

**MINAMATA
CONVENTION
ON MERCURY**

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**Conference of the Parties to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Fifth meeting**

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Item 4 (n) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the
Conference of the Parties: knowledge management****Progress report on knowledge management and digitalization******Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. Strengthened knowledge management, effective information exchange, and accelerated digitization processes are key factors to achieve the objective of the Minamata Convention as well as the Sustainable Development Goals within the remaining eight years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The implementation of the Minamata Convention plays a direct role in achieving several goals, such as numbers 3, 12, 14, and 17. Recognizing the importance of digital tools and best practices, the Secretariat has developed a digital strategy to advance the work towards the objective of the Convention and efficiently support its Parties. The strategy, presented in the document UNEP/MC/COP.5/19, aligns with broader initiatives, including the UN Secretary-General's Data Strategy and Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, as well as UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2025, which emphasize the responsible use of data, multistakeholder collaboration, and leveraging digital technology for environmental sustainability.
2. Information on progress regarding knowledge management and digitalization achieved by the Secretariat since the Convention came into force is provided in the following sections.

II. Digital tools

3. The Secretariat of the Minamata Convention launched a new **website** with improved accessibility, user experience and a data-driven approach in August 2020. The website featured updated information architecture organized by relevant topics and content types such as publications, news, and resources. It also integrated data visualizations for national reporting and Parties' profiles. The website is based on solid knowledge management and uses the United Nations technical standards (Drupal) for better interoperability with other systems such as InforMEA (the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements) and the Convention's Online Reporting Tool (ORT). The website's data-driven approach provides dynamic access to information, from global views to dedicated sections, automatically connecting data points to offer streamlined information views. It also covers the Convention's history, documents, and archives since the negotiation process initiated in 2007.

* UNEP/MC/COP.5/1.

** The present note is being issued without formal editing.

4. The website is intended to serve as a platform to facilitate the implementation of the Convention by Parties and provide a good user experience and efficiency in retrieving the information. It also aims to increase awareness about the Convention's positive impact on people and the planet. The website is maintained and updated according to the needs identified at each Conference of the Parties in English, French and Spanish, with all the official documents in the six UN languages. From August 2017 until August 2023, the Convention's website has reached 478k users with 1,894k page views, with an increasing number of visitors year by year. The site had 61k users and 289k views in 2018, 67k users and 296k pageviews in 2019, 65k users and 244k pageviews in 2020, 92k users and 361k pageviews in 2021, and 109k users and 413k pageviews in 2022.

5. In 2021 the Secretariat developed the **Online Reporting Tool (ORT)** to assist Parties in fulfilling their obligations under Article 21 of the Convention, which requires them to report on measures taken to implement the Convention's provisions and their effectiveness, as well as any challenges faced in meeting the Convention's objective. Each national focal point receives personalized credentials to log into the ORT, and can save and complete reports in stages. The tool is available in all six UN languages and includes conditional questions and prepopulated replies based on the data stored in the Convention's website database, links to the relevant Convention text and the reporting guidance for quick reference, and the option for the Secretariat to amend replies based on requests made by Parties after submitting their report. The Secretariat also created an online **dashboard** that provides real-time data on reporting performance and quantitative responses from all Parties, drawn from the ORT database. This dashboard can be a starting point for presenting some of the effectiveness evaluation indicators once the indicators have been approved by the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat provides support to Parties for successful report completion and submission, including online training and regular outreach.

6. In addition to the dashboard on national reports, the Secretariat has also undertaken other data visualization initiatives, such as dashboards of projects under the Specific International Programme (SIP) and under the Global Environment Facility (GEF), both of which are in the finalization stage. In the case of the latter, the Secretariat has piloted the interoperability of the Convention website and of the GEF projects database on the GEF website to bring the data automatically, consistently, and without duplication of efforts. Through an internal validator, projects can be reviewed and displayed at the global level within a projects database, and from the country profiles. The main key performance indicators are visualized in dynamic graphs through a dashboard. This initiative has attracted significant interest from other multilateral environmental agreements, and efforts are being made to replicate and expand it within the framework of the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements, known as InforMEA. Dashboard work on projects is expected to expand since data management and visualization provide useful insights for different stakeholders on the progress of the Convention's projects.

7. In terms of **infrastructure**, the Convention website was hosted on the servers of the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions until August 2020, as it used the same technology. Since the website was migrated to Drupal, it has been hosted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the cloud servers based on an internal cooperation agreement and with dedicated access for the Minamata Convention Secretariat to manage the cloud infrastructure.

III. Building partnerships

8. Since its establishment, the Secretariat has been actively participating in the work of InforMEA, under which MEAs agree on common data standards to enhance data sharing, information exchange, and compatibility across the organization and its associated platforms. The revamped Convention website launched in 2020 is fully interoperable with InforMEA, automatically sharing existing and new information entries on Parties, decisions, national reports, national plans, national focal points, events and publications. Through communities of practice, InforMEA and MEAs have been sharing experiences and best practices on knowledge management and the development of tools and interfaces for automated data and information exchange. The Secretariat has been leading in the areas of outreach, dashboards for e-learning, the calendar, national reporting best practices and GEF project integration. Furthermore, at the thirteenth InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting held in a hybrid format in October 2022 in Montreux, Switzerland, the Secretariat showcased its new national reporting tool and a pilot on data visualization on GEF projects. In June 2023, at the Extraordinary Working Group meeting, the Executive Secretary opened the meeting with the Chief of the Digital Office in UNEP with a dialogue on the importance of collaboration toward a long-term data strategy as envisioned by the UNEA resolution UNEP/EA.4/Res.23. At the same meeting, the Secretariat showed progress on national reporting dashboards and the finalization stage of the revamped projects database and data visualization.

9. The Secretariat of the Minamata Convention and **the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions (BRS)** have continued their collaboration in the context of the InforMEA initiative by sharing tools, experiences, and best practices on knowledge management, in particular in developing standards to exchange information on projects, in using shared taxonomies management tools and sharing knowledge on how to visualize data on national reporting dashboards.
10. The Secretariat has been also collaborating with other partners, like the **Global Mercury Partnership**, in interchanging knowledge on mercury issues, and advocating for inclusive and responsible digital solutions for sustainable development.
11. Defining **audiences** has been a priority activity for the Secretariat since it is essential for effective communication and public awareness strategy. The Secretariat built a structured database with over 2,500 segmented contacts, including national focal points, bureau members and ad hoc experts' groups of the Convention, UN missions in Geneva and Nairobi, COP participants, and web subscribers, to ensure targeted communication on the work under the Convention. In 2021, the Secretariat sent 15 email campaigns to 2.5k recipients resulting in 37k openings and 31k clicks. In 2022, the Secretariat sent 17 email campaigns to an average of 3.2k recipients, which resulted in a total of 62k openings and 60k clicks.

IV. COP digital services

12. In 2022 UNEP recognized the Secretariat with an award for the successful organization of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the first conference of the Parties of a multilateral environment agreement held in person since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The received **Kipepeo Award** was for innovation in devising unique solutions for the meeting, including effective arrangements for online participation for delegates who were unable to travel. Host country Indonesia as well as members of the secretariats of other MEAs, more specifically of the BRS Conventions Secretariat, CBD Secretariat, and Ozone Secretariat, provided vital support for the smooth running of the meeting. The award is annual and recognizes teams and projects demonstrating exceptional efforts and performance in pursuit of UNEP's goals.
13. From COP-1 to COP-3, the BRS Conventions Secretariat provided comprehensive digital services to the Minamata Convention Secretariat to cover web support, document upload, intranet, and on-site help desk. With the Secretariat's switch to the new website in 2020, from COP-4 onwards, all online services are managed directly in-house. The Secretariat continues to engage with the BRS Conventions Secretariat for IT advice and for on-site technical participant support.
14. For the fourth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-4), the Secretariat created a **digital ecosystem** and designed a functional workflow to ensure the COP could be delivered efficiently and effectively, irrespective of the complex and ever-changing circumstances of the pandemic. These changes included: a) using integrated digital platforms for the two segments of COP-4; b) ensuring adequate communication with Parties, c) improving the Secretariat team performance and digital skills in challenging situations by providing training and guidance on the best use of digital tools, and d) extending the Secretariat with expert colleagues from other MEAs. The extended Secretariat mapped out the digital ecosystem, defined its related workflows, established milestones for each service delivery, identified challenges, risks, and resources needed for putting the ecosystem in place, and prepared standard operating procedures. The digital ecosystem consisted of:
 - (a) **Website:** The new Minamata Convention website was the primary platform for promoting COP-4 and providing information on official documents, the agenda, media, side events, registration, dynamic schedule and other practical information. Additionally, it integrated the Convention's new safe space for in-session documents and provided direct access to the meeting platforms through the daily updated timetable (live schedule).
 - (b) **Intranet:** The meeting was conducted paperless, and printed documents were not provided at the venue. Pre-session documents were available on the meetings' website. In-session documents were uploaded to a safe section of the website prepared explicitly for the second segment of COP-4 in Bali, Indonesia (COP-4.2). This safe space was password protected and only accessible to COP-4 participants. It was part of the document control workflow, and it included conference room papers, the draft report, statements and other submissions, as well as a special section for contact groups containing all necessary uploads and direct references to relevant working and information documents.
 - (c) **Registration system:** Registration for both segments of COP-4 was handled using Kronos, a participant and registration management system developed by the CBD Secretariat that is widely used by several other MEAs (Ozone, CITES, CBD). This system has brought several benefits,

as both registration and participant management for the COP are done through the same application. In addition, during the second segment of COP-4, Kronos was fully integrated with the online meeting platform. The roles of participants, such as viewers or speakers, were automatically transferred to the online meeting platform to ensure security and accessibility. From one COP to another, information on participants is pre-loaded by the Secretariat into the database, and each delegation independently manages its registration, thus streamlining the process. The Minamata Convention Secretariat signed an Internal Cooperation Agreement with the CBD Secretariat to maintain and improve the use of Kronos for future meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

(d) **Meeting platforms:** Participants were granted online access to the COP-4 sessions, including both plenary and contact groups, through the Interactio virtual platform, which required meticulous organization of physical and virtual spaces, ensuring optimal connectivity, support, and moderation in both environments. The Secretariat undertook early efforts to incorporate a solid infrastructure for online participation with decision-making capabilities and practical measures to facilitate the participation of Parties and delegates unable to travel due to COVID-related constraints. Interpretation in the six UN languages was provided for plenary sessions. The Secretariat added meeting links on the online daily schedule on the COP-4 webpage that directed delegates to the correspondent online session. The meeting platform was seamlessly integrated with Kronos, allowing participants to utilize the same username, password, and assigned roles from their registration to access the online sessions.

(e) **Online forums:** The Secretariat developed two online thematic forums to facilitate the preparation of Parties and observers for COP-4: the Online Budget Forum and the Online Technical Documents Forum. The forums provided a secure space for Parties to review, comment or ask questions about some specific documents in preparation for the two segments of COP-4, which were followed up by the Secretariat. Each delegation member nominated through the COP-4 pre-registration platform could access the Minamata Convention Online Forums through a unique link following the same roles established in the pre-registration system. The forums piloted at COP-4 proved to be useful and will continue to be arranged for future COPs as needed.

(f) **Online support:** The Secretariat offered technical online support to participants regarding the available platforms for following the meeting, including information on the website, intranet, and access to the online sessions. This support was specifically targeted towards registered COP-4 participants, with special consideration given to delegates from Parties attending only online. The Secretariat provided daily support during the COP week from 7 am to 11 pm local time.

V. Digital literacy

15. In September 2020, the Secretariat initiated a series of free online sessions aimed at better understanding the Convention's provisions, as well as policy and scientific aspects. Titled **Minamata Online**, these digital events were created as a way to continue supporting its Parties and relevant stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they have been extended until now. Targeted to government officials, scientists, NGOs and other stakeholders, the sessions are arranged according to three streams: implementation support and review, mercury science, and COP preparations. Since 2020, the Secretariat has organized 49 sessions covering a wide range of topics like mercury emissions, monitoring guidance, contaminated sites, trade in mercury, waste management, mercury in the southern hemisphere, the review and amendment of Annexes A and B, financial mechanism, public awareness, ASGM, national reporting, gender, effectiveness evaluation, and health risks.

16. These digital engagements have been developed in collaboration with the Global Mercury Partnership (GMP), the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant (ICMGP) and the Geneva Environment Network (GEN). The third season in preparation for COP-5 started in October 2022 and will run until the COP meeting in late October 2023.

17. To date, many participants have enrolled for webinars and followed live streams, displaying proactive involvement in discussions and knowledge exchange through the Minamata Online platform. Past sessions, including presentations and video recordings, are accessible on the Convention's website. Minamata Online is poised to be a source of knowledge and support, including to the Parties from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

18. The Secretariat has developed **e-learning** materials and interactive courses jointly with the UNEP, InforMEA and UNITAR on topics related to the implementation of the Convention. The InforMEA portal hosts the Introductory Course to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, created by the Secretariat to facilitate the understanding and applicability of the Convention. In 2022, the Secretariat also jointly developed with InforMEA a course on mercury and gender. And, the Secretariat, UNEP and UNITAR collaborated to create an online training platform in response to

countries' increasing interest in developing mercury emissions inventories and the subsequent high demand for guidance and training on this topic. All courses are available on the Convention's website. The Secretariat is expanding its online training portfolio in collaboration with the United Nations Staff College on more specialized national reporting and the use of trade reports courses to support Parties in completing their reporting obligations with funding from the European Union.
