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Global Mercury Partnership
Partnership Advisory Group
First meeting
Geneva, 31 March–2 April 2009

Report of the Partnership Advisory Group on the work of its first meeting

1. The first meeting of the Partnership Advisory Group of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Mercury Partnership was held at the Varembé Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland, from 31 March to 2 April 2009.

Background

2. In its decision 23/9 the Governing Council of UNEP called for the establishment of partnerships between Governments and other stakeholders as one means of reducing the risk to human health and the environment posed by the release of mercury into the environment. Subsequently, in its decision 24/3 IV, the Council, while acknowledging the progress made since 2005, recognized that efforts thus far to reduce those risks had not been sufficient. It accordingly, among other things, requested the Executive Director to strengthen partnerships under the UNEP mercury programme through a number of measures including the development, in consultation with other stakeholders, of an overarching framework for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. The decision called for the Executive Director to consult with partners and other stakeholders and for the framework to provide for the development of partnership business plans, goals and operational guidelines.

3. Pursuant to decision 24/3 IV the Executive Director of UNEP developed a draft overarching framework and presented it to partners and other stakeholders at a meeting that took place from 1 to 3 April 2008 in Geneva. Following that meeting the Executive Director finalized the overarching framework and presented it to the UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session (16–20 February 2009). The Governing Council, in its decision 25/5, commended the Global Mercury Partnership as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury and welcomed the creation of the overarching framework.

4. The overarching framework contains in an annex operational guidelines that govern the operation of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. Section 3 of the guidelines provides for the creation of the Partnership Advisory Group. Consisting of up to 25 members representing Governments, regional economic integration organizations and major groups and sectors, the Group is to meet at least annually. Its functions and responsibilities, specified in paragraph (f) of section 3, are:

(a) To encourage the work of the partnership areas consistent with the overall goal and operational guidelines of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership;

(b) To review the partnership area business plans in order to advise the partnership areas on the consistency of their business plans with the overall goal and the operational guidelines of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership;

(c) To report to the Executive Director of UNEP on overall progress;

(d) To communicate overarching issues and lessons learned while promoting synergy and collaboration across partnership areas;

(e) To report on activities undertaken within the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

I. Opening of the meeting

5. The meeting was opened at 10.10 a.m. by Mr. Per Bakken, Head, Chemicals Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP Chemicals). He noted that the meeting was taking place at an opportune moment and in a spirit of optimism engendered by the recent adoption by the UNEP Governing Council of decision 25/5, which, in addition to reiterating support for the Global Mercury Partnership, called for the establishment of a legally binding instrument for responding to the global challenges posed by mercury. The decision contemplated that the instrument to be adopted could allow for both binding and voluntary approaches to make important contributions to the management of mercury. Thus, and because such approaches were needed as the vehicles for immediate action pending adoption of a legally binding instrument, partnerships would continue to play a vital role. Progress to date had been good, as evidenced by the adoption of six partnership area business plans, but much remained to be done. He suggested that in conducting their work the members of the Group consider not only how partnership activities might achieve the goals and objectives of the Global Mercury Partnership but also how they might contribute to and inform the negotiations to come on the terms of the legally binding instrument.

II. Organization of work

A. Election of a chair

6. The Group elected by acclamation Ms. Abiola Olanipekun (Nigeria) as its Chair.

B. Adoption of the agenda

7. At its opening session the Group adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda set out in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/1:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organization of work.
   (a) Election of a chair;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Organization of work.
3. Review of overall progress, including status of partnership areas.
4. Consideration of overarching issues and lessons learned.
5. Other matters.
6. Adoption of the report.
7. Closure of the meeting.

C. Organization of work

8. The Group agreed to conduct its work in plenary sessions and in small breakout groups. The Group agreed to work from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. each day, subject to adjustment as needed.

D. Attendance

9. The meeting was attended by the following members of the Partnership Advisory Group: Ms. Marianne Bailey (Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America), Mr. Michael Bender (Zero Mercury Working Group), Mr. Ludovic Bernaudat (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), Ms. Maria Doa (United States Environmental Protection Agency), Ms. Cristina Echavarria (Alliance for Responsible Mining), Ms. Gabi Eigenmann (Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland), Ms. Elisabeth Fadum (Pollution Control Authority of Norway), Ms. Alessandro Fino (CNR–Institute for Atmospheric Mercury), Ms. Susan Gardner (Department of State of the United States of America), Ms. Grace Howland (Environment Canada), Mr. Xiaodong Jian (Ministry of Environment of China), Mr. Wojciech Jozewicz (Arcadis U.S., Inc.), Mr. Joshua Karliner (Health Care Without Harm), Ms. Susan Keane (Natural Resources Defense Council), Ms. Joy Leaner (Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning of South Africa), Ms. Abiola Olanipekun (Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria), Mr. Gopal Krishan Pandey (Ministry of Environment and Forests of India), Ms. Alejandra Salas (Environmental National Commission of Chile), Mr. Gernot Schnabl (Directorate-General for Environment of the European Community), Ms. Lesley Sloss (International Energy Agency Clean Coal Centre), Mr. Gustavo Solorzano (National Centre for Environmental Research of Mexico), Mr. Masara Tanaka (Tottori University of Environmental Studies), Mr. Gustavo Tavares da Costa (Ministry of Environment of Brazil), Mr. Kevin Telmer (Artisanal Gold Council) and Mr. Zhuo Yuqun (Tsinghua University, China).

10. The following States were represented at the meeting as observers: Belgium, Germany, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea and the United States of America.

11. The following individuals and organizations attended or were represented at the meeting as observers: Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Communities and Small-scale Mining Initiative, Concorde East/West Sprl, Euro Chlor, FDI World Dental Federation, Mr. Yves Guibert, Institute for Atmospheric Pollution, Kyrgyz Mining Association, Mr. Gilles Labarthe, Transparence, S.A., United Nations Institute for Training and Research, World Health Organization, World Medical Association and Zoï Environment Network.

III. Review of overall progress, including status of partnership areas

IV. Consideration of overarching issues and lessons learned

A. Presentation on UNEP Governing Council decision 25/5

12. As a prelude to the Group's consideration of agenda items 3 and 4 the representative of the secretariat, at the request of the Chair, described in some detail the decision adopted by the UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session on chemicals management, including mercury, in which the Council called for the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on mercury, and its significance for the work of the Group.

13. Decision 25/5, he said, had created a new dynamic for the Global Mercury Partnership in that it explicitly recognized the value of partnerships and other voluntary approaches in the management of mercury both before and after adoption of the legally binding instrument. Thus in paragraph 20 of the decision the Governing Council commended the creation of the Global Mercury Partnership as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury, welcomed the creation of the Partnership's overarching framework and endorsed the continued participation of UNEP in the Partnership, while in paragraph 25 it explicitly recognized that the legally binding instrument could include both binding and voluntary approaches. He also said that the Partnership, as the vehicle for immediate action on mercury, would likely play a key role in providing information vital to the preparation of a report by the Executive Director called for in paragraph 29 of the decision on "various types of mercury-emitting sources" and "current and future trends of mercury emissions". That report would provide an analysis and assessment of "the costs and the effectiveness of alternative control technologies and measures" for the benefit of the intergovernmental committee that would negotiate the legally binding instrument. He noted too that the decision called for work on negotiating the legally binding instrument to commence in 2010 and to conclude by 2013, in time for the twenty-seventh regular session of the Governing Council. As there would likely be a need for five meetings of the intergovernmental negotiating committee the deadline set by the Council would be very challenging.

14. With those points in mind he urged the Group to use the current meeting to energize the Global Mercury Partnership and in addition to assessing the work under way in the partnership areas to consider potential outputs, targets and milestones that might inform the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee in its efforts to conclude a legally binding instrument on mercury.

B. Overall progress and status of partnership areas

1. Presentations by the partnership area leads and the secretariat

15. Following the secretariat's presentation on decision 25/5 the leads of the six partnership areas reported on progress in their respective partnership areas, highlighting certain issues from the reports on progress in the six areas that were before the Group in documents UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/INF/1–INF/6.

16. The lead for the artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area noted that an ambitious target had been set of reducing mercury emissions from the sector by 50 per cent by 2017 and reported that work was under way in a number of areas in conjunction with partners to make progress toward that target.

17. The lead for the mercury cell chlor alkali partnership area noted that a demand reduction target had been established and that regional reporting indicated a declining number of mercury cell facilities. The success of a demonstration project was highlighted along with challenges, including the need for additional support and a need to find a way to manage surplus mercury resulting from conversion of facilities to non-mercury processes.

18. A key achievement of the fate and transport partnership area was noted by the representative of the partnership area lead as the production of a report on mercury measurement, models and policy implications, which had contributed to the UNEP report on emissions presented to the Governing Council in February 2009. She also noted a number of projects that were under way at the national level in a number of participating countries.

19. In her report, the mercury in products partnership area lead noted in particular that there was a need for greater outreach to a range of stakeholders and increased cooperation with other partnership areas, both of which she said were key to eliminating the use of mercury in products.

20. The lead for the mercury releases from coal combustion partnership area highlighted the commencement of work on a guidance document with the eventual aim of developing an online tool that would allow plant managers to determine how changes in plant configuration could reduce mercury emissions. The area also aimed to work with Governments to improve emissions inventories.

21. The mercury waste management partnership area lead noted that the area's business plan had recently been adopted and that a guidance document on waste incineration was being prepared.

22. Representatives of the secretariat then reported briefly on progress in two emerging partnership areas for which there were as yet no leads and which were not discussed in documents UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/INF/1–INF/6: non-ferrous metals mining and mercury supply and storage. They noted that draft business plans had been posted for both areas on the UNEP Chemicals website and that leads were needed for those areas to allow the active pursuit of coordinated activity.

23. In the mercury supply and storage partnership area, one key initial activity had included a project to address primary mercury mining in Kyrgyzstan, where the last remaining mine known to export mercury globally was located and accounted for about 10 per cent of the world's mercury supply. UNEP, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and their partners were facilitating a move away from primary mining, with funding from Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America. The project represented a unique opportunity for Kyrgyzstan to take action with the international community to remove the last source of primary mined mercury on the export markets.

24. Another key activity was a study being funded by Norway aiming to address options for storing future excess mercury in Asia and Latin America. The study was currently under way, after an inception workshop in Bangkok in March 2009. The workshop participants had considered and agreed on a report that forecast that by 2017 there would be excess mercury in Asia. Given that mercury did not degrade, several options for storage were being explored. The countries of Asia were concerned about the social acceptability, technical requirements and health and environmental impacts of storage options. The project had no clear indication of lifetime funding, a circumstance exacerbated by the fact that it did not fall within the ambit of an existing partnership area. It was hoped that it would eventually come within a

mercury supply and storage partnership area, if one were established. In that context the secretariat sought input on whether it would be useful to have separate partnership areas on mercury supply and storage.

2. Discussion

25. In the discussion that followed the above presentations there was consensus that the work of the partnerships was as valuable as ever in the wake of the adoption of decision 25/5 calling for the adoption of a legally binding instrument on mercury. The decision contemplated a role for voluntary approaches under the instrument to be developed. In addition, the partnerships were key as the mechanisms for continuing immediate action on mercury during the time it would take to negotiate the instrument. There was also agreement that the partnerships could play an important role as a source of information for the intergovernmental negotiating committee, including through the report called for in paragraph 29 of decision 25/5. A number of members stressed that the work of the partnerships should complement the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. Another said that the Partnership Advisory Group should not presume to decide what its role might be under the legally binding instrument, as that was a matter beyond its mandate.

26. There was also consensus that mercury storage was a critical issue with linkages to all partnership areas, as progress in taking mercury in its various forms out of circulation of necessity implied a need to store it. There was consensus too on the interrelated nature of storage, supply, waste and trade issues and the relationship between products, waste and storage and the need for the various partnership areas to work with one another as appropriate. It was noted in that regard that the mercury in waste partnership area had been working with the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. It was noted too that the mercury in products area and the mercury in waste area had been working together, particularly with respect to issues of infrastructure and best available techniques. More generally, members agreed on the need to maximize efficiency and promote cooperation and coordination within partnership areas and to strengthen communications between them.

27. There was also general agreement that inventories were lacking in many areas and were needed for establishing the scope of the problem and setting priorities in the work to be done, including through identifying areas in which quick reductions of mercury use could be achieved. It was noted that inventories were challenging to develop, particularly in the coal area where they would need to be updated at least annually, but were nevertheless crucial. Where possible “bottom up” inventories facilitated by Government involvement were preferable as they allowed for the collection of large amounts of detailed site specific data on emissions at their source; where necessary, however, “top down” inventories based on extrapolations from known data on industrial activity could be generated and were also useful.

28. One member requested further details on the best practice options guidance to be issued by the mercury release from coal combustion partnership, including whether it would cover mercury-specific controls such as activated carbon systems. The partnership lead replied that the best practice options guidance would cover everything from coal blending and coal cleaning to mercury-specific options such as activated carbon. The document would include multi-pollutant strategies to maximise the co-benefits that could be achieved by improving systems that were already in place or planned to deal with other pollutants. Mercury control options are often plant-specific, so the long-term objective was to develop an online interactive tool that plant managers could use to design solutions tailored to their particular circumstance with an emphasis on cost-effectiveness.

29. Several members emphasized that, in preparing guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices for waste management, partnerships should bear in mind the need for low-cost solutions that would be appropriate to different countries and conditions and would avoid promoting technological solutions without regard to cost. Further, the merits and demerits of each technique needed to be explained and the guidance needed to be wide-ranging to ensure that it was valid for as wide an audience as possible.

30. One member contended that guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices should only be considered in areas where non-mercury alternatives were not available. Where such alternatives were available the elimination of mercury use should be the goal.

31. Another member raised a question about whose role it was to define guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices. He suggested that as such guidance might be the subject of negotiations on the legally binding instrument to be developed in accordance with decision 25/5 the Group should be very cautious in dealing with it and should avoid doing anything that might prejudice the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. The Group agreed that in promoting such guidance it ran the risk of inadvertently touching upon matters that should be left to the intergovernmental committee that would negotiate the legally binding instrument on mercury. The Group agreed that it would be preferable to refer to any guidance produced by the partnership areas as "best practice options", which, it was hoped, would make clear that the Group wished to provide information to countries and other stakeholders on possible measures for dealing with mercury that they could adopt should they so desire.

32. Several members spoke of the need to consider the effects of the global economic crisis in establishing goals and timelines. Those already established might need adjusting in view of the effects of the crisis. Concern was likewise raised about the sustainability of project funding. In that context one member noted that the financial crisis was prompting an increase in artisanal gold mining, which might have an effect on whether the target reduction of 50 per cent by 2017 could be met.

33. One member spoke of progress in achieving the mercury in products partnership area's target of reducing demand for mercury-containing medical devices by 70 per cent by 2017. Progress had been good, including legislation introduced in Argentina and the Philippines banning mercury thermometers. Other projects were under way in Brazil, Chile, Honduras, India, Mexico, Latvia, Lebanon, Senegal and Viet Nam. Many medical institutions had found that they saved money by using non-mercury devices. Cooperation was under way with the World Health Organization to bring more Governments into the partnership area and there was a good chance that the demand reduction target would be achieved.

34. One common theme that had been raised in the reports of many of the partnership areas was the difficulty in setting numerical targets and reporting on the targets that had already been established. Several members highlighted the importance of indicators and metrics, and one suggested that the Group should make recommendations on how the partnership areas could provide more information on achieving targets.

35. Several members commented on another common theme in the partnership area reports: the need to encourage new partners and to raise funds. One member suggested that guidance from UNEP on how to approach potential donors and partners would be helpful, particularly regarding the priority areas in which partnerships were ready to move forward with useful products to take to potential donors, and said that the Group should focus on the problem. Another member suggested that the establishment of a legally binding instrument might have a beneficial effect on fundraising should the partnerships be specifically featured in any such instrument.

36. The representative of the secretariat emphasized that projects supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) required co-financing and that other donors therefore had to be sought. With regard to GEF itself, he noted that it had funded mercury projects through its international waters focal area. He said that while current funding was likely to be fully allocated residual GEF funds might become available as the fourth GEF replenishment period came to an end. New funding under the fifth replenishment might not start flowing until 2011 but given the time required for GEF applications it was not too soon to begin the preparation of project proposals. In response to a question the representative of the Secretariat noted that UNEP would be constrained in its ability to increase its own funding for the partnerships as it would have to support the intergovernmental negotiating process and its funding was largely earmarked. Discussions were under way with the Executive Director on the subject.

37. The member representing the United States noted that his Government had provided $1 million for UNEP mercury projects in 2008 and about $8 million in project-specific funds since 2005. He said that his Government was of the view that continued funding was needed to sustain the momentum of the partnership projects. Other members agreed that as the partnerships were the vehicles for immediate action to address the mercury challenge, efforts should be made to ensure that their momentum was sustained as the intergovernmental negotiating process was embarked on.

38. The member representing India reviewed progress in his country since 2003, when it had initiated its mercury control programme. With voluntary efforts, encouragement and awareness-raising by a central task force, and no fiscal incentives, 96 per cent of the chlor alkali industry had converted from mercury cell processes to membrane cell processes. The remaining 4 per cent was likely to convert by 2012. He noted that Europe, home to some 40 per cent of mercury cell based chlor alkali manufacturing, had set an elimination target date of 2020, and he suggested that UNEP should focus on

accelerating that date. Hospitals in Delhi were phasing out mercury thermometers but blood pressure instruments were causing more difficulty. A study had therefore been commissioned on the awareness of doctors and paramedical staff of what to do in cases of mercury spillage. A national committee was also examining the entire life cycle of compact fluorescent lights and fluorescent tube lights in India and the Government was setting standards on their mercury content. India was looking for partners for the collection and retrieval of used compact fluorescent lights and tube lights, which were energy efficient and therefore popular.

39. One member requested more information from the mercury cell chlor alkali partnership area on conversion, particularly the examples cited of plants in Mexico and Brazil, and wanted to know what the partnership was doing to facilitate conversions. He also asked whether the area could learn from the experience of India outlined above. The lead for the mercury cell chlor alkali partnership area explained that the area had strong industry participation but lacked participation by some relevant countries and additional donors with ideas for projects. Efforts to date included a 2006 workshop in Mexico at the inception of the partnership area that had raised awareness and engaged industry with the issue. The partnership area had also funded work to examine individual facilities and promote industry best practice options. Regarding plants that were currently converting, she hoped to improve links with the storage partnership area and in the short term to help such facilities and their government partners to ensure that such conversions did not result in further problems with storage.

C. Overarching issues and lessons learned

40. Introducing agenda item 4, the Chair recalled that one of the responsibilities assigned to the Partnership Advisory Group was to communicate overarching issues and lessons learned while promoting synergy and collaboration across partnership areas. In that connection, she drew attention to the proposed draft report to the Executive Director of UNEP on overall progress that had been prepared by UNEP for consideration by the Group (UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/4, annex I), saying that the Group's main task at the current meeting would be to finalize that report.

41. The representative of the secretariat then outlined the draft report, saying that its aim was not only (in chapter I) to review activities undertaken to date but also (in chapter II) to summarize lessons learned and to determine on that basis how best to move the Global Mercury Partnership forward on two fronts: first, in achieving the overall goal and objectives of the Global Mercury Partnership; and, second, in responding to decision 25/5 by, for example, providing information for the intergovernmental negotiating committee and to inform the report called for by paragraph 29 of decision 25/5. In chapter II of the draft report two sets of seven paragraphs had been left blank so that the Group could record its findings and recommendations with respect to each partnership area. The first set of seven paragraphs, starting at paragraph 39, related to achieving the overall goal and objectives of the Global Mercury Partnership and the second set, starting at paragraph 51, to responding to those parts of decision 25/5 concerning the intergovernmental negotiating committee process.

42. The Group agreed that it would undertake its work on the draft report in three breakout groups, each consisting of members from two partnership areas:

(a) The mercury-containing products partnership area and the mercury waste management partnership area;

(b) The mercury releases from coal combustion partnership area and the mercury air transport and fate research partnership area;

(c) The artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area and the mercury cell chlor alkali production partnership area.

43. With regard to emerging partnership areas that had not yet been formalized, it was decided that breakout group (a) would consider mercury supply and storage; that breakout group (b) would consider non-ferrous metals mining and cement production; and that breakout group (c) would consider vinyl chloride monomer production. The breakout groups would report to the Advisory Group on the results of their work, first taking up the issues beginning at paragraph 39 and then those beginning at paragraph 51.

44. One member said that in undertaking their work the breakout groups should identify top priority projects or activities for which funding could be sought without delay. Another noted that it would assist prospective donors if the scale and timeline of projects could be specified. In response to a question, the representative of the secretariat said that provision might be made for a "comment period"

before the report was finalized so that all partnership members would have an opportunity to discuss its content.

45. The partnership area leads subsequently reported on the results of the groups' work. During his presentation on storage issues, the member representing the Zero Mercury Working Group said that the Group was willing to act as interim lead on mercury storage issues until the forthcoming meeting of the open-ended working group in October 2009. The Advisory Group accepted the offer with thanks.

46. In the discussion that followed the presentations by the partnership area leads it was noted that the presentations had revealed a number of common themes. All the partnership areas had reported that there were many opportunities for cross-cutting work and cooperation between partnership areas, and several had proposed to undertake joint work with other areas. Second, much interest had been expressed in updating business plans and expanding on the existing work of the partnership areas. Third was the perception that there was a need to link specific actions to targets and to indicators and metrics to measure achievement. Fourth, there had been repeated calls for additional resources, including new partners with expertise, and recognition of a need to identify funding opportunities for partnership projects. Fifth, many members had highlighted the concept of providing guidance, for example on alternatives for mercury reduction and waste, and a proposed menu of best practice options for reducing mercury emissions from coal combustion. Last, emphasis had been placed on efforts to raise awareness of non-mercury alternatives and the need to disseminate technical information, in the form of fact sheets for example, and inventories to identify priorities for future work.

47. Several members raised the issue of timing, in terms of whether the Partnership could potentially provide useful information to contribute to the study cited in paragraph 29 of Governing Council decision 25/5. The representative of the secretariat noted that it was not possible to predict with certainty what the intergovernmental negotiating committee might request in terms of assistance or when it might want it. Assuming for the sake of planning, however, that the committee would want to consider the paragraph 29 report early in its process, at its second meeting, the study would have to be substantially complete by about October 2010. Partnership areas would therefore have to deliver their contributions for the study to the secretariat by about April 2010. It was further noted that the intergovernmental negotiating committee might call for other inputs from the secretariat and the partnership areas and that the timetable for delivering any such inputs had not been established.

48. Several members commented on issues relating to the storage of mercury. One expressed apprehension regarding the viability of some of the options for storage, noting concerns about long-term operational and maintenance costs, needed regulatory mechanisms and who would manage long-term storage facilities. Given that his country still used and imported mercury for various uses, he also questioned whether global demand for mercury might be such that there was in fact no need for mercury storage and proposed that consideration be given to some form of regulated trade regime until such time as non-mercury alternatives were available. The representative of the secretariat responded that while an inventory of mercury supplies in Asia was needed as soon as possible a preliminary study had concluded that there would soon be an excess of mercury in Asia resulting from moves away from chlor alkali cell production and mercury capture in non-ferrous metals processing, among other sources. Thus the project being funded by Norway was under way to consider options for storing that excess, and it would consider the operational and maintenance cost issues noted.

49. Another member said that it was necessary to investigate what happened to mercury following conversion of plants or hospitals. He noted that under Mexican hazardous waste regulations facilities storing mercury for more than six months would be breaking the law, an obvious disincentive to conversion. Others noted that mercury bans could have the unintended consequence of prompting businesses storing large amounts of mercury to put it on the market or otherwise dispose of it. Steps therefore had to be taken in the short term to provide for the storage of mercury in the case of conversions or bans. One member suggested that a separate group or sub-group be established on the issue of storage.

50. Several comments were made regarding dental mercury. One member noted that when mercury was banned in gold mining it was often illegally imported under the guise of dental mercury. The representative of the World Dental Federation said that a global task force was examining United Nations data in order to develop a common understanding and a basis for dialogue on dental amalgam. He also reported that the Federation would launch a global caries initiative in July 2009, the goal of which was to achieve a prevention-based model that would provide the basis for a reduction in restorative treatment, including the use of dental amalgam. One member, noting that dental facilities were a major contributor to mercury in municipal wastewater treatment facilities, stressed the need for

awareness-raising to promote mercury-free alternatives and for a two-pronged approach that allowed for the differences between developed and developing countries in making the transition.

51. Another member, referring to the links between artisanal and small-scale gold mining and other partnership areas, especially air transport and fate research, said that it was important to investigate what happened to the mercury emitted from small-scale mining facilities and how far it travelled; there was therefore a need to raise awareness, including among scientists and academics.

52. The member representing India, referring to technology options for mercury emission control in coal combustion, said that the cost of selective catalytic reduction equipment could be prohibitively high, especially for developing countries such as his that were dependent on coal energy for power stations. It would be preferable, in his view, to design a low-nitrogen-oxide burner, which might not be as efficient but would be more affordable. He proposed developing a partnership with the International Energy Agency Clean Coal Centre with respect to developing inventories and considering cost-effective technology options for his country. The partnership area lead pointed out that low-nitrogen-oxide burners did not oxidize mercury and therefore did not render it soluble. She agreed, however, that there were effective low-tech and relatively cheap options for developing countries and said that the Clean Coal Centre, in its role as lead on the coal partnership, would be pleased to work with the member on clean technology options as one of the first projects under the new UNEP work programme.

53. One member stressed the importance of developing regulatory mechanisms and promoting government involvement in efforts to reduce mercury cell chlor alkali production, suggesting that industry was unlikely to engage in plant conversion on a voluntary basis. In response to a question, the lead of the chlor alkali partnership area said that there were detailed inventories of mercury conversion facilities for some major producing countries but considerable gaps elsewhere. There had been only three replies to a UNEP questionnaire on the subject. One member noted that industrial facilities such as paper mills with mercury cell processes were sometimes overlooked.

54. During the discussion further information was presented on the situation of the mercury mine in Kyrgyzstan mentioned above. The representative of UNITAR said that an action plan was being developed with a number of partners to explore options for closing down the mine should the Kyrgyz Government decide to do so. A social and economic assessment was about to be completed. It was recognized that as the mine was located in an area of high unemployment alternative sources of income for the local population would have to be found. The Kyrgyz Government was scheduled to present the action plan at an international forum later in the year. Although it had set up an advisory committee to consider the matter, not all ministries were convinced of the need to shut the mine. A member of the Board of Directors of the Kyrgyz Mining Association who attended the meeting said that a group of experts would shortly be established to make recommendations to the advisory committee. He suggested that if the mercury mine were closed, illicit production would undoubtedly increase to supply the country's large artisanal gold mining industry, which already resulted in considerable releases of mercury to the environment. He suggested that if the mine were to be closed then consideration should be given to an international ban on the opening of new mercury mines.

55. Following the Partnership Advisory Group's discussions in the breakout groups and in plenary sessions of the draft report to the Executive Director set out in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/4, it was agreed that the secretariat would revise the draft report to reflect those discussions. It was also agreed that because document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/4 had unavoidably been distributed to the members of the Group only a week before the current meeting, owing to the need to reflect in that document the important changes to the partnership landscape wrought by decision 25/5, it would be beneficial for members of the Partnership Advisory Group to have some additional time to review and comment on the report to the Executive Director as revised by the secretariat.

56. Accordingly, it was agreed that the secretariat would circulate the revised draft report to the members of the Group by Friday, 10 April 2009. The members would then have until 30 April 2009 to submit written comments on that draft to the secretariat. Upon the close of the comment period the secretariat would finalize the report taking into account the comments received and would then circulate the final report. The report as finalized by the secretariat following the comment period is set out in annex I to the present report.

D. Review of proposed reporting format

57. The secretariat introduced document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/5, which included in its annex a proposed format prepared by the secretariat for reports by the partnership areas to the UNEP Governing Council. The secretariat had prepared it in accordance with section 7 of the Overarching Framework, which provided that the partnership areas would report on their activities to the Governing Council every two years.

58. In the discussion of the proposed format there was general agreement that it would allow the partnership areas effectively to communicate the most relevant issues for the partnership areas and to report on how their objectives were being met. There were, however, several suggestions for improvement. One member proposed that all reports on partnership area work should follow a chronological format covering past, current and future activities. Several members proposed including a section on activities carried out jointly by two or more partnership areas and potential areas for future collaboration. Another member suggested that it would be useful to identify priority actions for the forthcoming year, which would help to focus on such areas and would enable donors to see what issues most urgently required funding. One member said that the report should describe how partnership area activities responded to paragraphs 29, 34 and 36 of Governing Council decision 25/5.

59. The Group agreed that the secretariat should revise the reporting format to incorporate the above suggestions.

E. Proposed revision of the introduction to the Overarching Framework

60. The secretariat introduced document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/6, which set out a proposed revision to the introductory paragraph of the Overarching Framework that would reflect the fact that the Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session had welcomed the progress made by the Global Mercury Partnership and endorsed UNEP participation in the Partnership. The proposed revision had been drafted in consultation with the European Union, which had originally proposed the text.

61. The Partnership Advisory Group approved the proposed revision with a minor amendment.

V. Other matters

A. New partnership area member and nominated partnership area lead

62. The interim lead of the emerging mercury storage partnership area announced that the World Chlorine Council had agreed to become a member of that partnership area.

63. The member representing the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area lead, noted that much work in the area in developing countries was carried out by non-governmental organizations. In the light of that, he said, it would be useful if a non-governmental organization were to co-lead the partnership along with UNIDO. He proposed, subject to follow-up discussions with the partnership area, including UNIDO, that the Natural Resources Defense Council be made co-lead. The Group welcomed this proposal and the member representing the Natural Resources Defense Council said that her organization would be happy to accept the proposal should it be approved by the partnership area.

B. Meeting on the Kyrgyz mine situation

64. The representative of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research announced that there would be an informal meeting on Friday, 3 April 2009, at the Varembé Conference Centre on the situation of the mercury mine in Kyrgyzstan described above. He invited all interested parties to attend. The Partnership Advisory Group agreed that, considering the importance of that situation, the report of that meeting would be appended to the present report as an annex. It is accordingly set out in annex II to the present report. It is presented as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

C. Arrangements for meetings of the Partnership Advisory Group

65. The members of the Partnership Advisory Group agreed that the current meeting had been very useful but that there was room for possible improvements at future meetings of the Group. Thus it was

agreed that while the breakout group sessions had been productive it would nevertheless be helpful for the group to spend more time in plenary sessions, particularly in ensuring objective evaluations of the partnership areas; that there should be more formal presentations from the partnership areas, including on success stories; and that the agenda at future meetings should set aside time for discussion of how to build linkages among partnership areas. In addition, one member suggested that the Group would make the best use of its time by striving to stick closely to its mandate.

VI. Adoption of the report

66. The Partnership Advisory Group adopted the present report on the basis of the draft report set out in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/L.1, as orally amended.

VII. Closure of the meeting

67. Following the customary exchange of courtesies the Chair declared the meeting closed at 4.05 p.m. on Thursday, 2 April 2009.

Annex I

United Nations Environment Programme

Global Mercury Partnership

Report on overall progress

Introduction

1. The Operational Guidelines set out in the Overarching Framework of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Mercury Partnership specify that one of the responsibilities of the Partnership Advisory Group is to report on overall progress to the Executive Director. They also provide that UNEP is to facilitate reporting on progress to Governments, including the UNEP Governing Council or its subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, and that the partnership areas are to report biennially to UNEP using a reporting format prepared by UNEP.

2. Reporting is to include tracking partnership activities and partner contributions, assessing effectiveness and measuring the impact of partnership activities on the achievement of the overall goal. The purpose of reporting is to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

3. The present document is a report on overall progress of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. It reflects input received from the partnership areas through the 2007–2008 partnership area evaluations and considers the future direction of the Partnership. It was developed by the Partnership Advisory Group at a meeting that took place from 31 March to 2 April 2009.

4. A separate report on activities undertaken under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership has been finalized by the Partnership Advisory Group and is available on the website of the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics at www.chem.unep.ch/MERCURY/partnerships/new_partnership.htm .

I. Assessment of overall progress (2007–2008)

5. In paragraph 20 of its decision 25/5 the UNEP Governing Council commended the Executive Director of UNEP and members of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership for progress in developing and implementing the Partnership as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury and welcomed progress made by the Partnership in creating an overarching framework for immediate action in the priority areas identified in decision 24/3 IV. It also endorsed the continued involvement of UNEP in the Partnership.

6. Overall interest in the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is strong. Partners agree that the partnership areas are a good venue for sharing and exchanging relevant information.

7. The present chapter provides an assessment of overall progress of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership in 2007–2008.

A. Development of the Overarching Framework

8. In line with paragraph 27 (a) of UNEP Governing Council decision 24/3, an Overarching Framework for the Global Mercury Partnership has been developed under the auspices of the Executive Director. The Overarching Framework was developed in consultation with Governments and other stakeholders and was finalized at a meeting of partners that took place in Geneva from 1 to 3 April 2008.

9. The Overarching Framework establishes an overall goal for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership: to protect human health and the global environment from the release of mercury and its compounds by minimizing and, where feasible, ultimately eliminating global anthropogenic mercury releases to air, water and land.

10. Decision 24/3 also called for the development of business plans for each of the partnership areas established under the Global Mercury Partnership. The Overarching Framework outlines a business plan template that provides guidance to the partnership areas in structuring the partnership area business

plans. Business plans have been drafted for the following partnership areas: artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM); mercury cell chlor alkali production; mercury air transport and fate research; mercury in products; mercury releases from coal combustion; and mercury waste management. The business plans are available on the website of the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics at www.chem.unep.ch/MERCURY/partnerships/new_partnership.htm.

B. Expanding the number and scope of partnerships

11. Decision 24/3 IV called for the expansion of the partnership programme to include new growing or related sectors such as vinyl chloride monomer production, non-ferrous metals mining and cement production and waste combustion. UNEP sought feedback from Governments and other stakeholders on these new and emerging areas, together with other emerging areas outlined in paragraph 19 of decision 24/3 IV such as mercury supply and storage.

12. Initial feedback indicated that vinyl chloride monomer production was a regional issue that could be addressed in a regional context within Asia. A project has been initiated in this area in which UNEP is working with the Government of China to facilitate regional discussions on the issue to foster regional action planning, awareness-raising and technical information exchange on best practices and innovative approaches. A two-day workshop on mercury reduction in carbide PVC production is planned to be held in Beijing from 4-5 June 2009. An investigative report on carbide PVC production currently being prepared by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China will be made available for the workshop. As a final result of this project the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China will prepare a carbide PVC analysis, to be completed in late 2009.

13. The European Cement Association is compiling worldwide data from public literature, scientific databases and individual company measurements on the status of mercury emissions from cement kilns. Along with the UNEP report on atmospheric emissions requested by the Governing Council in its decision 24/3 IV, this information will provide a basis for informed decision-making on the best means to address the challenge of mercury releases from cement production. No lead has been identified for this area. A lead is necessary for coordinated activities to be pursued actively in this area.

14. The partnership area on mercury waste management has been established and will be led and supported by the Government of Japan initially for two years. The business plan is available in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/2, which sets out the business plans for the six partnership areas for which such plans have been developed.

15. In response to needs identified in UNEP Governing Council decision 24/3, draft partnership area business plans have been prepared for mercury supply and storage and non-ferrous metals production. They are posted on the website of the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics at http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/new_partnership.htm. No leads were identified for these areas in the 2007-2008 timeframe. It is recognized that partnership area leads are necessary for coordinated activities to be pursued actively in these areas.

C. Partner membership

16. As of 4 February 2009, the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership comprised 27 members. In addition, there are a number of participating organizations that have yet to submit official support letters to the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership, a step that is needed for formal recognition as an official member of a Global Mercury Partnership partnership area. The Partnership Advisory Group encourages such participating organizations to signal formal support to the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership through a formal letter of support as specified in the Overarching Framework.

17. The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that UNEP and the partnership areas continue to encourage new partners to join the partnership.

D. Endeavouring to secure adequate funds

18. The Executive Director sent a fundraising letter dated 26 March 2007 to UNEP official focal points drawing attention to decision 24/3 IV and the need for funding to support the implementation of the decision, including work on partnerships. The United States of America subsequently pledged $1,000,380 to support the work of partnerships, which was in addition to support provided by the United States and other donors in 2005-2007.

19. A number of strategic activities have recently been supported:

(a) The Government of Norway has provided $1,500,000 to fund activity in three strategic areas: a primary mercury mining project in Kyrgyzstan, a number of mercury storage projects in Asia and South America and a UNEP mercury waste project;

(b) The European Commission has provided 999,915 euros to fund a three-year project aimed at reducing mercury emissions from coal combustion in the energy sector.

20. UNEP has also taken other steps to secure funding, such as through the establishment of the Mercury Small Grants Programme and through raising limited funds through the Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (in particular for activities relating to artisanal and small-scale gold mining).

21. In addition, partners in the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership have directly supported a number of projects. Other donors have expressed interest in providing support.

22. UNEP has approved the support of one P-3 level staff member to support the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership with funding from the UNEP Environment Fund.

23. A common weakness identified in the partnership area evaluations for 2007–2008 is a lack of funding for partnership area activities. Additional funding is required to implement activities under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership in line with the priority actions established in the partnership area business plans.

E. Status of the partnership areas

24. Business plans have been drafted and are operational for the following partnership areas: artisanal and small-scale gold mining; mercury cell chlor alkali production; mercury air transport and fate research; mercury in products; mercury releases from coal combustion; and mercury waste management. Some of the partnership areas have been active since 2005. The April 2008 version of the business plans are reproduced in document UNEP(DTIE)/Hg/PAG.1/2. Future updates of the business plans will continue to be made available at the following web address: www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/new_partnership.htm

25. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is acting as lead in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area. The objective of this partnership area is the continued reduction and elimination of mercury uses and releases in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The partnership area has set a target of a 50 per cent reduction in mercury demand in artisanal and small-scale gold mining by the year 2017.

26. The United States of America is acting as lead of the mercury cell chlor alkali production partnership area. The objective of this partnership area is to minimize significantly and, where feasible, eliminate global mercury releases to air, water and land that may occur from chlor alkali production facilities. The partnership area has set a target of a 29 per cent reduction in mercury demand in this sector by the year 2015.

27. Italy is acting as lead of the mercury air transport and fate research partnership area. The objective of this partnership area is to increase global understanding of international mercury emission sources, fate and transport by accelerating the development of sound scientific information to address uncertainties and data gaps in global mercury cycling and its patterns (e.g., air concentrations and deposition rates, source-receptor relationships, hemispheric and global air transport and transformation and emission sources), by enhancing information sharing among scientists and between scientists and policymakers and by providing technical assistance and training, where possible, to support the development of critical information.

28. The United States of America is acting as lead of the mercury-containing products partnership area. The partnership area objective is to phase out and eventually eliminate mercury in products and to eliminate releases during manufacturing and other industrial processes through the use of environmentally sound production, transportation, storage and disposal processes. Numeric reduction targets have been established for various product categories.

29. The International Energy Agency Clean Coal Centre is acting as lead of the mercury releases from coal combustion partnership area. The objective of this partnership area is the continued minimization and elimination of mercury releases from coal combustion where possible. No numerical targets have yet been established for this partnership area.

30. The Government of Japan is acting as lead in the mercury waste management partnership area, which was initiated in early 2008 by the Government of Japan. The objective of the partnership area is to minimize and, where feasible, eliminate unintentional mercury releases to air, water, and land from waste containing mercury and mercury compounds by following a life cycle management approach.

F. Assessing effectiveness of the partnership areas

31. Tables 1 and 2 below provide available data that might be used as a baseline from which to measure partnership area progress in the future.

Table 1: Possible mercury demand baseline data

	Demand 2005 (tons)	Demand projection 2015 (tons)	Partnership target (tons)
Partnership areas			
Artisanal and small-scale gold mining*	650–1000	650	410 (Hg demand by 2017)
Mercury cell chlor alkali production	450–550	350	250 (Hg demand by 2015)
Mercury containing products			
Batteries	300–600	200	50 (Hg demand by 2015)
Lamps*	100–150	125	100 (Hg demand by 2015)
Dental amalgam*	240–300	270	230 (Hg demand by 2015)
Measuring and control devices	150–350	125	50 (Hg demand by 2015)
Electrical and electronic devices	150–350	110	50 (Hg demand by 2015)
Others, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and traditional and ritual uses*	30–60	40	30 (Hg demand by 2015)
Mercury releases from coal combustion (numbers are for overall fossil fuel consumption)	Not applicable	Not applicable	
Waste incineration	Not applicable	Not applicable	
Total	**2070–3360**	**1870**	**1170**[1] **(37% reduction from the 2015 projections)**
Other significant areas with demand			
Vinyl chloride monomer production*	600–800	1000	1000 (2015 projection, no target established)
Overall total demand (including VCM)		2870	**2170 (24% reduction from the 2015 projections)**

* Area where the availability of suitable economically feasible alternatives is limited or non-existent and that progress may potentially be less rapid in these areas.

Data based on: Supply of Supply, Trade and Demand Information on Mercury, UNEP 2006
Global Atmospheric Mercury Assessment: Sources, Emissions and Transport, UNEP 2008.

[1] For simplicity in the table, the overall total target includes the artisanal and small-scale gold mining 2017 target of 410 tons in the calculation for the overall 2015 total.

Table 2: Possible mercury release baseline data

	Releases to air 2005 (tons)	Releases to air projection 2020 (tons)	Partnership target (tons) (Note: No partnership area release targets have been established.)
Partnership areas			
Artisanal and small-scale gold mining	350	330	
Mercury cell chlor alkali production	47	0	
Mercury containing products	120–236	146	
Batteries	20–31	20	
Lamps	13–28	13	
Dental amalgam[2]	24–28	25	
Measuring and control devices	33–74	33	
Electrical and electronic devices	26–47	26	
Others, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and traditional and ritual uses	29–58	29	
Mercury releases from coal combustion (numbers are for overall fossil fuel consumption)	880	1200	
Waste incineration	125	35	
Total			
Other significant source areas			
Vinyl chloride monomer production	Not available	Not available	
Metal production (ferrous and non-ferrous, excluding gold)	200	190	
Large-scale gold production	110	110	
Cement production	190	280	
Overall total demand			

Data based on: Global Atmospheric Mercury Assessment: Sources, Emissions and Transport, UNEP 2008.

32. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the information included in tables 1 and 2 provides a useful baseline that assists in identifying areas of priority action. The Partnership Advisory Group also notes, however, that the uncertainty of current existing global data makes it difficult to use such data as a benchmark to measure partnership area progress, and that improved data and estimates of current, baseline and projected demand may result in changes to these estimates and targets.

33. In order to track partnership area progress effectively in future overall progress reports, the Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the partnership areas include more specific indicators of progress in the next drafts of their business plans. Such indicators might include, for example, progress on specific projects, in specific countries and at the facility level or other small scale.

[2] Dental figures are based on cremation statistics. They do not include data on the production, handling and disposal of dental amalgam.

II. Encouraging the work of the partnership areas in moving forward

34. As specified in the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Overarching Framework, the partnership areas should support the overall goal of the Partnership through contributing to the following objectives, consistent with the priorities set out in paragraph 19 of Governing Council decision 24/3:

(a) Minimization and, where possible, elimination of mercury supply, considering a hierarchy of sources and the retirement of mercury from the market to environmentally sound management;

(b) Minimization and, where feasible, elimination of unintentional mercury releases to air, water and land from anthropogenic sources;

(c) Continued minimization and elimination of global use of and demand for mercury;

(d) Development of non-mercury technologies where suitable economically feasible alternatives do not exist.

35. In addition, the work of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership must be consistent with UNEP Governing Council decision 25/5.

36. In the present chapter the Partnership Advisory Group makes recommendations based on the efforts identified in the current partnership area business plans to encourage the future work of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

37. The Partnership Advisory Group makes the following overall observations and recommendations to the partnership areas in moving forward:

(a) There is an overall need to maximize efficiency and promote cooperation and coordination within the overall Partnership; there is in particular a close relationship between the products, waste and supply and storage partnership areas;

(b) There are opportunities for cross–cutting work and cooperation across partnership areas. This might include linking activities and partnership areas to other activities and partnership areas and could be done in a number of ways, including by hosting joint meetings or inviting members of the various areas to each other's meetings;

(c) There is a general need for increased linkages and synergy across partnership areas in particular areas, for example:

(i) The non-ferrous metal industry is an important producer of by-product mercury, leading to a need for safe storage capacity for the mercury and an impact on the ASGM sector. In addition, the transition of the chlor alkali sector away from the mercury cell production process results in excess mercury that needs to be safely stored and or regulated;

(ii) The fate and transport research partnership area has links with other air emissions-related partnership areas (such as ASGM and coal combustion) in contributing to a better picture of the global mercury cycle, for example by using air emissions information in modelling;

(iii) Product life cycles link supply, products, waste management and storage;

(iv) ASGM generates mercury-contaminated waste;

(d) There is concern about the funding of partnership activities and its sustainability, particularly in the context of the global financial crisis;

(e) There is a general need for additional resources in the partnership areas, including in the form of participation by new partners and the identification of opportunities for funding partnership projects. This is particularly true for partnership areas that do not have a direct connection to formal industrial sectors;

(f) It is important to set priorities for the work to be done under the Global Mercury Partnership. Mercury release inventories will play an important role in the setting of priorities. Developing such inventories, however, presents a number of challenges;

(g) There is an opportunity to update the current partnership area business plans and their associated activities and indicators as well as to design future work and activities in line with Governing Council decision 25/5.

A. Meeting the overall objective of the Partnership

38. The Overarching Framework establishes an overall goal for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. In meeting this overall goal, the partnership areas are to establish objectives for themselves. The objectives of the partnership areas are to be clear, measurable, target-oriented, realistic and clearly linked to the ambitious goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

39. The Partnership Advisory Group makes the following observations about meeting the overall objectives of the partnership areas:

(a) Setting targets and tracking progress are difficult. Indicators, metrics and inventories will play an important role in improving performance of all partnership areas;

(b) There is an important link between the partnership area targets and the specific actions taken under the partnership areas to achieve those stated objectives. In the future, this link can be enhanced and built upon to improve partnership area design and performance;

(c) There is a need for many of the partnership areas to attract new partners in a strategic way.

40. Below, the Partnership Advisory Group reviews the objectives, targets and timelines established in each of the partnership area business plans with the aim of encouraging the work of the partnership areas consistent with the overall goal and operational guidelines of the Partnership.

41. For the artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group recognizes that the current ASGM partnership area target of 50 per cent mercury emission reduction by 2017 is ambitious but also notes that such a target may be needed to galvanize the actions of Governments and stakeholders in this area. Partners have indicated that the 50 per cent reduction can be achieved by generalizing the use of retorts, fume hoods and mercury reactivation and by addressing whole ore amalgamation;

(b) In terms of tracking partnership area progress, the Partnership Advisory Group notes that while it is difficult to obtain good and reliable data on mercury use on mining sites, increased monitoring of a selected number of sites with further extrapolation of the data obtained could strengthen global estimates;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group welcomes the development of a logical framework identifying an overall approach for addressing this sector. The logical framework should include an overall goal, objectives, proposed actions and outputs. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the first actions for the partnership area to consider undertaking are the development of policy models for the legalization and formalization of the sector, the development of a global knowledge base on ASGM, the creation of a technical database of existing technologies and practices, the provision of partner feedback on mercury standards on “fairtrade” gold and the provision of partner feedback to the Council on Responsible Jewellery Practices on the management of by-product mercury at large-scale mining sites. Thereafter, a set of detailed activities should be developed to enable a coordinated approach to donors. The Partnership Advisory Group urges the partnership to create a mechanism to coordinate existing and future efforts on the ground;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the involvement of the private sector in the partnership area has been very limited so far and that there is therefore a need to attract additional partners in a strategic way. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that a non-government organization co-lead would benefit this partnership area given that much work in this area in developing countries is carried out by non-governmental organizations. The partnership area lead, UNIDO, suggested that the partnership area consider having the Natural Resources Defence Council co-lead this partnership area with UNIDO. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that industry participation in the partnership could be beneficial and should be continued to be pursued by the partnership area as artisanal mining sites are often adjacent to industrial operations and that such proximity can create a number of conflicts. Additionally, as more resources are needed, the involvement of more donor countries would be beneficial. As implementation on the ground is essential to the sustainable introduction of cleaner technologies, partnership efforts to identify and involve local non-governmental organizations should continue. Finally, the Partnership Advisory Group suggests that the partnership area seek more interest

from the beneficiary countries; for example at the moment, only two beneficiary countries (Liberia and Nigeria) have formally identified themselves as official partners.

42. For the mercury cell chlor alkali production partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that the demand reduction target in the business plan is appropriate when taken along with the other indicators of progress outlined in the business plan. It is noted that global data is uncertain, particularly for emissions. There is also an issue of unaccounted for mercury at some sites, whose fate in the environment is unknown;

(b) With respect to inventories, the Partnership Advisory Group notes that global chlor alkali facility inventories are outdated and perhaps somewhat inaccurate. It is also noted that there could be small chlor alkali operations in paper mills that are not accounted for in any inventories;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that countries with smaller mercury cell capacity or small installations such as paper mills would benefit from greater networking and information dissemination and agrees that countries with relatively little production, particularly countries where enterprises are not members of industry networks such as the World Chlorine Council, should be encouraged to join the partnership. An improved inventory will be useful in identifying such countries. It was noted that European countries are represented in the partnership area indirectly through the World Chlorine Council, but the area lead nevertheless believes that European governmental participation would be valuable in terms of advice and information that could encourage progress in countries that still face issues of pollution control and conversion;

(d) Regular capacity-building and awareness-raising with regard to best practices and conversion is considered by the Partnership Advisory Group to be an important activity, both to ensure that voluntary phase-outs stay on track or accelerate and to address facilities with large releases. The Indian voluntary conversion programme was cited as an example of the benefit of strong governmental involvement in conversion efforts, in particular recognizing that the programme had resulted in phase out of 94 per cent of previous mercury cell chlor alkali production capacity. The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that enhanced dissemination of information on conversion and best practices, including fact sheets and case studies, be pursued as a means to advance progress in achieving the partnership area objectives;

(e) The Partnership Advisory Group recognizes the value of nationally established time frames for the phase-out of mercury cell technology as a mechanism for prompting industry to undertake conversion.

43. For the mercury air transport and fate research partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that it is timely for the fate and transport partnership area to review and update its 2008 business plan, taking into account the Overarching Framework as well as the timelines and other outcomes agreed by the UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session. The following suggestions were put forward by the Partnership Advisory Group for consideration by the partnership area in undertaking this work:

(i) The partnership area should communicate and coordinate activities with other partnership areas. For example, the partnership area is clearly linked with air-emissions-related partnership areas such as the coal combustion partnership and the proposed cement partnership (with regard to inventory development, modelling and training and capacity-building opportunities). The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the partnership area describe more clearly in its business plan these linkages and how it will strengthen them;

(ii) Consideration should be given to developing additional activities that address identified gaps in source emissions information (e.g., non-point sources) or promote capacity-building activities such as training and awareness-raising activities;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that additional partners would be welcomed in this partnership area and could include countries where, for example, inventory pilot projects are taking place;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the mercury air transport and fate research partnership area could play a role in tracking progress of the Global Mercury Partnership.

44. For the mercury-containing products partnership area:

(a) In general, the Partnership Advisory Group believes that the targets for the individual product areas are aligned with the overall goal of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership and are sufficiently ambitious and realistic. Some areas identified as needing increased focus are dental amalgam, non-medical measuring devices, lighting, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. Increased focus will require additional resources;

(b) For dental amalgam, the Partnership Advisory Group thinks that more ambitious targets and projects on managing dental amalgam waste should be included in future revisions of the business plan;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that there are alternatives for most product sectors, with the notable exception of lighting. It therefore does not see the development of new non-mercury technology as a major priority for this partnership area;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that there remains a need for awareness-raising, standard setting and review, technology transfer and employment of non-mercury technologies in some countries;

(e) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the products area take into consideration the varying economic, development and environmental conditions of countries while increasing its level of activity in Africa, the Asia/Pacific region and Latin America. It notes that these regions are underrepresented in the waste management and product partnership areas;

(f) The Partnership Advisory Group suggests that additional partners are required in this partnership area to achieve progress in several areas, in particular with respect to dental amalgam, non-medical measuring devices, lighting, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. It notes that the partnership area needs to engage manufacturers and Governments where manufacturers are headquartered in order to encourage elimination and reduction of mercury use in products.

45. For the mercury releases from coal combustion partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the coal partnership has established priority activities in three areas: the production of a best practice options guideline document; development of emissions inventories in target countries; and promoting emissions reductions by facilitating use of the best practice options guidelines;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the funding of €1 million from the European Commission has served to focus the targets and timelines of the partnership area in the near term, while the objectives are considered to be ambitious and realistic;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group notes the challenges of undertaking emissions inventory work, particularly in cases where there is limited or no national Government approval to undertake such work. With national Government approval for the necessary work, inventories could be produced using a bottom-up approach within six months. The Partnership Advisory Group acknowledges that without Government approval it may be necessary for the partnership area to proceed with existing published inventories or to make estimates based on available information. Either way, inventories for emissions from large coal-fired facilities in the target countries could be available within 6–12 months;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that there will be gaps in inventories relating to emissions from smaller coal-fired sources and industrial facilities but it is foreseen that the fate and transport partnership area may consider such emissions in their work;

(e) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that projects under priority area 3 identified in the coal combustion business plan are pivotal to the achievement of the partnership goals as they will demonstrate the efficacy of the best practice options guidelines in achieving quantifiable mercury reductions. There is currently a plan to initiate one project in each of the four target countries within the next 12 months. However, the Partnership Advisory Group stresses that these four projects would be the absolute minimum required to demonstrate efficacy of the best practice options guidelines. The partnership area should therefore seek further assistance and funding to facilitate as many demonstration projects as possible.

46. For the mercury waste management partnership area:

(a) The life-cycle approach to the sound management of waste containing mercury is needed to meet the objective for the waste management partnership area. Such an approach should

consider products to be the upstream end and waste disposal to be the downstream end of the overall cycle. The Partnership Advisory Group recognizes that the reduction of mercury in products needs to be addressed in order to minimize the input of mercury to waste disposal processes. The involvement of manufacturers should enhance this;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that a takeback programme for products would supplement efforts to minimize the amount of mercury entering the waste stream;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the first step in decreasing the amount of mercury entering waste treatment systems is separate collection of products and wastes containing mercury. Intermediate treatment to recover mercury and mercury removal in incineration processes are also important. Such measures can be effective in reducing the release of mercury from treatment processes and in minimizing mercury releases from dumping sites;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the partnership area needs to address best practice options and case studies on waste management systems, taking into consideration the varying economic, development and environmental conditions of countries. The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the partner efforts in the current business plan be amended to explain more clearly the various stages in each process of waste management, collection, separation, incineration and final disposal. The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that pilot projects focused on specific issues such as dental amalgam and releases from landfill sites be carried out;

(e) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that a wide variety of projects be designed to demonstrate the various levels of implementation and applicability of mercury waste management techniques and practices at the national and regional levels;

(f) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that current planning in the waste partnership area extends only to the next three years.

47. For emerging areas that have not been formalized:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group acknowledges the importance of supply and storage issues to the overall Partnership. It also acknowledges that there is a need for one or more partnership areas for these issues, as well as a need for leads for the areas, to ensure sustained activity on such issues;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group has nominated the Zero Mercury Working Group to act as interim lead on mercury storage until the meeting of the open-ended working group that is to take place in October 2009. The draft business plan for the area will be updated to align potential strategies and opportunities with the current objectives and priorities of the overall UNEP Mercury Programme. Potential partners and leads will be identified;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group notes the importance of a supply partnership area and encourages the expansion of supply activities beyond primary mercury mining to include other sources of mercury supply such as mercury cell chlor alkali production, by-product mercury from non-ferrous metals mining, and recycled mercury;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends continued partnership activity in the area of cement production and proposes South Africa might consider a leadership role for a partnership area. Furthermore, the Partnership Advisory Group recommends that a business plan be developed for consideration at the next Partnership Advisory Group meeting along with a proposal on how best to incorporate this sector in the Global Mercury Partnership with the aim of fostering sustained activities in this area;

(e) The Partnership Advisory Group recognizes the regional aspect of vinyl chloride monomer production. The Partnership Advisory Group welcomes the work initiated in this area by the Government of China and others.

B. Responding to UNEP Governing Council decision 25/5

48. The UNEP Global Mercury Partnership is recognized as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury. In paragraph 20 of its decision 25/5, the UNEP Governing Council commends the Executive Director of UNEP and members of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership for progress in developing and implementing the Partnership as a vehicle for immediate action on mercury and welcomes the progress made by the Partnership in creating an overarching framework for immediate action in the

priority areas identified in decision 24/3 IV. The Governing Council also endorsed continued involvement of UNEP in the Partnership.

49. In paragraph 34 of decision 25/5 the Governing Council requested the Executive Director, coordinating as appropriate with Governments, intergovernmental organizations, stakeholders and the Global Mercury Partnership and subject to the availability of resources, to continue and enhance, concurrently with the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee and as part of the international action on mercury, existing work in the following areas:

(a) Enhancing capacity for mercury storage;

(b) Reducing the supply of mercury from, for example, primary mercury mining;

(c) Conducting awareness-raising and pilot projects in key countries to reduce mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining;

(d) Reducing mercury use in products and processes and raising awareness of mercury-free alternatives;

(e) Providing information on best available techniques and best environmental practices and on the conversion of mercury-based processes to non-mercury based processes;

(f) Enhancing development of national inventories;

(g) Raising public awareness and supporting risk communication;

(h) Providing information on the sound management of mercury.

50. The UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session also took decisions on a number of other matters that will influence the future path of the overall UNEP Mercury Programme, in particular:

(a) The preparation of a global legally binding instrument on mercury, work on the negotiation of which is to commence in 2010 with the goal of its completion prior to the twenty-seventh regular session of the Governing Council, in 2013 (paragraphs 26, 27, and 28);

(b) The launch of a study that will inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee on various types of emitting sources (as well as current and future trends in mercury emissions) with the study analyzing and assessing the cost and effectiveness of alternative control technologies and measures (paragraph 29).

51. Below, the Partnership Advisory Group reviews the partnership area business plans to further encourage the work of the partnership areas, to promote synergy and collaboration across the partnership areas and to promote synergy and consistency with UNEP Governing Council decision 25/5.

52. The Partnership Advisory Group makes the following overall observations with regard to responding to decision 25/5:

(a) There is a need for consistency between partnership area work and decision 25/5. Accordingly:

(i) Partnership area work should complement and inform the intergovernmental negotiating process envisaged by the decision, as appropriate (for example with respect to guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices), noting that input would be needed by the third meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee;

(ii) Political decisions and considerations are the province of the intergovernmental negotiating committee;

(b) There is a need to ensure that partnership activities receive sufficient funding despite the financial needs of the intergovernmental negotiating process;

(c) The partnership areas can play a significant role in the development and dissemination of guidance materials, consistent with paragraph 34 of decision 25/5, including for example guidance on different alternatives for waste management and a menu of best practice options for reducing mercury emissions from coal combustion;

(d) As envisaged in paragraph 34 (g) of decision 25/5, the Global Mercury Partnership and the individual partnership areas have a role to play in raising public awareness and supporting risk communication. Areas where partnership activities have already been effective in raising awareness

include substitution with non-mercury alternatives, sharing of technological information and dissemination of fact sheets;

(e) Mercury release inventories can play a role in identifying priorities for future work;

(f) The intergovernmental negotiating process schedule, when it becomes available, will assist the partnership areas to orient their activities so that they can play a role in informing the intergovernmental negotiating process. The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that for the time being, in the absence of information about the intergovernmental negotiating process schedule, April 2010 is the working deadline for submission of information to UNEP for reflection in the study to be conducted by UNEP pursuant to paragraph 29 of decision 25/5. The Partnership Advisory Group urges the partnership areas to inform UNEP as soon as possible regarding any contributions to the study that they may wish to make. The intergovernmental negotiating committee may call for additional contributions from UNEP that may have different deadlines.

53. For the artisanal and small-scale gold mining partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the ASGM partnership enhance its awareness-raising activities and pilot projects in key countries to reduce mercury use by the sector. The Partnership Advisory Group also recommends that the ASGM partnership area continue:

(i) To document, examine and provide assistance to support improved legal and regulatory frameworks for the formalization of ASGM;

(ii) Contribute to the construction of a global knowledge base and monitoring system for ASGM;

(iii) Create a technical database and resource centre of existing technologies and practices and untested alternatives;

(b) In addition, the Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the ASGM partnership provide feedback on the mercury provisions of Standard Zero for “fairtrade-fairmined” gold mined artisanally and on a small-scale, that it delegate an expert member of the ASGM partnership to engage with the Alliance for Responsible Mining and Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International in the finalization of the mercury requirement for Standard Zero and that the partnership report to UNEP and the Partnership Advisory Group on the outcome of the process;

(c) The Alliance for Responsible Mining, the World Bank, through its Communities and Small-Scale Mining initiative, the Natural Resources Defence Council, UNIDO and the Artisanal Gold Council have already contributed significantly to the work in this area. The Partnership Advisory Group urges UNEP to mobilize small-scale funding to continue activities in the area that will reinforce work by these partners and that UNEP assist with the identification of funding sources for activities on a larger scale;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group urges the partnership area to develop inventories and best practices, including voluntary standards, plausible reduction scenarios and examples that can be used as models for programme design and for improved national-level public policy that could inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

54. For the mercury cell chlor alkali production partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that, as a priority matter, the partnership area should provide improved source inventory information that could inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee. The Partnership Advisory Group discussed ways to do this and agreed that this could be done in a relatively short time frame, that is, by the time of the second meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. The information should include, to the extent feasible, the number of plants per country, their size, their age and any plans for conversion;

(b) The partnership area is already tracking demand and emissions through World Chlorine Council reporting. The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that two parallel metrics, the global consumption figure and the updated baseline and tracking information noted above on the number of existing, closed and converted plants, will give the most accurate sectoral picture. In addition, an inventory will help to capture an updated global emissions picture, which will be of interest to UNEP for the update of its emissions report and to the mercury fate and transport partnership area;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group agrees that information on legal regimes in particular countries or regions applicable to the sector, including storage, would be useful. Country identification

of potentially high-polluting installations would also facilitate near-term activities of the partnership area, including better dissemination of information on best practices. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that such activities would be in accord with paragraph 34 of decision 25/5, specifically subparagraphs (d), (e) and (f);

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes the existence of synergies and the need for coordination with the storage and waste areas (particularly in terms of near-term or interim storage solutions) and agrees that inventory data would be of interest to the fate and transport partnership area.

55. For the mercury air transport and fate research partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that UNEP consider information that could be provided by the fate and transport research partnership area in the development of the updated report referred to in paragraph 36 of decision 25/5 in the light of the important network of experts that cooperated to produce the forthcoming partnership area publication and the experience gained by the area in contributing to the 2008 emissions report. This would be preferable to the production of a separate report by the fate and research partnership area;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the fate and transport research partnership area could provide information that might inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee in prioritizing the sources of mercury releases for action (for example, drawing on inventory and modelling activities of the fate and transport research partnership area and other partnership areas);

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group also notes that the fate and transport research area could provide UNEP with information on various types of mercury-emitting sources and current and future trends in mercury emissions. Whether the area could contribute to the study to be conducted by UNEP pursuant to paragraph 29 of decision 25/5 with respect to the analysis and assessment of the cost and effectiveness of alternative control technologies and measures could be explored. It is noted that the partnership area could provide information on modelling in any such contribution;

(d) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the partnership area might also contribute to activities aimed at enhancing the development of national mercury inventories in coordination with other partnership areas and possibly with other international programmes. The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the partnership area might consider activities on raising public awareness. Such activities might include reviewing the possibility of communicating scientific information to a public audience. One of the objectives of the partnership area is to enhance the sharing of information among scientists and between scientists and policy-makers.

56. For the mercury-containing products partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends that the mercury-containing products partnership area contribute to the implementation of decision 25/5 through progress in reducing the use of mercury in products, in particular through awareness-raising on both the risks of using products containing mercury and the availability of non-mercury alternatives;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the partnership area has quantitative objectives and targets that could be used to inform the intergovernmental negotiating process;

(c) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends increased cooperation between the products and waste management partnership areas. It recommends that these partnership areas consider organizing a joint meeting of the two areas or inviting partners in each area to attend meetings of the other area. It also recognizes that there will be future cooperative work with other areas, including the emerging supply partnership area.

57. For the mercury releases from coal combustion partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that the best practice options guidance document under preparation by the partnership area will be made available in August 2009 as a resource for UNEP to use in preparing the study requested under paragraph 29 of decision 25/5. Likewise, national inventories in targeted countries could be drafted in time to be used by UNEP in its preparation of the paragraph 29 study;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends increased cooperation between the coal and fate and transport partnership areas. It recommends that these partnership areas consider inviting partners in each area to attend meetings of the other area.

58. For the mercury waste management partnership area:

(a) The Partnership Advisory Group notes that one possible contribution of the mercury waste partnership area is information on best practice options as guidance on the reduction of mercury releases from waste management. Such options include the collection and separation of used products containing mercury, flue gas treatment of waste incinerators, treatment of wastewater containing mercury and leachate from landfills and treatment and disposal of solid wastes, ashes and sludge. The area is in the process of preparing such guidance with support from the Government of Japan and expects to finalize it in early 2011. The guidance could be made available to UNEP to inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee in time for its third meeting to provide basic technical knowledge for any discussion of waste management;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group recommends increased cooperation between the products and waste management partnership areas. It recommends that these partnership areas consider organizing a joint meeting of the two areas or inviting partners in each area to attend meetings of the other areas. It also recognizes that there will be future cooperative work with other areas.

59. For the emerging areas that have not yet been formalized:

(a) In respect of supply, the Partnership Advisory Group notes that Kyrgyzstan is looking for leadership from the international community in addressing primary mercury mining. The Partnership Advisory Group acknowledges the support requested from Kyrgyzstan in ensuring that no new exporting primary mercury mines are established internationally;

(b) The Partnership Advisory Group welcomes the vinyl chloride monomer project initiated in China and recommends that the results of the project be provided to UNEP to inform the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

Annex II

Report on the Informal Meeting on the Kyrgyz Primary Mercury Mine

Meeting Summary

Special meeting on the Kyrgyzstan Primary Mercury Mine Project, Geneva, Switzerland
Friday 3 April 2009

Introductions/tour de table

Mr. Craig Boljkovac of UNITAR opened the meeting. Mr Jan Huismans (UNITAR Senior Training Advisor) was appointed as Chair by consensus.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Pieter Leenknegt (Belgium), Ms. Jian Xiaodong (China), Mr. Kubanychbek Noruzbaev and Mr. Valentin Bogdetsky (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Elisabeth Fadum (Norway), Ms. Gabi Eigenmann (Switzerland), Mr. John Thompson and Ms Susan Gardner (US State Department), Ms. Marianne Bailey, Ms. Maria Doa and Mr. Thomas M. Groeneveld (US EPA), Mr. Craig Boljkovac and Ms. Dzhanat KALMYRZAEVA (UNITAR), Mr. David Piper, Ms. Brenda Koekkoek, Ms Sheila Logan and Ms Ms. Tatiana Terekhova (UNEP), Mr. Otto SIMONETT, Ms. Christina STUHLBERGER and Mr. Viktor NOVIKOV(zoï Environment Network), Ms. Susan Egan Keane (NRDC) and Mr. Peter Maxson (Concorde East/West Sprl)

Opening remarks

The Chair invited the meeting to consider the reasons why we are meeting, the overall problem of mercury, and recent events which have increased the prominence of this issue.

Overview of the mercury-related results of the 25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council

David Piper from UNEP provided introductory remarks regarding the 25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council, noting the new enthusiasm in the partnership areas, and the recent decision taken by the Governing Council to develop a legal instrument on mercury, as well as the need to increase immediate action. He set out the elements required in an agreement on mercury, highlighting the importance of limiting mercury supply as a key mechanism to reduce mercury demand and promote the use of alternatives. He also highlighted that there is currently a strategic window to take action on reducing primary mercury supply, and expressed his hope that this project could assist the government on Kyrgyzstan to develop a solution which met their needs as well as addressing this element of the global challenge. UNEP looks forward to supporting Kyrgyzstan in these considerations, and will be hosting an international forum in cooperation with them later this year to consider feasible options.

Report on the current status of the mine and initial actions in Kyrgyzstan

Mr. Noruzbaev, national workgroup coordinator from Kyrgyzstan noted that mercury mining has existed for a long time in Kyrgyzstan and that while Kyrgyzstan is not against reducing mercury production, very serious economic and social aspects must be considered in the project, given that the facility is a major employer in the region, taxpayer to the local and central government and supplier of mercury globally. He elaborated on the history of exploration of KYR mercury reserves, production facilities at the active Khaidarkan mine and noted that all mercury produced by the mine is exported, and is of high purity. Environmental issues are linked to the pollution from smelter, waste and contamination levels of agricultural soils. There was a brief presentation about other former mercury mines in the region, which needs to be considered in action plan. Their closures were partly influenced by low mercury concentration in the ore and some effects of the collapse of the USSR. Medical statistics and research on the health impacts of mercury mining and smelting operations is very limited. Information on body mercury levels seen in the local population indicates to high levels in workers, but not in other groups. There was no consideration of the role of dietary intake of mercury. Kyrgyz coordinator stressed that more detailed social research on the local level will be required, considering the role of social factors in mine closure.

Kyrgyzstan Country Development Strategy (CDS) indicates available mercury reserves sufficient for 30 years of operation. However, it also mentions that ores are depleted, and ground water intrusion is a serious problem. CDS prioritizes development of small scale deposits. Small scale mercury mining (such as in China) was previously considered in the drafting process of CDS. Although economically effective, small scale mercury mining may cause major environmental problems, and after the engagement of the Kyrgyz Mining Assocciation into the mercury project,

this option was deleted. However, small scale mercury production may increase if proper legal provisions are not taken. Currently the mine has been offered to private investors.

The issue of artisanal gold mining was highlighted. It was noted that mining licenses are available, and any citizen can obtain one, however illegal gold mining still occurs. The level of mercury use in gold mining was not known, however mercury pollution has been detected around mine sites (annual mercury releases are estimated at 200-300 kg). Local demand for mercury was also increasing, which raised a concern that, even if the mercury mine was formally closed, mercury mining would continue illegally to meet demand from the informal gold-mining sector.

The economic importance of the mine to the local region was highlighted. There may need to be some relocation from the mine region, which would require financial support. Work is underway to consider of the costs involved in closing the mine with sufficient support to the local region. An economic master plan for district is being developed by Austrian consultants working for the Austrian development agency. This economic plan will be considered as part of a national plan. The plan, which will consider the problems in the region, possible industries and suggestions for alternative activities should be available in August 2009. Participants mentioned a few possible alternatives to mercury mining, such as cement production, manufacture of fire-resistant bricks, exploration for other minerals and gold mining.

Progress in the project to-date

Mr. Craig Boljkovac gave a brief overview on the progress of the project to date, highlighting the key issues for consideration. The project, which is entitled "Development of an Action Plan to Address Primary Mercury Mining in Kyrgyzstan" is at the stage where a draft Socio-Economic Assessment is being completed. A technical assessment (see below) is in the late draft stage. These assessments are providing input to the development of an action plan with options which will be agreed at a National Forum with the participation of relevant ministries and stakeholders (by government decree) in June or July 2009. A final decision on the fate of the mine is anticipated in August 2009.

Mr. Victor Novikov and Ms. Christina Stuhlberger (GRID-Arendal, ZOÏ Environment Network) provided an overview of the assessment undertaken to date. This report showed significant local pollution with samples, especially agricultural soils, exceeding national limits. The report also demonstrated there were technical-economic problems for the mining company, including ore depletion, mining difficulties and low revenues, which have become critical over the last six months. Subsidies in the form of low energy prices and tax reductions are received by the company. A number of alternatives had been identified as mentioned above, however at this stage it is not possible to put a priority or ranking on these options. This should be seen very much as a work in progress, and recommendations for the most suitable options would be based on consultations with the government of Kyrgyzstan.

Ms Brenda Koekkoek (UNEP) presented information on the proposed international forum to be held later in 2009. This meeting was to consider the cost-effectiveness of mercury mining, and the need to transition to other activities. The forum would inform donors and start to explore what a package to address the issues might look like. In discussion of this, it was raised that it would be useful to explore which countries already have country programs of assistance to Kyrgyzstan, and investigate how these may contribute to the program. UNITAR indicated that this would be included in the socio-economic assessment. Another issue to be further considered is what kind of information materials should be available for forum participants (assessments, action plan, etc).

UNEP also presented the thought starter which had been made available for the meeting, and which presented the project in a standardized international format. Currently, there are four main areas set out as expected results, however feedback on these would be very useful. Activities are set out as specific steps, and consideration of the suitable group to undertake these activities may be part of later discussions. The need for consulting suitable experts and donors was highlighted, as well as the need to consider available information. It was noted by UNEP that the partnership area did not currently have the expertise to undertake the detailed assessment and generation of a plan for the economic restructuring of the mine and the local area. It would be necessary to involve a range of other organizations, including development banks, who had such expertise. UNEP noted that the logframe presented should be seen a way to focus discussion, and may reflect how future elements are structured. It was noted that there is a need to ensure we don't lose sight of the major objective, which should be to stop the primary mining of mercury.

It was indicated that the national seminar in Kyrgyzstan on mercury mining issues and action plan may be arranged in the middle of this year.

Closing of the Meeting

In closing the meeting, Mr. Huismans thanked participants for their open participation and welcomed the submission of additional ideas.

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