



## Minamata Convention on Mercury – how it addresses the emission of mercury from coal combustion

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Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty that aims at protecting the human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury. In 2003, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), accepting the key findings of the first UNEP Global Mercury Assessment 2002, agreed that there is sufficient evidence of significant global adverse impacts from mercury to warrant further international action to reduce the risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury to the environment. It also decided that national, regional and global actions, both immediate and long-term, should be initiated as soon as possible to protect human health and the environment. In 2009, the Council agreed to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury. The committee finalized the draft convention through five meetings, and governments adopted the Minamata Convention on Mercury at a diplomatic conference held in Kumamoto, Japan in October 2013. The Convention entered into force in August 2017. The Convention has 114 parties as at 20 October 2019.

The Convention controls the entire life cycle of mercury, including supply, trade, mercury-added products, industrial processes using mercury, artisanal and small-scale gold mining, emissions to air, releases to land and water, interim storage, waste and contaminated sites. Regarding mercury emission to air, it identifies five point-source categories: coal-fired power plants; coal-fired industrial boilers; production of non-ferrous metals (lead, zinc, copper and industrial gold); waste incineration facilities; and cement clinker production facilities. Parties have an obligation to require the use of best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP) to control and reduce emissions no later than five years after the date of entry into force. For existing sources, parties are required to implement measures such as BAT/BEP and multi-pollutant control strategies within ten years. Parties are also required to develop emission inventory within five years and maintain it thereafter.





After the adoption of the Convention, a group of technical experts was established to develop guidance on the implementation of the emission-related provisions of the Convention. Based on the report from this group, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention held in September 2017 adopted guidance on BAT/BEP, emission inventory and other obligations of the Convention.

When the negotiations for the Convention started, coal combustion was recognized as the largest source of the anthropogenic emission of mercury to air. The third Global Mercury Assessment 2013 revealed that artisanal and small-scale mining is the largest global emission source, but still coal is recognized as the second largest source. The most recent Global Mercury Assessment 2018 estimates the emission of mercury from stationary combustion of coal in 2015 as 480t, about 21 percent of the total anthropogenic emission. The mercury emission from coal combustion in parties to the Minamata Convention covers about 85 percent of the total, which means that the efforts by the parties to reduce the emission will have a significant effect globally.

