

## ZMWG's Preliminary Views on COP-6 Decisions

September 2025

This paper summarizes the preliminary views of the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) on the anticipated decisions at COP-6. Priority issues are highlighted. COP-6 delegates are encouraged to consult with ZMWG members with any questions.

In the following section please find the ZMWG recommendations on:

1. Proposed Revisions to Annex A (cosmetics, dental amalgam) and B (vinyl chloride monomer);
2. Mercury Compounds
3. Effectiveness Evaluation
4. Artisanal & Small-Scale Gold Mining

### 1. ZMWG RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO ANNEX A

#### a. Cosmetics

To address challenges from mercury-added cosmetics, COP-5 amended the Convention's Annex to replace the 1ppm threshold with a zero-mercury ban on cosmetics, by 2025, in [Decision MC-5/4](#). [Decision MC-5/5](#) instructed the Secretariat to solicit input and report back to COP-6 on measures for preventing the manufacture, import, and export of mercury-added cosmetics. The Secretariat synthesized submissions received by Parties and stakeholders, including the submission by the [ZMWG](#). The topics addressed by this report include the phase out of sales; strategies for discouraging use, marketing and advertising; establishment of restricted product listings; licensing and product ingredient approval; and developing voluntary agreements with online platforms.

Parties and stakeholders continued to emphasize the dangers associated with mercury-added skin lightening products (SLPs) and the need to effectively eliminate them. Halting as much production of mercury-added SLPs should be the first and foremost objective, since it is far more cost effective to eliminate production rather than trying to halt the trade, distribution and sales afterwards. In addition, submissions also underlined the need to tackle the challenges presented by the availability of mercury-added SLPs that are sold illegally via local markets and through the internet.

The Secretariat's report confirmed that eliminating mercury-added SLPs is a multifaceted challenge requiring effective measures to reduce both supply and demand. On a parallel track, via the GEF funded, UNEP led-project on 'Eliminating mercury added skin lightening products' – executed by WHO and BRI in Sri Lanka, Gabon and Jamaica – incremental progress is being made. GEF has also recently approved a similar 5 year, full size project in 13 African countries.

Continuing the African region's leadership, the *"Libreville commitment on the elimination of mercury-containing skin-lightening cosmetics in Africa"* was<sup>1</sup> adopted at a high-level regional meeting in January 2025, requested that support should continue and invited Parties at COP-6 to adopt a programme of work, including a budget, to accelerate the elimination of this global mercury crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://minamataconvention.org/en/news/libreville-commitment-elimination-mercury-containing-skin-lightening-cosmetics-africa>.

**ZMWG therefore recommends that a COP 6 decision on future work on mercury added cosmetics, by the Minamata Convention Secretariat, focuses on ensuring that:**

- **Parties still lacking policies banning the manufacture and trade of mercury added cosmetics are identified along with available resources necessary to provide support;**
- **With assistance from international agencies such as the World Customs Organisation and Interpol, major sources of production and trade of mercury-added cosmetics are identified in view of being neutralized;**
- **Information is provided to Parties on potential funding options for purchasing field sampling equipment, thereby enabling more systematic controls of the presence of mercury in SLPs; and**
- **With assistance from World Health Organization and the Global Mercury Partnership, model national demand side reduction strategies for mercury added SLPs are developed and implemented.**
- **Contribution should be sought by the Global Mercury Partnership, and the Implementation Compliance Committee as relevant, also in proposing necessary recommendations to ensure compliance with the Article 4 provisions.**

## **b. Dental Amalgam**

Work on dental amalgam at COP-5 was guided by a [proposal](#) from Botswana and Burkina Faso on behalf of the African region, to amend Parts I and II of Annex A. The resulting provisions to strengthen the Convention are reflected in [Decision MC-5/4](#). However, as no consensus was reached, two elements were left for the COP-6 to discuss as per document MC COP.6/6:

Adoption of a 2030 Phase-out date: The proposal calls on Parties to adopt 2030 as the phase-out date for dental amalgam, by amending Annex A part I,

This is consistent with the direction Parties are heading in adopting measures to phase down use; phase out use in pregnant women and children; and the overall phase out of dental amalgam. More than 60 countries have banned dental amalgam use, stopped its import, replaced it in public programs or declared its phase out.<sup>2</sup> Among those, the European Union banned the use of dental amalgam since 1 January 2025.

The deadline of 2030 is consistent with the SDGs and WHO's Bangkok Declaration, which calls for phasing out dental amalgam, where feasible.

Exclusion of dental amalgam from public programs: The proposal further calls for excluding the use of dental amalgam under government insurance schemes and programmes by amending Annex A, Part II.

**ZMWG Recommendations:** *Since non-mercury dental fillings are cost effective, perform as well, and are available and used worldwide, we support the objectives of the proposed amendments calling for the discontinuation of dental amalgam by 2030 along with complementary measures.*

## **2. ZMWG RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO ANNEX B**

### **Vinyl chloride monomer**

Vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) production remains one of the main industrial uses of mercury. During the intersessional period following COP-5, Parties and stakeholders were invited through [Decision MC-5/6](#) to provide information on the technical and economic feasibility of mercury-free catalysts for VCM production. Nine Parties and three organizations submitted input.

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<sup>2</sup> A progress tracker of the phase out of dental amalgam is available at <https://environmentalmedicine.eu/global-dental-amalgam-tracker/>.

The Secretariat's report, summarized in Document 6.6/Add.2, concluded that mercury use in VCM production is now limited to a few Parties and mainly China. Even there, reductions are being achieved with support from a UNIDO/GEF project. Many examples of mercury-free alternatives were highlighted in the submissions. [NRDC](#) and the [Zero Mercury Working Group](#) contributed evidence as well.

**ZMWG Recommendations:**

***The Convention enabled Parties to continue to produce PVC with mercury, but required the transition to mercury free process as soon as possible. As presented above, mercury-free alternatives are readily available, technically feasible and economically feasible. Therefore, based on existing processes, the COP has sufficient evidence to establish that mercury-free catalysts have become technically and economically feasible and requesting the phase out of this process.***

### **3. ZMWG RECOMMENDATION ON ARTICLE 3**

#### **Mercury compounds**

Article 3 requires the COP to evaluate whether the trade in specific mercury compounds compromises the objective of the Convention and to consider whether specific mercury compounds should, by their listing in an additional annex adopted in accordance with article 27, be made subject to paragraphs 6 and 8 of article 3.

[Decision MC-5/3](#), adopted during COP-5 requested the Secretariat to initiate a study of the global supply, production, trade and use of mercury compounds, and to present the report to COP-6. The final version of the study is set out in document UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/5 .

The ZMWG welcomes the study's findings, which confirms that significant quantities of mercury compounds are traded and used in manufacturing and products, often without restrictions. Many of these compounds can be easily converted into elemental mercury, undermining the goals of the Convention. Some are also used in the production of mercury-added SLPs.

As also recommended in the [2023 EIA report](#), it is vital to close the loopholes that allow most mercury compounds to avoid restrictions, while also providing greater resources for customs enforcement. Past experience (e.g., in the EU) shows that banning specific compounds can lead to substitution with other mercury compounds. Currently legal under the Convention, the manufacture and trade of mercury compounds is occurring in plain sight worldwide, often crossing multiple jurisdictions.

***ZMWG recommendations: COP-6 should establish an intersessional open ended expert group charged with making recommendations to COP-7 on the steps necessary to close the loopholes in the Convention and eliminate the detrimental use of mercury compounds in SLPs and other hazardous uses.***

### **4. ZMWG RECOMMENDATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION PROCESS**

Parties agreed during COP-4 to begin the first effectiveness evaluation of the Convention and adopted an evaluation framework . The evaluation was launched at COP-5, through Decision [MC-5/14](#), establishing the Effectiveness Evaluation Group (EEG) who adopting indicators for the evaluation. The EEG, composed of 25 Party representatives and supported by observers, including the ZMWG, began work in 2024. It is divided into subgroups charged with the evaluation of specific articles of the Convention.

In parallel, the Open-Ended Scientific Group (OESG) is collecting and reviewing global mercury monitoring, emissions, and releases data. A [draft report](#) with these data included is available for review. The findings of both groups will feed into the first effectiveness evaluation, scheduled for release at COP-7 in 2027. COP-6 is expected to review progress and provide further guidance.

While the draft decision as per document MC COP.6/16 is welcomed, as an observer of the OESG and EEG working groups, the ZMWG notes the limited availability of data to properly assess the effectiveness of the Convention. Critical information is still missing, particularly emission inventories. This challenge has been highlighted in the OESG, where in several areas reliance on regional case studies has been necessary. While case studies can be useful, they are not an ideal substitute, as the accuracy of models is often reduced by data gaps.

Furthermore, the absence of a standardized format for data submission across Parties creates difficulties in analysis, and some countries continue to face capacity constraints. Also, much of the data available is outdated, with most still stemming from the MIAs in 2017.

***ZMWG recommendations: The Secretariat works closely with Parties and supports experts (including indigenous experts), to harmonize data collection methodologies and processes. For regions where data are missing, collaboration should be strengthened with regions that have already developed methodologies, including Indigenous co-led monitoring programs and activities (e.g. the Canada Northern Contaminants Program). This will ensure the availability of information but also contribute to the technology transfer among Parties.***

## **5. ZMWG RECOMMENDATION ON ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING**

ASGM continues to be the sector with the largest use, emissions and releases of mercury globally.

Pursuant to Article 7.3, Decision MC-5/7 invited Parties who have not yet submitted their ASGM National Action Plan to do so. Out of the 51 Parties and 4 Non-Parties that had notified the Secretariat that ASGM and processing using mercury amalgamation was more than insignificant in their territories, 35 Parties and 2 Non-Parties submitted National Action Plans.

Those Parties who have submitted a National Action Plan are reminded of their obligation to provide a review every three years of the progress made in implementing obligations under Article 7 and to include such reviews in reports submitted pursuant to Article 21. The deadline for the next full national reports is 31 December 2025.

In a [report](#) published in July 2025, the EIA exposes how Mexican mercury mines, some allegedly taken over by organized crime, are driving a deadly supply chain that links gold mining, environmental devastation, and human rights abuses. The EIA report also reveals that high gold prices, which have spurred the expansion of illegal ASGM into the rainforests of South America, and particularly the Amazon, are driving skyrocketing prices paid by miners to mercury traffickers and leading to the prospect of very quick return on investment for smuggling operations.

Further, widespread evidence from ZMWG members illustrates that mercury use in ASGM remains widespread, even in countries where it is illegal, such as Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, and Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines largely because mercury continues to enter through porous borders and in many forms.

***ZMWG recommendations: COP-6 should establish an intersessional open ended expert group charged with making recommendations to COP-7 to accelerate the closing of primary mines, eliminate loopholes in the Convention that benefit traffickers and illegal gold miners, improve comprehensive reporting on mercury trade, and identify enhanced enforcement measures necessary to eliminate the illegal production, trade and use of mercury in ASGM.***

