

Minutes of the meeting

Regional meeting for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Preparation for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on mercury

The regional consultations took place in the hotel Jolly Alon, Chisinau, Moldova, from 16 to 17 October 2018. The consultations included presentations of the documents available for COP2, followed by discussions among Governments addressing various issues to be discussed at COP2. In addition, information sessions on other matters of relevance in the chemicals and waste cluster such as Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management were held back-to-back with the regional consultations on 18 October 2018 led by the respective secretariats and bureau members.

There were 44 participants in the meeting representing the 18 countries of the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan and Ukraine), international organizations and agencies UNDP Astana, SAICM Secretariat, BRS Secretariat and World Health Organization, the Stockholm Convention Regional Centre in the Czech Republic, and civil society participants representing Zero Mercury Working Group and IPEN.

1) Opening of the meeting

Meeting was opened by Rossana Silva-Repetto, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention who welcomed all participants in the meeting. She acknowledged the generous support of donors from Austria, Japan, Sweden and Switzerland who made the meeting possible. Bureau member Ms. Svetlana Bolocan, CEE bureau representative from Moldova, welcomed all on behalf of the host country. Delegates were also welcomed by secretary Secretary of State, Ms. Valentina Tapis, Ministry of Agriculture of Moldova who emphasized importance of the Minamata Convention for countries with economies in transition and invited more countries in the region to become Parties as soon as possible.

2) Adoption of the agenda

The meeting agreed to conduct their deliberations from 9 am till 6 pm with one hour lunch break. Agenda was adopted with additional presentation from Product partnership and dental amalgam. The working languages of the meeting were English and Russian.

3) Update of activities since COP1

Mr. Karel Bláha, CEE bureau representative from Czech Republic, informed delegates about bureau meetings that were held inter sessionally between COP1 and COP2 and he added that the EU will hold its preparatory meeting on 22 October and early November and WEOG will meet in the margins of the OECD meeting in early November 2018.

Georgia informed that started administrative procedure for ratification and hope to finish by end of 2018. Bosnia and Herzegovina also informed about their progress in accession to the Minamata Convention, that they are half way through. Ukraine also informed on the progress in their ratification and noted that the document is with their President. Tajikistan also started national procedures and hopes to be able to finish ratification by end of the year 2018.

Kazakhstan informed that it holds today its regular meeting of stakeholders towards ratification of the Second stage of ratification. Last but not least, Armenia also noted that their country ratified the convention in the intersessional period and is a Party now, too.

Countries making progress in ratification should also inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

The Executive secretary reminded delegations that there is a need to nominate national focal points even if countries have not yet finished the ratification procedures, because NFP facilitates communication on the matter of the convention.

She provided update on Secretariat matters; the secretariat should have 10 positions but was not yet able to recruit staff at full. Currently, there are five positions filled, the executive secretary and four secretariat staff who also worked in the interim secretariat. The recruitment continues, a technical officer joined on 15 October and a budget officer will join on 1 November 2018. She also noted that positions are temporary for one year and they will become fixed pending the decision of the COP2.

Mr. David Ogden (BRS Secretariat) also commented on the cooperation with Minamata secretariat and noted that working at the same floor is much easier.

Information on inter-sessional work was also provided. As agreed by COP1, the Secretariat undertook activities on effectiveness evaluation, on waste thresholds, on contaminated sites and on open burning of waste. The outcomes are provided in documents prepared for COP2 (working and information documents, as appropriate).

The secretariat informed about status of contributions to the Convention trust funds (three of them). She noted on the difference between the approved amount and pledged amount (70% of funding approved for General Trust fund. She also informed delegations that on the reminder of the bureau on the procedures of providing support, due to the lack of funding, the Secretariat will only support participation of Parties to the COP2, and will prioritize participation

Executive Secretary also informed on meetings of the Governing Board to the Specific International Program to support capacity building and technical assistance. Call for applications to its First round from 5 June to 31 August 2018. 19 applications were received by the deadline. Second meeting of the Governing board took place in Oslo 2-3 October 2018 and the board reviewed the complete and eligible projects and decided to fund 5 projects in the first round. The projects are on the website. (Africa - Lesotho and Benin, GRULAC - Argentina, CEE - Armenia, Asia-Pacific - Iran). Activities will start immediately after the COP2. On the work of the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC), the ES noted with apprehension that Claudia-Sorina Dumitru was elected vice chair and rapporteur for the work of the Committee.

4) Overview of the general structure and programme for COP2 of the Minamata Convention

Delegates received information on the structure of the second meeting of the COP2 and also a scenario note prepared by the COP2 president. The president will guide the meeting on the order of items of the agenda and the plan is to advance items that require discussions in contact groups early on Monday. The bureau expects to have: two technical groups (waste and thresholds and effectiveness evaluation), budget, and secretariat (institutional issues) groups established as contact groups.

Important issues for consideration in preparation for COP2 were mentioned - election of officers, credentials, venue and date for COP3, contact groups and process of review of Annex A and Annex B. The chair also underlined the importance of the agenda, annotated agenda and scenario note for effective preparation to the COP2. He also noted that the tentative timetable is a first iteration and it would be adjusted by the bureau depending the progress in the meeting.

Regional meetings on the spot will be held every day, chair suggested to have CEE meeting on Sunday at 3 pm in Geneva (bureau 11 am - 1 pm) and requested CEE members to attend the meeting on Sunday.

Further, the CEE delegates asked about inter-sessional meetings between COP2 and COP3 - no budget approved for this activity, but it is opened for voluntary contributions. Some delegations emphasized on the importance for regional meetings as they present a possibility for better preparation to the COP. In CEE region there are many non-parties and their involvement in the contact groups as co-chair should be encouraged.

5) Introduction of the documents for COP2

The secretariat introduced in detail the actions and documents prepared for COP2 on technical matters and identified areas where contact group discussions would be desired:

Document on releases MC/COP.2/4Rev.1 - the rev was issued for administrative reasons as comments did not reach the secretariat on time. Decision 1/17 to compile information, three parties, only one identified sources of releases (point sources). Suggestion to defer the decision to 2021 as requested by the convention.

on Mercury waste, ZMWG a IPEN - suggested to further work on the documents regarding the thresholds on contaminated sites as we need to understand why we have certain thresholds and what it means. CEE is favorable to establishment of a contact group and understands the importance of further work on this matter inter-sessionally.

On financial rules, non-EU countries asked for reconsidering second "six alt" as option to go forward and also asked EU to consider their position to come up as one region, where possible. Chairs summarized that decision is simple - to clear brackets remaining and identify information required for the review and request all to provide information to COP3.

Regarding the article 14, SCRC discussed on the work done by existing regional centres (SCRC and BCRCs) for Minamata Convention and asked whether it would be possible to find ways how to acknowledge/take into account their work done under the Minamata Convention when being evaluated under respective conventions. Chair noted that this issue would need to be taken up by countries in the region.

Ms. Claudia Dumitru briefed the meeting on the Implementation and Compliance Committee and their work in elaborating the Rules of procedure for the committee and preparation the most appropriate rules for the committee under the Minamata Convention. In the ensuing discussion participation of observers in the ICC meeting was clarified and delegates agreed that it would be beneficial to have observers in the ICC meetings. It was further explained that the text would allow for that, in line with the spirit of Minamata and ongoing practices. However, as opening up the text could entail delays, the meeting proposed to accept the text as drafted in the ICC rules of procedure.

RECETOX informed about HBM4EU project and mercury being priority substance in the project and also on pilot project implemented jointly by UNEP and WHO in Russia and Kyrgyzstan that tested WHO guidelines as updated in the field and provided an useful input into the work on effectiveness evaluation. In addition, she also informed about the project coordinated by the Czech Republic and submitted a project looking at to the review of the ESFRI roadmap in 2018 (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures). The project EIRENE is looking at exposure of the human population but also to other factors affecting human health. The Czech Republic proposed such infrastructure in 2017 to the ESFRI update. While the project was not approved yet, the evaluation recognized that there is a significant gap at the EU level and research infrastructure studying human exposure and exposome should be established. This infrastructure would be also open and used for capacity building for non-EU countries in the European region (and wider).

On Effectiveness evaluation, the co-chair of the group briefed on the meeting in Ottawa and its outcomes. The full report is contained in document INF8, full set of comments in document INF15 and proposal for decision (and further work) in working document 2/13. She noted that it will be a topic that requires discussion over several stages, but pragmatic approach was taken by the group.

WHO representative provided the participants with a short presentation on human bio monitoring regarding mercury. She underlined that human bio monitoring can be an indicator for effectiveness evaluation because it is very sensitive in evaluating human exposure on the basis of risk reduction measures (in particular the consumption advisories). She also provided information of outcomes on the UNEP/WHO GEF supported project and noted that documents are published on WHO Euro website for countries reference/use. Co-chair concluded that this region is supportive to the recommendations provided in 2/13, experts should continue the groups work while recognizing the differences from POPs monitoring.

The meeting also considered status quo regarding financial rules and took note of the work to be done at COP2. The Executive secretary has also provided a detailed information on the documents available for COP2 regarding the item 5(k) Secretariat and highlighted new documents pre-

pared for the COP including the document 2/15.add1 prepared during the bureau meeting. In addition, a joint document is currently being prepared by Minamata Secretariat and BRS secretariat on the different services they are purchased or shared with BRS. BRS secretariat also added that INF7 is based on 20 years of experience and standard costs for UN and that the costing is based on procedures. Co-chairs emphasized that the sooner the decision on the Secretariat is taken, the better for the Convention and that the matter was discussed quite extensively in previous meetings. Nevertheless, it will be taken up by the COP2 early on.

Another matter discussed was emissions resulting from open burning of waste. The meeting took note that submissions from Moldova, Nigeria, UNITAR and IPEN. Moldova clarified that during their Minamata Initial Assessment found that mercury toolkit did not contain sufficient guidance how to estimate releases from this sector and suggested that climate change convention contained more applicable procedure for this sector. Republic of Macedonia confirmed that on the basis of the field tests (samples) undertaken in their Minamata Initial Assessment they can confirm that for open burning of wastes the results coming from toolkit (as it stands) are underestimated. She suggested to share with the region results of their inventory.

Executive secretary presented program of work and budget contained in the document 2/18. She also said that capital reserve is now full due to considerable savings reached due to delayed recruitment of the Minamata Convention staff and contribution on top of assessed contributions by a Party. She highlighted that document 2/18 also contains a table in its Annex II that shows assessed contributions. She also mentioned the support provided by UNEP on organization and also communication from other branches/divisions/offices of UNEP in 2018 and also budget for 2019. She emphasized that for the 2019 there is no increase required, but authorization to move the expenditures from 2018 to 2019. She also presented a template that secretariat prepared for a more detailed sheet with activities and accounts for staff costs in relation to the budget contained in document INF 9.

Several countries asked about the expected assessed contributions of countries in the process of ratification of the Minamata Convention. The Secretariat promised to liaise with Nairobi office to get the information to countries and some delegations mentioned that information could be provided prior COP2 as encouragement for further ratifications.

6) Way forward

Under the item 6 the Minamata Secretariat presented preparations for COP2 regarding registrations, logistics and documents. She informed that a travel support should be provided to parties only due to insufficient amount of resources available to cover participant travel. She also mentioned that a letter providing information

Moreover, there will be a technical briefing on Sunday and a number of showcase events, knowledge labs and other events taking place during the COP2. application forms for those events are provided on the website.

7) Support for implementation and activities

UNDP Astana office project manager informed about mercury inventory taking place in Kazakhstan at present. initial assessment revealed mining activities and coal burning as the most significant sources. The project will investigate further mercury content in coal. Level 2 assessment is taking place now and results were provided to Ministry of Energy for consultations. Expect ratification is planned before end 2020.

it was also noted that INF document will also be prepared on Support for implementation and activities for COP2 and various agencies were contributing to activities undertaken btw COP1 and COP2.

8) Updates from the Chemicals and Waste Cluster

The BRS secretariat provided the meeting with information on a busy work in preparations to the joint meeting of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions to be held in Geneva 29 April - 9 May 2019 and what is expected from parties and on organization of work of the joint meeting. More details will be provided at the next regional meeting in to be held in Brno, Czech Republic 25-27 March 2019. And there is possibility for a back to back short meetings on Minamata Convention.

The SAICM Secretariat informed on the agenda of the information session scheduled for 18 October 2018 and highlighted the needs for input for beyond 2020 and in preparations to OEWG3 (Montevideo, first week in April 2019) and ICCM5 held in Germany in October 2020.

9) Other matters

A delegate representing the Product Partnership under the Global Mercury Partnership informed on harmonization of custom codes prepared under the Product Partnership under the Global Mercury Partnership that it could help distinguish on import and export of mercury and mercury added products. and that work could facilitate work under article 4 and article 21. The Partnership informed that their received 40 responses to the survey so far and suggested other governments to undertake the survey prior COP2 to collect more views.

Representative of World Alliance of Mercury free Dentistry informed about a meeting in Bangkok in May 2018 and report available in the website¹ and provided participants with proposal for a CRP provided by African region in preparation for COP2, suggesting amendment Minamata Convention regarding dental amalgam and Annex A/B.

10) Closing of the meeting

Co-chairs reminded delegations on actions needed for COP2, in particular regarding the nominations to the bureau, technical groups and and potential co-chairs of the contact group from the CEE region. Moreover, co-chairs acknowledged contribution of donors, arrangements provided by the host country and their technical experts, and also to SCRC-RECETOX for the meeting support. The meeting closed at 13:30.

¹ <https://mercuryfreedentistry.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/workshop-report.pdf>