

Mercury Storage-Supply Partnership and Related Initiatives



Michael Bender

Mercury Policy Project / Zero Mercury Working Group

www.mercurypolicy.org / www.zeromercury.org

UNEP Open Ended Working Group Meeting

Bangkok, Thailand

October 2009



**Mercury
Policy Project**

Presentation Overview

- Overview
- New Partnership Area
- Regional, Country Initiatives
- Next Steps
- Summary



Mercury Fountain in
Barcelona, Spain

Global Hg supply reductions & storage

- More cost effective to curtail production, sequester mercury before it is haphazardly dispersed to millions of users and subsequently released to the environment
- INC to develop provisions to reduce the supply of mercury and enhance the capacity for its environmentally sound storage in its overall approach to mercury (paragraph 27.b of Decision 25/5).
- INC deliberations expected to:
 - Address trade related issues.
 - Develop effective universal global coordination, action, and enforcement mechanisms.
 - Assist in developing storage capacity in certain regions.

Creation of new partnership area on supply and storage

- Initiated during Partnership Advisory Group in April 2009:
 - Purpose is to enhance the on-going work in these areas, identified as a priority in GC Decision 25/5, paragraph 34.
 - Zero Mercury Working Group agreed to serve as interim chair with understanding that government lead or co-lead would be identified.
- Proposed business plan (updated version of earlier UNEP draft) drafted in consultation with stakeholders.
 - Anticipates limited life of partnership in deference to anticipated treaty obligations and governance structure.
 - Therefore, focus on near term priority activities.

Draft business plan

Partnership goal:

- reduce mercury supply to 50% by 2013 (from 2005 baseline)
- need 600 ton mercury reduction beyond EU/USA export bans.



Reduction opportunities include:

- additional mercury export restrictions
- storage of chlor-alkali mercury, and
- less primary mercury mining.

*An Open Mercury Cell
Chlor Alkali Plant*

Source: Center for Science and
the Environment, New Dehli,
"Down to Earth"

Regional, country initiatives

- A number of countries/regions have adopted legislation or enacted regulatory measures to reduce mercury supply from being traded.
 - EU Hg export ban by 2011, phase out mining.
 - U.S. Hg export ban by 2013.
 - Hg export bans in Scandinavian countries.
- The EU and US are taking steps to store Hg.
- Not all countries need permanent Hg storage. Hg storage is most important for those countries/regions that have much excess mercury supply.

Regional mercury storage projects

- Storage projects in the Asia-Pacific (AP) and the Latin America and Caribbean regions (LAC) aimed at reducing excess mercury supply.
- Meetings co-sponsored by UNEP & ZMWG, supported by Japan, Norway.
- Initiated review options for the storage of excess mercury in these regions with identified supply issues.
- Storage option preferable to re-entry of elemental mercury into the global marketplace.



Regional Hg storage initiatives, Cont.

- Project inception workshops took place in Thailand for AP in March and in Uruguay for LAC in April 2009.
- Regional mercury trade flow reports presented.
- Executive Committees for the project created in both regions, comprised of governments and NGOs.
- Options Analysis and Feasibility Study commissioned for long term storage of mercury in AP and expected to start soon in LAC.



Asia-Pacific regional initiative

- Recognition that improved Hg storage should contribute to Hg demand reduction.
- “Polluter pays principle” guiding principle.
- Criteria of most concern in management options:
 - Social and political acceptability (sustained leadership) of the infrastructure
 - Public health, safety and environmental impact
 - Preference for a centralized facility
 - Operating and maintenance costs.
- Global treaty embodying storage will ensure consistent & sustained national government policies.

LAC regional initiative

- Recognition of top priority to address surplus Hg from decommissioned chlor alkali plants and mining.
- Identified need to come up with extraction technologies to convert Hg compounds into elemental form.
 - Proposal also to address elemental mercury as a waste with disposal similar to other hazardous waste.
- Expressed need to deal with end of life Hg products (such as from health care) and the need to establish interim national storage facilities.
- Recognition of importance to build public support through public hearings during the environmental impact assessment of a facility.

Next steps on supply and storage

- Encourage further progress on the two regional storage projects and Kyrgyzstan primary mining project already underway.
- Collaborate on funding opportunities as they arise.
- Revise draft business plan based on input received.
- Invite potential partners to join the new partnership area and identify a government lead or co-lead.



Summary

- Investing in supply, trade and storage initiatives is more efficient and effective than trying to control mercury release.
- Storage options for large mercury quantities should be accessible globally.
 - Must be accompanied by regional and/or national legal and regulatory measures.
 - The US and EU have adopted policies to phase out exports, store surplus mercury.
 - There is a need for assistance in developing storage capacity in certain regions.
- Not all countries need permanent mercury storage. Storage is most important for those countries/regions that have excess mercury supply.