

Decision AMCEN/20/Dec.7: Africa's participation at the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury

We, the African Ministers of Environment,

Having met in Nairobi on 16 and 17 July 2025 at the twentieth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recalling the objectives of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and reaffirming our collective commitment to protecting human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds,

Further recalling decision MC-5/7 on artisanal and small-scale gold mining that recognized that national action plans on artisanal and small-scale gold mining are central to the achievement of obligations under article 7, and recognized the efforts by many parties to develop and submit such plans,

Aware of decision MC-5/4 adopted at the fifth session of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury held in Geneva, Switzerland in November 2023, which mandated the phase-out of key mercury-added products by 2025 and 2027, respectively,

Alarmed by the continued production and export of mercury-added products to African countries despite global efforts to eliminate such products, particularly the practice of using exemptions to continue production for export into countries with weaker regulatory frameworks,

Apprehensive that some parties to the Minamata convention have already made declaration not to accept fourth Conference of Parties and fifth Conference of Parties amendments in accordance with sub-paragraph 3b of article 27 of the convention in which other Parties made a declaration with regard to amendment of annexes with accordance of para 5 of Article 30 and did not deposit with the depositary any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with respect of amendment to Article 5,

Concerned that Africa remains a net importer of mercury-added products such as fluorescent lighting, dental amalgam, and mercury-added cosmetics, making the continent highly vulnerable to dumping, hazardous waste accumulation, and public health risks,

Expressing concern that mercury-added skin lightening products are still widely used in Africa despite the requirement to phase out its manufacturing, import and export under the Minamata Convention and,

Highlighting the regional project addressing mercury-added skin-lightening cosmetics in thirteen countries in Africa, implemented by United Nations Environmental Programme, recently approved under eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility,

Noting that pollution from artisanal and small-scale gold mining remains the largest global source of anthropogenic mercury emissions,

Recognising that the importation of energy consuming products and equipment into Africa, including those containing mercury, poses a dual environmental and energy efficiency challenge, which must be addressed jointly by both exporting and importing countries,

Further recognising the significant mercury emissions from artisanal and small-scale gold mining, the largest source of mercury pollution in Africa, and the urgent need to formalise the sector, scale up mercury-free technologies, and accelerate the implementation of national action plans,

Deeply concerned about the continued illegal trade in mercury across African borders due to weak enforcement capacity, limited customs controls, and porous borders,

Welcoming domestic regulatory actions by some exporting Parties to prohibit the export of mercury-added products and inefficient energy consuming equipment that do not comply with national standards of importing countries, in line with Decision XXXV/13, adopted at the thirty fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer on the import and export of prohibited cooling equipment,

Highlighting the significant climate and development co-benefits of transitioning to mercury-free and energy-efficient alternatives such as light emitting diode and low-emission cooling technologies, and emphasising the need for support to local manufacturing of mercury-free products in Africa,

Recognising that, despite formal bans, global mercury trade is increasingly diverted to artisanal and small-scale gold mining operations in Africa,

Acknowledging the upcoming sixth session of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, scheduled to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from November 3 to 7, 2025, as a critical opportunity to consolidate Africa's unified position and advocate for the continent's priorities in global mercury governance,

Underscoring the importance of building adequate infrastructure for the environmentally sound management of mercury waste, including regional collection, storage, treatment, and disposal facilities, supported through public-private partnerships.

Decide:

1. To call upon African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to fully implement Decision MC-5/4 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, including the phase-out of all listed mercury-added products within the stipulated timelines, and to prevent any further importation of such products into the continent and phase out of the use of dental amalgam for patients under fifteen years, pregnant and breastfeeding women and to submit a national phase out plan or a progress report within the stipulated timeline.
2. To support the development and enforcement of harmonised minimum performance and safety standards for lighting, cooling, and other energy consuming products across the continent, with a view to eliminating substandard, mercury containing and inefficient products from the African market.
3. To call upon African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to

expedite the preparation and adoption of stringent minimum performance standards for these products applicable within the continent as an opportunity to ensure safety and strict compliance with the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

4. To request African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to develop and enforce robust regulatory frameworks and monitor and control the importation and distribution of these products, ensuring they adhere to the established performance standards and are entirely free from mercury.
5. To request the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, to accelerate the elimination of mercury-added skin-lightening products and strengthen regional collaboration to strengthen regulations, enhance enforcement measures, and raise public awareness to combat these harmful products.
6. To request the African Group of Negotiators on Chemicals and Waste to develop a common African position for sixth session of the Conference of Parties of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, ensuring it reflects the urgent need for strengthened compliance mechanisms, export restrictions, and enhanced financial and technical assistance for Parties from the African region.
7. To urge African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to support the outcomes of the fifth session of the Conference of Parties of the Minamata Convention on Mercury especially those related to artisanal and small-scale gold mining, mercury-added products and in protecting African countries from the detrimental effects of such mercury and related waste on human health and the environment.
8. To urge African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to review the progress of their implementation of the artisanal and small-scale gold mining National Action Plans pursuant to paragraph 3(c) of Article 7 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
9. To encourage African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to establish and implement traceability and certification mechanisms for responsibly sourced artisanal and small-scale gold mining, in line with international due diligence standards, and facilitate access to formal gold buyers and markets.
10. To request the African Union Commission, with support from the United Nations Environment Programme, to coordinate the development of a regional roadmap for mercury-free and energy efficient products and their markets in Africa, including the promotion of local innovation and investments in manufacturing those products.
11. To invite development partners, and financial institutions to provide targeted support for the implementation of this decision, particularly in enforcing the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, enhancing border controls, supporting environmentally sound waste management, and strengthening regional monitoring systems.
12. To call upon African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to implement national action plans on artisanal and small-scale gold mining and support the formalization of the sector, access to mercury-free technologies, and establishment of regional centres of excellence for training and knowledge sharing.
13. To encourage enhanced cooperation among member States to address transboundary

illegal trade in mercury, including through intelligence sharing, customs coordination, and harmonised enforcement strategies.

14. To call upon African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to support the proposed amendments to phase out dental amalgam by 2030 and to end the use of dental amalgam in public programmes at the sixth session of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention.
15. To request the Secretariat of Minamata Convention on Mercury, in collaboration with United Nation Environmental Programme, to establish a regional coordination mechanism to facilitate information exchange, monitor implementation, track progress and facilitate stakeholder engagement on mercury across Africa,
16. To call upon African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to work with digital platforms to restrict the sale and advertisement of mercury-containing products online and ensure rapid removal of such listings when detected.
17. To call upon African member states that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to consider supporting a review of Article 3 of the Convention with the objective of further restricting transboundary trade in mercury.
18. To request African member States that are Parties to the Minamata Convention to promote synergies and coordinated implementation across related international chemicals and waste conventions, ensuring coherence at national and regional levels.
19. To encourage all Parties to the Minamata Convention to align with the conventions' decision M/C 5/4 to phase out mercury-added products globally by 2025 and 2027, respectively, particularly those that have made declaration not to accept the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties amendments in accordance with sub-article 3(b) of Article 27 of the Convention.

Annex

Africa's key policy messages to sixth session of the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and its Implementation

- (a) We recognise the significant risks associated with mercury-added lighting products, which include long-term environmental contamination and adverse health effects such as neurological and developmental damage.
- (b) We also recognise that while some countries have tightened regulations following the phase-out dates stipulated by the Minamata Convention on Mercury, others look to continue production under exemption procedures. This inconsistency threatens the Convention's objectives and allows the continued manufacture and potential dumping of mercury containing products in Africa.
- (c) We acknowledge that Africa, being mainly an importer of these products, is at risk of becoming a dumping ground for hazardous products, leading to severe management challenges and humanitarian crises related to toxic waste.

-
- (d) We express concern that regional bans and restrictions could exacerbate the dumping problem, compounded by insufficient border controls, weak regulatory frameworks, and inadequate waste management facilities.
 - (e) We advocate for the promotion of local light emitting diode manufacturing, which would require stringent regulations, capacity building, and incentives such as higher taxes on imported mercury-added products and robust support for local producers.
 - (f) We reaffirm the importance for harmonised standards and stringent enforcement measures across Africa to prevent the entry of sub-standard mercury-added products.
 - (g) We recognise that transitioning to mercury-free light emitting diode is highlighted as a readily actionable and high impact measure due to its substantial climate benefits, including saving over 1,400 million tons of CO₂. The energy savings of 50-70% compared to older technologies would significantly reduce CO₂ emissions and contribute to global climate goals, benefiting the continent.
 - (h) We recognize the severe threat posed by mercury-added products and take immediate actions to prevent their dumping.
 - (i) We support the expedited preparation and adoption of stringent performance standards for these products to ensure compliance with the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
 - (j) We emphasise the need for the development of robust regulatory infrastructure to monitor and control the importation and distribution of these products, ensuring they are mercury-free.
 - (k) We support the need to promote regional technology cooperation and South-South exchange in areas such as waste management, pollution monitoring, customs training, and manufacturing of mercury-free products.
 - (l) We recognise that Africa's leadership demonstrated at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties must now be reinforced through concerted effort at implementation of the decision.
 - (m) We emphasise the need for enhanced access to predictable, adequate, and simplified financial support for African countries through the Global Environment Facility, Specific International Programme, and other financial mechanisms, particularly for least developed countries and small island developing States.
 - (n) We reaffirm that strategic partnerships with regional financial institutions, multilateral trust funds, and technical agencies are essential to provide financial and technical assistance to ensure the effective implementation of this resolution and the operationalization of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.

- (o) We reaffirm the need to adopt gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches in all Minamata-related strategies, including through community empowerment, informal sector support, and youth engagement.
- (p) We recognise the responsibility of all countries to promote regulatory frameworks, fostering collaboration, and encouraging the transition to sustainable alternatives, to build resilience and protect its citizens from public health hazards, preserve its environment, and contribute to global climate goals.