

**Report of the Informal Consultation on the
“Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal
and Small-Scale Gold Mining”
June 15, 2005
Washington, D.C.
The United States of America**

The first informal consultation of the “Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining” took place in Washington, D.C., on June 15, 2005. The meeting was co-hosted by the World Bank Communities and Small Scale Mining (CASM) Secretariat, the United States, and the United Nations Environment Program Chemicals Unit (UNEP Chemicals). Representatives attended the meeting from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United States, the European Commission, environmental and social non-governmental organizations, technical and research institutes, and industry. The complete list of participants will be available on the UNEP Chemicals Partnership Website at www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships.

The consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining” was moderated by John Buccini of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Martin Dieu of the United States, and Gotthard Walser of the World Bank. The participants reviewed the decision on mercury of the 23rd UNEP Governing Council in February 2005 (UNEP GC Decision 23/9 IV), which is available on the UNEP Chemicals Partnership website at www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships, and shared views on how to implement the Governing Council decision by forming a partnership focused on the management of mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The participants discussed the goals, objectives, and potential initial actions of the partnership in order to ensure that those countries that are able and interested in developing early pilot partnerships, as called for in UNEP GC Decision 23/9 IV, can benefit from the views of the interested stakeholders. The informal consultation provided the basis for the partnership which will be further developed as pilot projects are developed and implemented.

Summary of the Discussion on Mining

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, possible next steps to advance the mandate of the UNEP GC Decision 23/9 IV, the importance of balancing research and direct actions, available technology, and additional technical and policy issues relevant to the partnership such as leveraging existing work and involving miners in discussions. 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 of the goals emphasized the need to continue to support and build upon existing international efforts to address artisanal and small-scale mining. It was recognized that the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Project (UNIDO/GEF/UNDP Global Mercury Project)-UNIDO/GEF/UNDP Global Mercury Project is a leader in these efforts and is now moving from an environmental assessment phase into an action-oriented phase. Participants

also underscored the importance of clarifying how the proposed Global Partnership supports or exists separately from the UNIDO efforts. Participants indicated that the human health impacts of mercury use should be the end point towards which the partnership would work and that the organization and implementation of the partnership should reflect this end. It was indicated that it is important for the partnership to include a wide variety of options for mining communities including the use of technology that would reduce the use, emissions, releases and health impacts of mercury and technologies that provide alternatives to mercury, keeping in mind at all times the socio-cultural and behavioral situations in individual communities. The group agreed that multiple approaches could be undertaken and should be developed for individual locations and situations. The local community should be engaged in all parts of the process.

Participants discussed the importance of educating communities about the effects of mercury, especially in areas where organizations are just beginning to address this issue. In those areas that have been the focus of considerable outreach and education in the past, it is important to ensure components for technology transfer and organizational strategies to reduce the mercury use and health impacts at the community level.

Reference to the language of UNEP GC Decision 23/9 IV was suggested as a guide for the partnership goal language (such as adding a component on health effects and reducing health impacts). The importance of identifying potential partners, interests, and needs was also noted.

Objectives

Participants provided comments on the objectives outlined in the artisanal and small-scale mining discussion paper. Participants generally agreed with the objectives but suggested that they be narrowed and refined.

Community outreach was seen as important as well as sharing of information on new technologies being developed. Thus objective 1, which calls for increased outreach and education, should focus on actions as well as education.

It was also noted that there are natural causes of mercury releases. Some suggested that Objective 2, on monitoring and data collection, could be better defined. Research and measurement can be important but should be balanced with finding solutions and completing actions to reduce mercury releases. Monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs should be incorporated so that proposed solutions could be determined to be sustainable. Existing satellite data programs could be useful in this regard. The sharing of satellite data would also support knowledge sharing on emissions as well as on projects to find synergies between existing programs and gaps in global knowledge.

There was general consensus that objective 3, to promote the transfer of best practices and appropriate technologies, is the priority, including the option of piloting non-mercury technologies. In fact, some participants suggested that objective 2, which calls for improved emissions monitoring, data collection and reporting, could become a subset of objective 3 on transfer of best practices and appropriate technologies, to ensure that monitoring and research is not done without getting at solutions in that same locale.

Participants suggested additional ideas for objectives. It was suggested to add an objective about developing economic, financial or other types of incentives to decrease mercury use, such as deploying appropriate technologies, which would increase the gold yield or price.

Initial actions

Participants indicated that the partnership is timely and important, with some noting that the current global level of effort on this issue is not solving the issue. Participants noted the need to develop a strategic plan and determine what resources are available.

Local and regional capacity should be utilized and UNIDO program countries could be used as regional information hubs, and existing networks such as the Africa Mining Network and CASM Africa are well positioned to take action in this sector.

A gap analysis could be completed of the UNIDO/GEF/UNDP Global Mercury Project to determine what it is missing and where other partners could fill in the gaps. It would benefit from post-project evaluation. The program is poised to request GEF Phase II funding, for which partners could be helpful.

Meeting Follow-up Actions:

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 artisanal and small-scale mining partnership's goals and objectives:

- Revise language in discussion paper on artisanal and small-scale mining to reflect input provided at the consultation;
- Encourage the identification of needs and resources by national governments and other stakeholders by September 1, 2005, to meet the target for identification of priority partnership areas, as identified in UNEP GC Decision 23/9 IV.

The informal consultation was co-hosted by the United States, CASM and 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 Marianne Bailey at the U.S. EPA at bailey.marianne@epa.gov, or the UNEP Mercury Program Secretariat.