

**Mercury-Containing Products Partnership Area
Meeting Report
24 September 2009**

Overview

1. The annual meeting of the Mercury-Containing Products Partnership Area was held via teleconference on 24 September 2009.
2. The teleconference was hosted by the Partnership lead, Dr. Maria Doa of the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA), from EPA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
3. The teleconference was attended by 25 call-in attendees and 6 in-person attendees, representing 5 national governments and 12 non-governmental organizations.

Role of the Products Partnership in relation to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

4. Brenda Koekkoek and David Piper of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided an overview of how the Products Partnership could operate in accord with the forthcoming Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) and Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meetings to develop a legally-binding instrument to address global mercury issues.
5. The OEWG will convene in Bangkok, Thailand, from 19 to 23 October 2009. For more information, please visit <http://www.chem.unep.ch/MERCURY/WGprep.1/Meeting.htm>.
6. The official INC process is scheduled for 5 sessions and will occur between June 2010 and February 2013, at roughly 8 to 9 month intervals between meetings. Governments will be able to determine the dates and locations of meetings, but will be restricted in flexibility to some degree on timing of meetings in order to accommodate the existing Governing Council timeline and allow for timely submission and translation of meeting materials.
7. Participants from UNEP suggested that documents similar to those submitted for the October 2008 OEWG 2 meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, will be developed based on new and improved data, as well as specific requests of parties to the INC. In order to have maximum effectiveness, all new data and materials will need to be completed and submitted by the end of 2011.
8. Participants agreed that it is likely that “Products” will be a mercury sector discussed early in the OEWG/INC process.

Existing mercury-containing products reduction goals and the merits of developing quantifiable measures and appropriate monitoring tools

9. Participants discussed the need to enhance the data collection and reporting of overall and product sector consumption data:
 - a. A participant suggested that one key to enhancing the work of the Product Partnership will be to improve the overall estimates of global mercury use in total and per product category. While it was agreed that the existing summary table in the Business Plan was generally acceptable, participants agreed that updates for all product sectors (especially dental amalgam) would benefit

future activities of the Products Partnership and feed into better estimates of global and sector baselines.¹

- b. A participant suggested that better data could be used to develop a priority or ranking protocol for mercury-containing product sectors.
- c. In a submitted written statement, one participant commented:

Since the Hg consumption figures for product categories are all given in ranges, since some of these ranges are pretty large, and since even these ranges will undergo further revision in the coming months, I would suggest that using them as a baseline from which to gauge future progress has limited value.

Therefore I think part of the product partnership effort should be devoted to identifying the manufacturers of mercury containing products around the world (the people at Lowell have already started such a list), beginning with the largest manufacturers and applications, and to encourage reporting on the mercury content of their products (much as NEWMOA does). More precise targets could be developed that involve reducing the number of manufacturers and the total mercury content of the different product categories. This would have the further advantage of reducing mercury use merely by drawing attention to the companies involved.

- d. Another participant echoed the call for improved data, especially where supply/storage and exports/trade data were concerned. Where dental amalgam was concerned, the participant suggested a potential, increased leadership and coordination role for the World Health Organization (WHO).
- e. A participant expressed concern in regard to the OEWG-INC timeline given the uncertainty of overall and sector specific data for products.
- f. In regard to data for dental amalgam, a participant noted that it is important to consider that sector totals might require revision because it is uncertain whether totals reflect the fact that dental amalgam capsules are not entirely composed of mercury (i.e., do existing totals pertain to the amount of mercury in a capsule, the total weight of a capsule, or a combination due to differences in data reporting).
- g. The Partnership lead mentioned that EPA's ongoing rulemaking efforts pertaining to mercury in certain products are likely to generate data that could enhance the quality and quantity of economic, exposure, and risk data associated with targeted products.

10. Participants also engaged in a robust discussion of whether reduction goals were too ambitious.

- a. On one hand, it was suggested that data limitations and a limited timeframe might be better served by identifying and prioritizing product sectors for increased emphasis. Where appropriate, this approach could build on and apply project design that has demonstrated success in the health care sector (with modification, as necessary). As to data limitations, it was noted that the Business Plan was operating on limited data from 2005 at the near midpoint for 2015 reduction goals.

¹ Note: Peter Maxson provided updated figures for the Business Plan in response to the call for comments prior to the teleconference. Updated data is reflected in draft Business Plan distributed with this Meeting Report.

- b. The alternative position was that the 2015 endpoint could be used to shape and streamline future projects so that innovative approaches could be tailored to the particular challenges of a product sector. It was emphasized that more and more technological advances, as well as mercury-free alternatives, were entering the global market, which could inform project design and selection. It was also noted that, in many product sectors, challenges would remain present yet are increasingly familiar and surmountable.
 - c. A participant suggested that the overall goals and objectives set forth in the Business Plan were appropriate and ambitious; however, it was suggested that the Business Plan be modified to demonstrate a nexus between goals and projects/priority actions, as well as means to describe and/or measure measurable steps taken toward achieving 2015 goals.
 - d. It was also suggested that the need to improve data collection, quality, and quantity was not mutually exclusive of ongoing or future efforts of projects. Participants agreed that efforts to improve data collection and monitor progress toward Business Plan goals and objectives could be incorporated into projects. It was also suggested that all progress achieved by projects be captured as beneficial to the Products Partnership and the Global Mercury Partnership, where feasible and appropriate.
 - e. A participant commented that drawing conclusions on measuring success in the Products Partnership remains challenging because there are often many means of measuring reduction, but no consensus on baselines or the preferred metric (e.g., reductions manufacturing versus reductions in consumption).
 - f. A participant suggested a format to better present the status and progress per product sectors via a summary of the sector, a list of projects, and a list of known challenges. This format could be used in decision-making related to the expansion of project and overall Partnership activities or to refocus and streamline existing strategies.
 - g. The Partnership lead summarized the existing interpretation of the Products Partnership and Business Plan structure as a balance of comprehensive and aggressive overall reduction goals and a “laboratory” for best practices and other approaches to mercury in products. In addition, it was noted that EPA supports ambitious overall and sector goals.
 - h. The Partnership lead also commented on the lack of “perfect data” in the products sector, whereby it was likely that any measurement methodology would be required to be multifaceted (e.g., a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures). It might also be required to employ different measures for individual projects when compared to the overall goals and objectives of the Products Partnership.
11. A participant called for a new approach to achieving mercury reduction goals by targeting product manufacturers. The process could start by identifying global manufacturers, then seeking to engage them based on demonstrated examples of engagement and collaboration to achieve reduction or cessation or mercury use.
- a. A participant commented that a list of known mercury manufacturers was being compiled by the University of Massachusetts (UMass), to support the October 2009 meeting of the OEWG.
12. A participant commented that ongoing and future efforts of the Products Partnership should be wary about the status of the global economy, such that strategies to develop and implement mercury-free products and

technologies might be required to be postponed. Dental amalgam was cited as a product sector likely to be affected by global economic trends (i.e., despite known human health and aesthetic advantages of mercury-free resins, patients opt for more affordable mercury-containing dental amalgam). In addition, there is concern that enforcement of prohibitions on secondary mercury production and exportation could be hindered as economic factors such as employment and shuttering of small businesses are on the rise.

13. A participant commented that even as reduction goals are realized in some regions, it is likely that residual demand for products will exist in the developing world.
 - a. Other participants noted, however, that there is much to be learned from EU reports about not only growing interest in mercury-free substitutes, but also the likelihood that the arte substitution could accelerate as status quo mercury-containing products were eliminated. Dental amalgam was a product category cited to illustrate this trend, as it is suggested that there is growing interest in more natural-looking composites is growing in developed and developing regions.

Status and results of existing projects and opportunities for new or expanded projects in relation to other products (e.g., lamps, batteries, dental amalgam)

14. A participant from HCWH described the progress of the Global Health Care Initiative, which is administered by HCWH and WHO within the auspices of the Products Partnership. In the past year, successes have been realized for projects focusing on sphygmomanometers (Argentina, the Philippines), fever thermometers (Taiwan, Uruguay), and mega-cities (Buenos Aires, Delhi, and Mexico City). In addition, the participant described a ten-point strategy being engaged on a global scale.
15. A participant from UMass described the Sustainable Hospitals Program, which is working with partners in Ecuador and Mexico on a year-long project to engage healthcare stakeholders and train specialists and hospital staff in Latin America on mercury reduction. Staff will facilitate mercury reduction and improved management of waste mercury in two Ecuadorian hospitals and two Mexican hospitals, as well as assisting with the baseline quantification of mercury currently in use and the amount subsequently reduced. Efforts are designed so that the development of technical skills and capacity in these countries can be successfully replicated in additional hospitals. Project staff recently formed a core team and developed project materials; training and rudimentary assessment activities are commencing in Ecuador and Mexico in the next few weeks.
16. A participant from UNITAR described the progress of mercury emissions and products inventories projects in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic is progressing well and has finished a situation analysis on mercury management. Next steps will be to develop a preliminary mercury emissions inventory via the UNEP Toolkit. It was also noted that Panama participated in a workshop to provide a “lessons learned approach” for using the UNEP Toolkit in the Dominican Republic, which demonstrates synergy between previous mercury pilot projects. In Nicaragua, progress has not been as rapid. Nicaragua has signed a memorandum of agreement, but work has not commenced. However, it is expected that inventories in both countries will include emissions estimates from mercury-containing products that could be used to design a strategy for including such data on national PRTRs.
17. A participant from UNEP mentioned that a review of lessons learned is being used to revise the UNEP Toolkit, which helps countries to build part their knowledge base through the development of a mercury inventory that identifies sources of mercury releases in their country and estimates or quantifies these releases. This revision will seek to incorporate information from various Products Partnership successes.
18. A participant from the Secretariat of the Basel Convention described the progress to date in efforts to raise awareness, exchange information, and develop environmentally sound waste management plans to safely

manage mercury wastes in Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Costa Rica, and Uruguay). Initial efforts have emphasized mercury wastes from the health care sector. To date, The Basel Secretariat in Geneva has signed an MOU with the Basel Convention Regional and Coordinating Centre in Uruguay; the Uruguay Centre is recruiting staff and negotiating MOUs with individual countries in Latin America.

19. A participant from UNEP described potential areas for the Products Partnership to consider via a UNEP-EPA cooperative agreement, including projects that focus on lamps, batteries, collection, and disposal. It was also recommended the Products Partnership consider awareness-raising and other projects pertaining to cosmetics, particularly in Africa.
20. A participant from Costa Rica indicated interest in participating in projects related to product inventories, waste management capacity-building, and long-term storage options.
21. A participant from Occupational Knowledge International proposed the concept of a voluntary certification program to establish an international mercury content standard for fluorescent lamps. It was also suggested that the Products Partnership recalibrate its representation of demand trends and reduction goals for fluorescent lamps due to the global increases in use of CFLs.
 - a. A participant from the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) mentioned that a similar standard is undertaken by NEMA members and has been incorporated into the EPA Energy Star program.
22. A participant suggested that the Products Partnership build on the successes of efforts in the health care sector to consider a suite of projects, specifically batteries, measuring and control devices, and electronic and electrical equipment. It was acknowledged that such an expansion would not be to the exclusion or detriment of health care projects, but rather segue to address additional, emerging areas of concern.

Interest in a face-to-face meeting of the Products Partnership

23. The Partnership lead proposed hosting a multi-day, face-to-face Products Partnership meeting in Washington, D.C., in Spring 2010.
24. Participants agreed that such a meeting would be beneficial to addressing concerns identified during the teleconference and others that might arise as the INC process launches.
 - a. It was also suggested that such a meeting incorporate the Waste Management Partnership and consider the modification of the Business Plan to support the INC process.