

**Revised Discussion Paper Following the Informal Consultation on the
“Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining”
held June 15, 2005, Washington, DC, United States
July 22, 2005**

On June 15, 2005 an informal consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining” was held in Washington, DC. Additional details on the informal consultation can be found in the meeting report, which is available on the UNEP website. Both this revised discussion paper and the meeting report reflect the current state of the discussion. Further comments will be taken into account as stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss this partnership within the structure of their national government or organization, and to consider the development and implementation of pilot projects under the partnership.

The Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Partnership

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining¹ is a globally significant source of mercury releases. In the gold mining process, mercury is used to amalgamate with gold ore. After the amalgamation process, the mercury is often evaporated 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 emissions on a global scale.

Proposed Goal of the Partnership

The Partnership would reduce the human health and environmental impacts associated with the use of mercury in artisanal gold mining and refining by reducing mercury use in, and releases from, this sector. The Partnership would seek to support existing international efforts in this area, in particular the efforts underway by the UNIDO Global Mercury Project. The Partnership would encourage increased attention to mercury management by artisanal and small-scale miners through outreach to, and actions with, mining communities regarding options, suited to local circumstances, for reducing mercury use and exposure.

Proposed Objectives of the Partnership

- Promote cleaner artisanal mining practices and technologies among governments, NGOs, miners and other stakeholders through demonstration and introduction of cleaner, cost-effective technologies for artisanal gold extraction, such as recapture for reuse or use of low- or non-mercury technologies as appropriate to the community. Disseminate this information broadly. Consider economic and other factors affecting the rate of adoption of such practices and technologies.

¹ For the purposes of this discussion paper, artisanal and small-scale gold mining refers to unincorporated, informal and/or illegal gold mining activity using rudimentary processes to extract gold from primary and secondary ores.

- In the context of technology and best practice transfer efforts, 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 use of satellite imagery and related techniques to augment on-ground modeling and monitoring activities.
- Increase international awareness of environmental and human health consequences of mercury use in the sector, and increase collaboration and communication among stakeholders to reduce risks to human health and the environment.
- Couple mercury health risk reduction solutions with community outreach programs to educate mining communities about mercury risks and reduce occupational exposures and environmental contamination.
- 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 a timeline for this phase of the partnership, which includes mobilizing resources to address an initial set of projects under the partnership and initiating implementation of such projects.
- Pursuant to Decision 23/9 of the UNEP Governing Council, consider options for reporting procedures and evaluation of mercury reductions.
- Collaborate with UNIDO and others on pilot emissions reduction activities using appropriate technologies and best practices, including training for mining communities and baseline and post-project monitoring on mercury consumption and releases in this sector.
- Assist regional collaboration to address this issue, such as providing technical support for the development and implementation of a Plan of Action for Regional Cooperation on Mercury Contamination in the Amazon Basin.
- Share best practice information for mercury management through UNIDO, UNEP, the World Bank, and other fora.
- 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

All stakeholders are welcome 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 23/9 IV. Partners can include national, state or provincial governments, international organizations, national and international companies, trade associations, healthcare, and 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 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, at bailey.marianne@epa.gov or by fax at 202-565-2411.