



Navigating the Mercury Challenge in Skin-Lightening Creams in the Philippines: A Regulatory Workshop

Concept Note

Date: 3 March 2025

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://bit.ly/3Qibxue>

Organizers/Secretariat: BAN Toxics, with support of the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Language: English

Background of the Project

Mercury-added skin-lightening products (SLPs) remain prevalent in both offline and online markets in the Philippines due to illegal trade and domestic sales. Factors such as limited law enforcement, consumer demand for cheaper alternatives, and widespread corruption exacerbate the problem, despite global and regional regulations. Combating the production, trade, and sale of these products is a significant challenge for national governments and the Minamata Convention.

In partnership with the Zero Mercury Working Group and the European Environmental Bureau, BAN Toxics has launched a project aimed at building national capacities to manage the illicit sale of mercury-containing cosmetic and skin-lightening products (SLPs) in the Philippines. This initiative is part of the organization's broader program to support stakeholders in implementing the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Major activities currently underway under the project include the development of the Philippine Mercury Material Flow with support of the Ministry of Environment – Japan, conducting market monitoring and reporting on problematic SLPs in both public markets and

online stores. Findings are reported to the relevant government agencies for regulation, including the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and for specific public awareness communications.

A major component of the project is conducting capacity-building with relevant agencies regulating products such as SLPs, as well as promoting the establishment of a Product Safety Pledge. In this regard, BAN Toxics will organize a Capacity-Building Workshop involving regulating agencies, e-commerce platforms, and international technical experts, focusing on policy and regulation improvements.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. Connect technical experts with policy implementers to discuss policy options for improving the regulation of SLPs in online stores, monitoring mechanisms used in other countries, and strategies for implementing regulation and monitoring.
2. Discuss the development of a product safety pledge, including provisions for a strengthened notice-and-takedown mechanism, transparency, and trade education, among others.
3. Develop collaborative strategies and actionable solutions for managing the illicit sale of SLPs through multi-stakeholder engagement.

Provisional Program

Time	Presentation	Presenter
1:00PM – 1:10PM	Registration	Secretariat
1:10PM – 1:15PM (5 mins)	Opening	Moderator
1:15PM – 1:25PM (10 mins)	Workshop Overview: The State of Affairs in the Proliferation of Mercury-Added Skin-Lightening Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Myra Mabilin Senior Consultant, BAN Toxics
1:25PM – 1:40PM (15 mins)	Documentary: The Dark Side of Skin Lightening	Produced by BAN Toxics, with support of the EEB
1:40PM – 2:00PM (20 mins)	Addressing the Global Mercury Crisis in Skin Lightening Products Sold Online: Overview of Mechanisms Used in Other Countries and the US Amazon Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Elena Lymberidi-Settimi Policy Manager for 'Zero Mercury' Campaign, European Environmental Bureau
2:00PM - 2:20PM (20 mins)	Case Studies: The European Commission/Canadian/Australian Product Safety Pledges	TBA
2:20PM – 3:20PM (10 mins each)	Panel Discussion:	Resource Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dir. Neil Catajay

	<p>Progress, Challenges, and Next Steps in Regulating Mercury-Added Skin Lightening Products</p>	<p>Director, Bureau of Philippine Standards-DTI Atty. Regino Mallari Jr. Director, Fair Trade Enforcement Bureau-DTI</p> <p>or</p> <p>RYAN RAY M. BALUYOT <i>Division Chief</i> Product Standards Monitoring Division, FTEB-DTI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Edwin Navaluna Chief - Chemical Management Section, EMB-DENR ● Ana Trinidad Rivera Director IV - Center for Cosmetics and Household/Urban Hazardous Substances Regulation and Research, Food and Drug Administration ● Elvin Enad Assistant Chief - Environmental Protection and Compliance Division, Bureau of Customs ● e-Commerce Platforms (TBA)
3:20PM – 4:20PM (60 mins)	Workshop Proper: Strategies for Co-implementing Regulation and Monitoring Mechanisms	Moderator
4:20PM – 4:30PM (10 mins)	Workshop Summary	Moderator
4:30PM-4:40PM (10 mins)	Closing: Ways Forward	Jam Lorenzo Deputy Executive Director, BAN Toxics

