

**Discussion Paper**  
**June 15, 2005**  
**Informal Consultation on the**  
**“Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining”**

**The Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Partnership**

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining is a globally significant source of mercury releases. In the gold mining process, mercury is used to amalgamate with ore. After the amalgamation process, the mercury is often burned in an open burner, without the recapture of mercury vapor. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) estimates that 1,000 tons of mercury are released into the environment each year from this sector, a large portion of which are atmospheric emissions. In addition, large quantities of the remaining mercury-laden wastes can remain on land and in water bodies at mining sites. Better practices for safe mercury capture and reuse can reduce occupational exposures and risks in the mining communities while also achieving significant reductions in mercury releases on a global scale.

**Proposed Goal of the Partnership**

The Partnership would promote the reduction of global use and emissions from artisanal and small-scale gold mining through the reduction of mercury releases to air, water, or land that may occur during the gold manufacturing process. The Partnership would seek to support the existing international efforts in this area, in particular the efforts underway by the UNIDO Global Mercury Project, and increase the availability of community outreach programs to educate mining communities regarding opportunities to reduce the occupational and environmental risks associated with artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

**Proposed Objectives of the Partnership**

- Increase community outreach programs to educate mining communities about mercury risks and reduce occupational exposures and environmental contamination.
- Improve emissions monitoring, data collection, and reporting of mercury use in artisanal mining. Improve estimates of mercury air emissions associated with small-scale gold mining and promote their inclusion within emission inventories.
- Promote the transfer of best practices and appropriate technologies among governments, local laboratories, and miners through demonstration and introduction of cleaner, cost-effective technologies for artisanal gold extraction, such as recapture for reuse, and disseminate this information broadly.
- Provide technical support for the implementation of voluntary, cost-effective operational practices aimed at reducing air emissions of mercury from industrial gold mining, where appropriate.

## **Proposed Initial Actions of the Partnership**

The partners could agree to work together to:

- Finalize a work plan with an identified time line for this phase of the partnership, which includes mobilizing the necessary resources to address an initial set of projects under the partnership and initiating implementation of such projects.
- Pursuant to the decision of the Governing Council, consider options for reporting procedures and evaluation of mercury reductions.
- Provide technical support for the development and implementation of a Plan of Action for Regional Cooperation on Mercury Contamination in the Amazon Basin.
- Work with UNIDO and others to launch pilot emissions reductions activities using appropriate technologies, such as hand-held retorts, including training for mining communities and baseline and post-project monitoring.
- Disseminate best practice information for mercury management through UNIDO and UNEP.
- Provide in-kind assistance to selected mining communities for field training in low-cost alternative sampling equipment to test for mercury in air, soil, water, and fish.

## **Becoming a Partner**

The United States and the UNEP Mercury Program welcome all stakeholders to participate in the Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining. Generally, a partner is an entity who indicates a willingness to contribute time, resources, or expertise to implement the partnership, which would be designed to advance the objectives of the 2005 UNEP Governing Council decision. Partners can include national, state or provincial governments, international organizations, national and international companies and trade associations, national and international healthcare organizations, national and international environmental organizations, international funding institutions, and other interested stakeholders. As partners, we would hope to work together very closely to ensure the success of this partnership by working to identify the elements and mechanisms necessary to achieve the objectives of the partnership. Interested partners or participants should contact Marianne Bailey in the Office of International Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at [bailey.marianne@epa.gov](mailto:bailey.marianne@epa.gov) or fax number 202-565-2412.