

**Report of the Informal Consultation on the
“Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chlor-alkali Sector”
Eastland Park Hotel
Portland, Maine
The United States of America**

The first informal consultation of the “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chlor-alkali Sector” took place on May 25, 2005 in the United States. The meeting was attended by representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, India, Mexico, the United States, the European Commission, the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, environmental and health care non-governmental organizations, U.S. and European industry, and U.S. states' environmental agencies. The complete list of participants can be found by clicking [here](#).

The consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chlor-alkali Sector” was moderated by Martin Dieu of the United States. The meeting was designed to initiate a discussion and lay the groundwork for the future launch of a partnership in the chlor-alkali sector. The participants reviewed the 23rd decision of the UNEP Governing Council (the 2005 Governing Council Decision), which is available on the UNEP website at www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships , and shared views on how to address the Governing Council decision to form a partnership focused on the reduction and the elimination of the use of mercury in the chlorakali process of particular facilities. The participants discussed the goals, objectives, and potential initial actions of the partnership in order to ensure that those countries which are able and interested in developing early pilot partnerships, as called for in the 2005 Governing Council Decision on Chemicals, can benefit from the views of the interested stakeholders. The informal consultation provided the basis for the partnership which will be further developed at the formal launch of the partnership.

Summary of the Discussion on Chlor-alkali

The informal consultation was structured around the [discussion paper](#), which is available on the UNEP web site (www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships). The group discussed the draft goals and objectives, and possible next steps to advance the mandate of the 2005 decision of the UNEP Governing Council. The group also discussed additional technical and policy issues relevant to the partnership, such as the significance of conversion and the importance of ensuring the viability within the partnership of multiple approaches to reducing mercury in the chlorakali processes in particular facilities, and the definition of a partner as being an entity willing to contribute time, resources, or expertise to implement the partnership. Below is a summary of what the group discussed and agreed on as the basis for the initial stage of the partnership.

Goals

The discussion on goals emphasized the need for the partnership to include conversion to non-mercury cell technologies, in addition to best management practices, as one way to eliminate mercury use in facilities, as it was noted that conversion is a best available technology for eliminating and reducing the mercury releases in the chlor-alkali sector.

The group agreed that multiple approaches, including conversion and best management practices, could be undertaken by the partnership, particularly since many countries may not be prepared for conversion and may choose not to participate in the partnership if conversion were included at this time.

The group also discussed the need to consider the implications of retiring mercury from facilities that have either converted or have been decommissioned. The possibility of forming a separate partnership to address the issue of surplus and waste broadly was also noted.

In addition, participants also suggested that the goal language for the partnership be more similar to that found in the 23rd decision of the UNEP Governing Council, and that it highlight the importance of identifying potential partners, interests, and needs. Once such information is provided by national governments to UNEP, participants agreed that appropriate working groups could be developed within the partnership by matching up the interests, needs, and capabilities of interested partners.

Objectives

Participants provided comments on the objectives of the chlor-alkali discussion paper. Participants suggested that, in addition to improving the availability of information on the global consumption of mercury by this sector, the availability of information on the global releases and safety information for workers also be improved and augmented. It was also noted that it was important not to create the appearance that an objective of the partnership is to extend the useful life of existing mercury cell plants, as this would not be acceptable to the public.

Initial actions

Participants had a variety of suggestions for initial actions of the partnership. It was noted that actions such as developing reporting procedures and collection of information on approaches and programs should proceed prior to and form the basis of a partnership work plan. This should not, however, hinder some partners from undertaking pilot activities under the partnership in the short term. A suggestion was made to formally launch the UNEP chlor-alkali partnership at a workshop being held by industry tentatively set for October 2005. This could also serve to encourage early, directed pilot projects under the partnership. Participants involved in organizing the workshop agreed to draft a 1-page proposal for the workshop and launch of the partnership by July 15, 2005 for consideration by the partners. The proposal will be posted on the UNEP web site, for review by other stakeholders interested in the partnership. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to provide comments on the proposed workshop by the end of August 2005.

The group discussed the issue of reporting under the partnership and how the global report proposed under the initial action items would achieve this. Upon learning that the global report on mercury consumption is likely to provide consolidated facility data by region, a suggestion was made that it would be more accurate to refer to it as a consolidated global report of best available information. It was also noted that despite the short time frame to produce a global report on mercury consumption by 2006, the report would be a contribution of useful information.

It was also suggested that the partnership should encourage new construction of chlor-alkali plants use of non-mercury cell technology. Participants suggested further aiding work in this area by collecting information on relevant legislation and policies regarding mercury reduction in this sector. Some discussion occurred on the definition of what constituted a “chlor-alkali facility” and concluded that this work potentially includes stand-alone, integrated facilities or expansions of existing facilities.

Action Items

Noting that the informal consultation had yielded the exchange of meaningful ideas and recommendations, the following actions could be taken in order to move forward with the chlor-alkali partnership’s goals and objectives:

- Revise language in discussion paper on chlor-alkali to reflect input provided at the consultation;
- Encourage the identification of needs and resources by national governments and other stakeholders by September 1, 2005, pursuant to the 2005 Governing Council decision;
- Assist partners involved in the planning of the stewardship workshop to draft 1-page proposal about pilot project by July 15, 2005;
- Post draft workshop proposal on UNEP web site by end of July 2005; and
- Provide comments on October 2005 workshop proposal by August 2005.

The informal consultation was held by the United States, in cooperation with UNEP, and was open to all interested stakeholders. Information was posted on the UNEP website in advance of the meeting at: www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships . Future activities of the partnership will also be posted on the web site in the interest of full transparency. Participation in the partnership is welcome at any time. To get involved or to become a partner, please contact Angela Bandemehr at bandemehr.angela@epa.gov or the UNEP Mercury Program Secretariat.