

## **Informal Consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector**

May 25, 2005  
Portland, Maine  
The United States

### ***Open invitation for Partners and Participants***

With the findings of the 2002 “United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) [Global Mercury Assessment](#)” report, UNEP became a global leader for coordinating international efforts to reduce the use and release of mercury and its compounds. UNEP, in collaboration with many prominent international organizations, has been pivotal in raising global awareness about the environmental and health issues associated with mercury releases and uses, and has initiated activities designed to build a strong foundation for international mercury reduction efforts.

Building on that strong foundation established by the [UNEP Mercury Program](#), a wide range of activities are necessary to address the global mercury issue. Paragraph 27 of the [decision 23/9](#) adopted by the [twenty-third session of the UNEP Governing Council](#) urges governments, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations and the private sector to develop and implement partnerships, in a clear, transparent and accountable manner, as one approach to reducing the risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury, thereby achieving the objectives set forth in the Annex to decision 22/4 V. The decision also invites the identification of a set of pilot partnerships by September 1, 2005.

To this end, in cooperation with UNEP, the United States will hold an informal consultation to initiate discussion on a “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector” that would develop and implement several sector-oriented activities involving the sharing of information, best management practices, annual reporting, and other methods to achieve and track mercury use and release reductions. The partnership consultation will be a side event to the [Mercury Reductions in Products and Waste Conference](#), which is to be held in Portland, Maine on May 23-25, 2005.

It is our hope that other stakeholders are interested in joining this “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector,” and will accept this open invitation to participate in the informal consultation on the afternoon of May 25. A [draft agenda to this informal consultation meeting](#) is also available. By focusing global mercury reduction efforts on controlling mercury use and releases in key sectors, a large portion of the global anthropogenic sources of mercury releases can be addressed more quickly, improving health and environment conditions in the near-term, both locally and globally. We recognize that many interested stakeholders may not be able to attend this initial consultation, and look forward to ongoing dialogue with prospective partners and the development of the partnership pilots in the months to come.

Over the course of the next several months, in addition to holding the informal consultation for a “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector,” we are interested in joining with other stakeholders to develop and implement partnerships in the following sectors: products, coal combustion, artisanal gold mining, and fate and transport research. In this regard, we call your attention to an informal consultation on a [“Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in Products”](#) also to be held on May 25 in Portland, Maine, as well as an initial meeting on a [“Global Partnership for Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining”](#) to be held on June 15, 2005 in Washington, D.C.

## **Partners**

The United States Government and the [UNEP Mercury Program](#) welcome all stakeholders to participate in this partnership. Generally, a partner is an entity who indicates a willingness to contribute either 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](#). In our view, 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.

## **The Chloralkali Partnership**

Some chloralkali plants, which produce chlorine and caustic soda, use mercury-cell technologies. Significant mercury use and emissions reductions can be achieved through the sharing of best management practices. The “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector” would bring together experts from around the world to share information and provide technical assistance on successful approaches for reducing or eliminating mercury in particular facilities.

## **Proposed Goal of the Partnership**

The Partnership would seek to make information available on public policy and industry experiences for improving the environmental performance of mercury cell chloralkali facilities, as well as making available operational information that would, for example, provide mercury exposure information for factory workers and operations. The Partnership would also seek to promote the reduction or elimination of global mercury releases in the chloralkali process of particular facilities through the adoption of best management practices.

## **Proposed Objectives of the Partnership**

- Exchange information and expertise on methods for improving the environmental performance of mercury cell factories.
- Transfer and apply best management practices for reducing or eliminating releases from the chloralkali process.
- Improve the availability of public information regarding the global consumption of mercury used in the chloralkali production process to establish a baseline for reporting on future reductions.

## **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, including mobilizing the necessary resources to address initial 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.
- Exchange information on approaches and programs for reducing or eliminating mercury from the chloralkali process. The information would come from both the public sector, where governments have taken steps to address mercury releases and provide safety information for workers, as well as from the private sector, where advancements in mercury reductions have been achieved. Information could be shared by developing a clearinghouse on the UNEP website, in particular at: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/>
- Facilitate the transfer of successful approaches for reducing the use of mercury in the chloralkali process at the factory level.
- Produce the first global report of mercury consumption in the chloralkali sector by 2006. Conduct pilot projects over the next two years to demonstrate best practices for reducing mercury use in the manufacturing process by providing on-site technical assistance and training in countries identified during the course of the partnership meetings as in need of assistance.

## **Next steps**

Interested partners or participants should contact Angela Bandemehr in the Office of International Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as soon as possible at [bandemehr.angela@epa.gov](mailto:bandemehr.angela@epa.gov). Partners and participants are expected to make their own travel arrangements to arrive in the United States to attend the meeting.

Please refer to the [provisional agenda for the informal consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in the Chloralkali Sector”](#) for further information.