



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Minamata Convention on Mercury

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Chemicals & Wastes

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Multilateral

FORM:

Legally-binding treaty

STATUS:

- Signed by Canada: October 10, 2013
- Ratified by Canada: April 7, 2017
- In force in Canada: August 16, 2017
- In force internationally: August 16, 2017

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Lead: Environment and Climate Change Canada

Partners: Health Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Global Affairs Canada

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Web Links:

- [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)
- [Text of the Minamata Convention](#)
- [Management of Toxic Substances: Mercury](#)

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

July 2022

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Mercury is toxic to human health and the environment. While Canada has reduced its mercury emissions by about 90% since the 1970s, domestic action alone is not sufficient. Airborne mercury pollution from other countries travels long distances and is deposited across Canada. This mercury threatens ecosystems and the health of Indigenous populations and consumers of country foods.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty that addresses all aspects of the life cycle of mercury, including requiring controls and reductions across a range of products, processes and industries.

Due to the adverse impacts of global mercury pollution on Canadians and their environment, Canada has and continues to play a key role in the work of the treaty.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Minamata Convention is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Convention takes a life-cycle approach to the management of mercury. Controlling and reducing mercury globally will occur through Parties meeting treaty obligations relating to supply, trade, products, manufacturing processes, artisanal and small-scale gold mining, atmospheric emissions, releases to land and water, environmentally sound interim storage and waste.

A financial mechanism consisting of the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund and voluntary Specific International Programme on capacity building and technical assistance will assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement and meet their obligations.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The Minamata Convention is expected to reduce mercury entering the environment from anthropogenic sources over time as a result of controlling or reducing mercury throughout its life-cycle.

An effectiveness evaluation will be undertaken no later than six years after the date of entry into force of the Convention and periodically thereafter. This evaluation shall be conducted on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical, financial and economic information including: i) reports and other monitoring information, ii) regular reports from Parties, iii) information and recommendations provided by the implementation and compliance committee, and iv) reports and other relevant information on the operation of the financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building arrangements.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This international agreement on mercury is important to Canada. While Canada has reduced its mercury emissions by over 90% in the past fifty years, 95% of anthropogenic mercury deposited in Canada comes from foreign sources. Canada's priority is to reduce the long range transport of mercury, especially to Canada's Arctic where it adversely impacts the health of Northern people and our fragile ecosystem.

Canada uses a risk-based approach to manage chemical substances. Due to the complex nature of mercury, a diverse set of tools is used to manage the risk of mercury in the environment. In many cases, mercury is also managed through provincial/territorial agencies. Canada implements its obligations under the treaty using [legislative and voluntary measures](#) such as codes of practice, Canada Wide Standards, and Pollution Prevention Planning Notices.

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

Canada actively participated in all five sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme that took place from 2010 to 2013.

On October 10, 2013, Canada signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Kumamoto, Japan, at a Diplomatic Conference, along with 92 other governments.

From 2014 to 2015, Canada was a member of a technical expert group on atmospheric emissions that developed guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices for adoption at the first Conference of the Parties (COP1). Canada hosted the first meeting of the technical expert group in Ottawa in February 2014.

In 2014 and 2016, Canada participated in two further meetings of the INC, which were aimed at developing a work programme for treaty implementation.

In conjunction with the Departments of Justice Canada and Global Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada conducted a detailed implementation analysis regarding the measures required to implement the treaty obligations in consultation with provinces, territories and stakeholders. In order to ratify the treaty, Canada needed to be in compliance with the treaty requirements. On April 7, 2017, Canada ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury, helping bring the treaty into force.

Canada actively participated in COP1, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2017. The COP adopted decisions on administrative and institutional matters and on guidance documents, and made progress on technical issues. In particular, an expert group was formed to begin work on evaluating the effectiveness of the treaty.

In February 2018, Canada hosted a five-day expert meeting for 25 regional representative experts and 10 observers to undertake initial work on the effectiveness evaluation of the treaty.

Canada participated in the second and third Conference of the Parties meetings in November 2018 and 2019 in Geneva. At these meetings, additional guidance documents were adopted and there was agreement to further advance work on technical issues, such as mercury releases and mercury waste thresholds, and administrative and institutional matters, such as arrangements for sharing services with the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat.

The fourth Conference of the Parties was arranged in two parts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada participated in the virtual segment of COP4, held in November 2021. At this segment, Parties discussed only administrative matters such as budget and programme of work, leaving technical matters to be discussed at the second segment held in-person in Bali, Indonesia, in March 2022. At the in-person segment, Parties reached agreement on certain arrangements for the effectiveness evaluation, phasing out additional mercury added products and manufacturing processes, and advancing work on mercury releases and mercury waste thresholds.

Canada has continued to play a leadership role in the convention by participating in intersessional technical expert groups, initiating discussions on developing guidance on completing national reports, and advocating for a scientifically sound process for the effectiveness evaluation of the treaty.

Reports

National reports containing information on the measures taken by a Party in implementing the Minamata Convention, and qualitative information on the effectiveness of such measures, are due every two years, and alternate between a short report focused on supply and trade and a full report on all aspects of implementation. The first short report was due in 2019 and the first full report in 2021. Reports are available on the [Minamata Convention website](#).

Results

A total of 128 governments have signed the Minamata Convention, and as of January 2022, 137 governments have ratified the treaty.