

**REGIONAL AWARENESS RAISING WORKSHOP ON MERCURY POLLUTION –
A Global Problem That Needs To Be Addressed**

Beirut, Lebanon, 11-14 October 2004

3. WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

Guidance questions for Working Group session 1

**Identification of major issues, problems, challenges
and priority information gaps at regional and national levels**

Guidance Questions

1. Is there sufficient knowledge of the main sources and quantities of mercury released into the environment in the countries of the region, and if not, what are the most important information gaps and how may they be filled?
2. Are the levels of mercury in different media (such as air, water, and soils) and biota (such as fish, marine mammals, and other wildlife) sufficiently known in the countries of the region and if not, what actions are needed to gain a better understanding?
3. Are there sufficient data on mercury exposures for humans and wildlife in the region and, if not, what are the most important information gaps and how may they be filled?
4. Based on existing data available, what issues and problems are of greatest concern for countries in region? For example, are there exposures to mercury for humans or wildlife that are of special concern in the region, are there certain source types of special concern, are there waste disposal issues, clean-up of hazardous waste sites, other problems, etc?
5. What are the barriers faced in trying to better understand mercury releases, levels of mercury in the environment, and extent of exposures in your countries and how can these barriers be addressed or removed?

Reports from Working Group session 1

IS MERCURY POLLUTION A PROBLEM RELEVANT TO THIS REGION/SUB-REGION? –

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE TWO GROUPS

Participants of Working Group 1A: Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya.

Participants of Working Group 1B: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

Question 1 Is there sufficient knowledge of the main sources and quantities of mercury released into the environment in the countries of the region, and if not, what are the most important information gaps and how may they be filled?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>There is not sufficient knowledge in the region.</p> <p>IRAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resources: have no information. • Need basic information about natural resources. • Information about industrial sources not enough. • How can we monitor? <p>AFGHANISTAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sufficient knowledge for main sources and quantities of mercury released. • No local production. • Come only from illegal smuggling. <p>LEBANON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is monitoring in fish. • Rivers are a source of pollution of seas. <p>TUNISIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little information available. • No monitoring for air, monitoring for water only. <p>EGYPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources not well defined. • We have to know emission rates of factories and sets. <p>MOROCCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot spots are known (two). • Lack of data on industries processes. • Apply the environmental laws, proceed with monitoring and control of the industries. <p>LIBYA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One hot spot is known, others not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No data or information about quantities; • Awareness for stockholders needed; • Amount imported unknown; • Control system badly needed; • Legislation not adequate.

Question 2 Are the levels of mercury in different media and biota sufficiently known in the countries of the region and if not, what actions are needed to gain a better understanding?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>IRAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No data for air; Insufficient data for sediments & soil. Needs: capacity building. <p>AFGHANISTAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not known. Needs: capacity building and local studies. <p>ALGERIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient studies scattered. National studies required. <p>EGYPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have national network for monitoring of river Nile water, but it needs development (capacity building) and upgrading. Other parts of media not analyzed systematically except in some research. <p>MOROCCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient studies. National studies required. 	<p>Not known sufficiently in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental awareness raising for stockholders; Financial Support; Scientific Support; Training capacity building; Development of standards.
Question 3 Are there sufficient data on mercury exposures for humans and wildlife in the region and, if not, what are the most important information gaps and how may they be filled?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>AFGHANISTAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, there is some data on mercury exposures for humans. For example Kidney diseases; Intestinal diseases; Skin diseases; Breathing disorders. <p>OTHER COUNTRIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sufficient data. Need capacity building. Put national standards for exposure. 	<p>Not sufficient data available in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source and quantities are unknown; Enough scientific knowledge; Absence of standards; No national studies. <p>SOLUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient data; Inventory for source and quantity; Establish standard and guideline; National studies needed;
Question 4 Based on existing data available, what issues and problems are of greatest concern for countries in region?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>ALGERIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mines of mercury and extraction plants. Two chlor – alkali factories. Stock of hazardous mercury waste. Pollution of soil at site of factories. <p>MOROCCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot spot (chlor - alkali) and the same thing as Tunisia. Exposure: yes, in the hot spot population. <p>IRAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Chlor – alkali) factories. Petrochemical factories. <p>AFGHANISTAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems: Use of mercury in: Hair, Wool, Thread used for carpet, Greece medicine, paint, Old batteries. Exposures: yes; Carpet business, Burning of sulfur and coal mines at present, Industrial waste products. 	<p>Yes, there are exposures to mercury for humans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no cleaner production; There is improper management of mercury; Lack of proper design for landfill; There are no alternatives for mercury for some usage; Lack of technical and financial support; Lack of safety measures; Clean up of polluted sites required.

Question 5 What are the barriers faced in trying to better understand mercury releases, levels of mercury in the environment, and extent of exposures in your countries and how can these barriers be addressed or removed?

GROUP A	GROUP B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of environmental national policies in some countries; • Capacity building in all countries; • Mercury is not a big problem in all countries; • No formulation of good monitoring programme; • Lack of awareness. <p>SOLUTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using clean technology; • Having environmental policies; • Having regional data information; • Capacity building; • Good monitoring; • Recycling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness; • Technical & financial support needed; • Inadequate of regulation; • Lack of good technology; • Studies about communities at risk required. <p>SOLUTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange information among regional counties should be encouraged; • Upgrading the scientific levels; • Media awareness should be reinforced; • Good monitoring established; • National action plans for mercury; • Capacity building; • Management tools; • Identify mercury sources (use available checklist); • Initiate program / eliminate products.

Guidance questions for Working Group session 2

Possible national, regional and international actions, policy approaches and regional or international cooperation that might be needed to reduce the risks posed by mercury

1. What mercury pollution problems are common throughout the region?
2. What actions should be taken nationally to deal with these problems?
 - a. Short-term?
 - b. Long-term?
3. Where are there opportunities for regional cooperation?
 - a. Short-term?
 - b. Long-term?
4. How can national and regional actions be implemented and what kind of support or assistance (technical, financial or other) may be needed?
5. What actions and support might be needed from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, such as public interest groups and industry, to support government action?
6. How can you, as workshop participants, engage your respective governments to become active in the mercury policy discussions prior to and during the UNEP Governing Council session in February 2005?

Reports from Working Group session 2

HOW CAN THE REGION ADDRESS ANY MERCURY RELATED PROBLEMS?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE TWO GROUPS

Participants of Working Group 1A: Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya.

Participants of Working Group 1B: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

Question 1 What mercury pollution problems are common throughout the region?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluorescent lamps; • Some polluted industries; • Mercury based chlor-alkali facilities; • Dental amalgam fillings; • Research laboratories and medical waste; • Lack of secure landfills; • Carpet industry (unique to Afghanistan). 	<p>Awareness of the mercury pollution problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Makers • Public <p>Industrial activities releasing mercury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining • All industrial processes releasing mercury e.g. cement, batteries <p>Cosmetics and other medical products with high level of Mercury</p> <p>Waste:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical waste: (equipments containing mercury) • Municipal waste: (products containing mercury such as florescent lamps) • Industrial wastes e.g. spent catalyst containing mercury.
Question 2 What actions should be taken nationally to deal with these problems (short-term and long-term)?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>a. Short-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building; • Legislation; • Awareness raising; • Health assessments; • Research work; • Control measures of some industries; • Initial assessment of the problem. <p>b. Long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of cleaner production; • Labeling techniques; • Remediation of contaminated sites; • New alternatives in production; • Solutions for mercury waste management (particular to Algeria). 	<p>a. Short-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness; • Identify population at risk. <p>b. Long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation to minimize exposure of population at risk; • Establishment of regulations on mercury pollution.

Question 3 Where are there opportunities for regional cooperation (short-term and long-term)?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<p>a. Short-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training; • Raising public awareness; • Regional data bases; • Exchange of information and experience. <p>b. Long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional network for mercury trade control. 	<p>a. Short-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and sub-regional workshops; • Exchange of experts and information; • Training. <p>b. Long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional conventions.
Question 4 How can national and regional actions be implemented and what kind of support or assistance (technical, financial or other) may be needed?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and financial assistance; • Adoption of national legislation; • Control measures; • Use financial incentives for industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base line studies; • Inventory; • Technical assistance; • Action plan; • Implementation of action plan (financial support will be required).
Question 5 What actions and support might be needed from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, such as public interest groups and industry, to support government action?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and financial (intergovernmental) support; • Know-how transfer; • Public awareness. (NGOs); • Communication (NGOs); • Environmental education (children and women); • Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders to cooperate with governments on cleaner production; • NGO participation; • Intergovernmental financial and technical support.
Question 6 How can you, as workshop participants, engage your respective governments to become active in the mercury policy discussions prior to and during the UNEP Governing Council session in February 2005?	
GROUP A	GROUP B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the hazards on environment and health; • Use of media to exercise pressure and public awareness; • Use NGOs and public associations to shed light on the problem; • Suggest alternative solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on conclusions and recommendations of this workshop to indicate the importance of this issue; • Necessity of the country to participate in the mercury policy discussions prior to and during the UNEP Governing Council session in February 2005; • Common focal point must remain unchanged for this programme.