management in Artisanal & Small-Scale Gold Mining
- European Commission Actions
 - Proposed Legislation to Ban Exports of Mercury and Store Excess Mercury
- 2007 United Nations Environment Program Governing Council Decision



Partnership Efforts to Reduce Global Mercury Demand

- Guided by UNEP Governing Council decisions 23/9 and 24/3.
- U.S. supports reductions in demand globally through the Global Partnerships for Mercury Reduction.
- U.S. has been a strong supporter of partnership efforts under the UNEP Global Mercury Program.
- The partnership approach aims for immediate, tangible mercury reductions and effective actions by leveraging:
 - Resources
 - Technical expertise
 - Technology transfer
 - Information exchanges



Partnership Efforts to Reduce Global Mercury Demand (cont'd)

- Three of the existing global mercury partnerships focus on reducing demand:
 - Mercury Reduction in Products
 - Identifies and implements successful approaches for reducing or eliminating mercury in products where there are effective substitutes.
 - Mercury Reduction in the Chlor-alkali Sector
 - Promotes the reduction or elimination of global mercury releases through the adoption of best management practices or through conversion to non-mercury cell technology.
 - Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining
 - Reduces human health and environmental impacts associated with the use of mercury in artisanal gold mining by working with mining communities and small-scale gold producers.



European Commission Actions

- European Commission proposed legislation to ban the export of commodity mercury by 2011.
 - The EC expects this legislation to be passed.
- Also, starting in 2011, mercury no longer used in the chlor-alkali industry as well as mercury obtained from the purification of natural gas or production of non-ferrous metals would have to be safely stored.
 - Storage would possibly be in underground salt mines adapted for waste disposal.



United Nations Environment Program Governing Council Decision 24/3 IV

- Builds on 2005 United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Governing Council decision 23/9 IV, which called for:
 - Reduce risks of mercury, including through a partnership approach;
 - Improve information on mercury, including through collaborative efforts to inventory global mercury uses and releases.
- 2007 UNEP Governing Council decision 24/3 IV calls for:
 - Commitments to increase efforts to reduce global releases and risks;
 - Increased data collection, analysis, and reporting to Executive Director;
 - Strengthening intergovernmental and UNEP partnerships; and
 - Establishment of ad hoc working group to explore viability of voluntary measures and international legal instruments.



Commits to

- Increased efforts to reduce global risks from releases of mercury taking into account the following priorities:
 - To reduce atmospheric mercury emissions from human sources;
 - To find environmentally sound solutions for the management of waste containing mercury and mercury compounds;
 - To reduce global mercury demand related to use in products and production processes;
 - To reduce the global mercury supply, including considering curbing primary mining and taking into account a hierarchy of sources;
 - To find environmentally sound storage solutions for mercury;
 - To address the remediation of existing contaminated sites affecting public and environmental health; and
 - To increase knowledge on areas such as inventories, human and environmental exposure, environmental monitoring and socio-economic impacts.



The decision urges Governments to

- Gather information on risks associated with **supplies** of mercury via:
 - Reduced reliance on primary mercury mining, emphasizing recovered mercury as a substitute;
 - Options and solutions for the long-term storage of mercury;
 - Regional activities to improve mercury import/export data and enforcement of customs control; and
 - The market and socioeconomic effects of the aforementioned activities.
- Develop and analyze options for **trade and supply** of mercury via:
 - Curbing primary mining production; and
 - Environmentally sound storage.



Requests reporting on

- Atmospheric emissions
 - Best available data on mercury emissions and trends by country, region, and sector, as well as applicable market forces and regulatory mechanisms;
 - Current results from global modeling and other resources on the contribution and impact of regional emissions; and
 - Sector-based best practices for reducing mercury emissions.
- Site-based contamination
 - Information on:
 - Extent of contaminated sites, as well as associated environmental and public health risks;
 - Environmentally sound mitigation options and associated costs; and
 - Contribution of contaminated sites to global releases.



Requests strengthening UNEP partnerships by

- Development of overarching framework;
- Organization of partners and stakeholders;
- Expansion of number and scope of partnerships to include new, growing or related sectors (e.g., vinyl chloride monomer production, non-ferrous metals mining, cement production, and waste combustion);
- Enhance artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership via:
 - Increased cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 - Exploration of innovative market-based approaches
 - Dissemination of alternative capture and recycling technologies
- Endeavour to secure adequate funds for the Global Mercury Partnership efforts.



Establishes an ad hoc working group composed of Governments, regional economic integration organizations; and stakeholder representatives to

- Review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments;
- Consider the priorities set forth in Paragraph 19 concerning efforts to address the global challenges to reducing risks from releases of mercury.