

Mercury Waste

Ibrahim Shafii

Secretariat of the Basel Convention

Secretariat of the Basel Convention
International Environment House
15 Chemin des Anemones
Chatelaine CH-1219
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
Website: www.basel.int
E-mail: ibrahim.shafii@unep.ch



Contents of the Presentation

- The mercury waste issue
- Overview of the Basel Convention
- Development of the Technical Guidelines on Environmentally Sound Management of mercury waste



The mercury waste issue

- Mercury poses special waste management challenges
 - it cannot be destroyed
 - only contained in form so that it does not circulate in the environment.
- Products containing mercury enter the waste streams from various sources such as municipal, medical, and industrial waste
 - getting mercury out of the waste stream may be most effective way to manage such waste.
- Inadequate or improper disposal of mercury containing waste can result in leakage to the environment.
- Waste containing mercury needs to be managed in an environmentally sound manner.



The Basel Convention provides a framework to manage waste containing mercury.

- Stipulates that any transboundary movement of wastes (export, import, or transit) is permitted only when the movement itself and the disposal of the concerned hazardous or other wastes are environmentally sound.
- Defines wastes as “substances or objects which are disposed of or are intended to be disposed of or are required to be disposed of by the provisions of national law”.
- Includes a general obligation for parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the generation of hazardous wastes and other wastes within it is reduced to a minimum, taking into account social, technological and economic aspects.



Environmentally Sound Management

“taking all practicable steps to ensure that hazardous wastes or other wastes are managed in a manner which will protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects which may result from such wastes”

•ESM includes minimizing the generation of such wastes, reducing transboundary movements, improving treatment and disposal, and ensuring such wastes are handled as close as possible to where they were generated



Mercury waste is classified in the Basel Convention

Relevant Annex I

(Categories of wastes to be controlled)

- Y1 – Clinical wastes from medical care in hospitals, medical centres and clinics
- Y17 – Waste resulting from surface treatment of metals and plastics
- Y18 – Residues arising from industrial waste disposal operations
- Y29 – Mercury; mercury compounds



Classification of mercury waste in the Basel Convention

Annex VIII (List A): hazardous wastes when containing annex III characteristics

A1010 – Metal wastes and waste consisting of alloys of ...mercury

•**A1030 – Wastes having as constituents or contaminants any of the following....mercury; mercury compounds**

•**A1170 – Unsorted waste batteries (when containing Hg)**

•**A1180 – Waste electrical and electronic assemblies or scrap containing e.g. Mercury-switches; glass from CRTs (containing Hg)**

•**A2010 – Glass waste from CRTs and other activated glasses**



Classification of mercury waste in the Basel Convention

Annex VIII (List A)(contd)

- **A4020 – Clinical and related wastes**
- **A4100 – Wastes from industrial pollution control devices**
- **A4140 – Waste consisting of or containing off-specification or outdated chemicals corresponding to Annex I categories**



The Basel Convention and other chemical related MEAs

- Other chemical conventions invoke the Basel Convention for waste management rather than developing separate regimes
 - Stockholm Convention on POPs Article 6
 - Montreal Protocol, MOP Decision V/24
- Similar approach could be followed for mercury.



Development of technical guidelines on ESM of mercury waste

- Guidelines aimed at assisting Parties in achieving ESM of mercury waste under development jointly with UNEP.
- Follow Decision VIII/33 of the COP8 to the Basel Convention.
- First draft presented in September 2007 to the OEWG6 meeting of the Basel Convention.
- Expected to be finalized before negotiations of the mercury LBI completed.



Contents of technical guidelines

- Guidance on ESM criteria and practices of mercury waste
- Legislative and regulatory framework
- Application for mercury waste prevention and minimization
- Identification and inventories
- Handling, collection, storage (interim) and transportation of mercury waste
- Treatment of mercury waste and recovery of mercury waste
- Long term storage and disposal of mercury waste
- Remediation of sites contaminated with mercury
- Public awareness and participation

Draft document available at:

www.basel.int/techmatters/mercury/guidelines/040409.doc



Status of the technical guidelines

- COP9 (June 2008):
 - Decision IX/15 agreed for work to continue on the guidelines;
 - Established an Intersessional Working Group to further develop the guidelines, Japan agreed to act as lead country until Jan. 2010.
- 4th draft currently available and will be presented to OEWG7 in May 2010 and COP10 in Oct. 2011.
- Guidelines are being pilot tested in capacity building projects:
 - Basel Convention supported projects in Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay (USA funding).
 - UNEP supported projects in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, Pakistan, and the Philippines (Norway funding). Results expected late 2009 /early 2010.



Conclusions

- Mercury containing waste is highly dispersive and needs to be managed in an environmentally sound manner.
- The Basel Convention provides a framework for managing waste containing mercury
 - The Technical Guidelines on mercury are a tool available to assist governments achieve ESM of mercury waste.
- Policies aimed at the reduction of mercury in products may be the most effective means to control mercury in waste.

