

## **Informal Consultation on the “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in Products”**

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 Products” that would develop and implement several sector-oriented activities involving the sharing of information, best management practices, training, and other methods to reduce mercury use and emissions. 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 Products,” 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 the launching 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 Products,” we are interested in joining with other stakeholders to develop and implement partnerships in the following sectors: chlor-alkali facilities, 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 Chlor-Alkali Facilities,”](#) 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 Products Partnership**

Mercury has been used globally in numerous products including paints, fungicides, household appliances, electronics, batteries, automobile switches, dental amalgam, medical equipment and thermometers. While mercury use in pesticides, fungicides, paints, and most batteries has been banned or phased-out in many parts of the world, these uses are continuing in many countries. Some estimate that mercury use in batteries may comprise about one third of the global mercury use in products. Yet for most products, there are effective alternatives available that could replace mercury.

The “Global Partnership for Mercury Reduction in Products” would bring together experts from around the world to share information and provide technical assistance on successful approaches for reducing or eliminating mercury in products.

## **Proposed Goal of the Partnership**

The Partnership would promote the reduction of global use and demand for commodity-grade mercury through reduction or elimination of mercury in products, where there are effective substitutes. The Partnership would also seek to reduce global mercury releases to air, water, or land that may occur during manufacturing and industrial processes, and during the disposal or recycling of mercury-containing products and wastes.

### **Proposed Objectives of the Partnership**

- Transfer and apply best management practices for reducing releases from product manufacturing, reducing the use of mercury-containing products and their associated wastes in the health care sector, and programs for reducing or eliminating mercury and other toxic substances from the product supply chain.
- Exchange information and expertise on the identification of mercury-added products, effective non-mercury substitutes, products (and specifications) where mercury has been significantly reduced or eliminated (e.g., batteries, thermometers, lamps), and effective regulatory or voluntary approaches to phasing out unnecessary mercury product uses or reducing mercury content of products.
- Improve mercury use inventories in countries to establish a baseline for future reductions in specific product categories (e.g., batteries, paints, thermometers).
- Better characterize the amount of mercury used in products globally, including where the products are manufactured and used, and raise public awareness of mercury-containing products and alternatives.
- Conduct assessments of technical, economic, regulatory, or other impediments to using non-mercury alternatives or reducing the amount of mercury used in products.

### **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 mechanisms for 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.
- Exchange information on approaches and programs for reducing or eliminating mercury and other toxic substances from the product supply chain.
- Facilitate the transfer of successful approaches for reducing the use of mercury-containing products and their associated wastes in the health care sector.
- Provide export and import data on commodity-grade mercury to assist UNEP in the preparation of the report on global mercury flows called for in the Governing Council decision.

- Initiate pilot projects in 2005 to reduce mercury use in the manufacture of batteries, paints, fungicides, and other products in countries identified during the course of the partnership meetings as in need of assistance.

### **Next steps**

Interested partners or participants should contact Denise Wright in the Office of Prevention, Pollution, and Toxics at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as soon as possible at [wright.denise@epa.gov](mailto:wright.denise@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 Products”](#) for further information.