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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Outcome of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP 1) (Geneva, 24-29 September 2017)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note on the above, submitted jointly by the Presidency and the Commission, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 13 October 2017.

Outcome of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP 1) (Geneva, 24-29 September 2017)

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The first Conference of the Parties (COP 1) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (the Convention) took place between 24 and 29 September 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Convention was adopted on 10 October 2013 and it entered into force on 16 August 2017. It inter alia bans new, and phases out existing mercury mines, contains measures to control emissions to air and on releases to land and water, and regulates the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The Convention has 128 Signatories and was ratified by the EU and 82 countries, including 18 Member States.

COP 1 considered a number of issues, set out in several documents prepared by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) that negotiated the convention and prepared its entry into force. This includes the final adoption of (1) guidelines on Best Available Techniques (BAT) to prevent and control air emissions from coal combustion, production of cement and metals and incineration of waste and (2) guidance on Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) that affects the health of some 15 million people, including up to 3 million children and women. Together, those two documents cover the overwhelming majority of emissions of mercury to air, which are the principal driver of mercury build-up in the environment and the food chain.

The COP 1 agenda also comprised a range of matters related to reporting, effectiveness evaluation, the financial mechanism, arrangements for a permanent secretariat, compliance and guidance, and further issues related to technical provisions of the Convention.

After adopting the technical documents prepared by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), the COP 1 plenary convened as a Committee of the Whole (COW) to address substantive issues. Constructive and smooth discussions led to agreement on a higher reporting frequency for the supply and trade of mercury and the launch of intersessional work to:

- develop a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the Convention including arrangements for monitoring mercury presence in the environment, biota and humans;
- prepare the establishment of waste thresholds specifying the scope of the waste provisions of the Convention;
- finalise guidelines on interim storage of commodity mercury;
- develop guidance on identification and assessment of contaminated sites.

After intense deliberations, COP 1 decided that the Secretariat of the Convention will de facto be located in Geneva, will benefit from an annual host country contribution of CHF 1 million, and will collaborate closely and maximise resources and expertise with the BRS Secretariat. It was also decided to review the operational arrangements for the Secretariat at COP 2. COP 1 also established a Specific International Programme as one part of the financial mechanism, and adopted the guidance to the Global Environment Facility – GEF (although one Party blocked agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding between the COP and the GEF, which will be again considered at COP 2).

Agreement was also reached on the financial rules and an effective core budget that includes reasonable COP costs and provision of resources to undertake priority intersessional work on effectiveness evaluation.

COP 1 included a High-Level segment on 28–29 September aiming to provide a specific platform at the highest level for the celebration of the entry into force of the Convention. That objective was achieved through Ministerial roundtables around the themes of mercury in land, air and water, a high-level interactive dialogue, steered by heads of UN organizations and the GEF, a Ministerial dinner and a keynote talk and action messages from Ministers and Commissioner Karmenu Vella. The High-Level segment was attended by two Heads of States and Governments and some 80 Ministers.

To conclude, COP 1 was generally successful and has put the Convention on the right tracks. The EU met its main priority objectives, namely the adoption of technical guidance, ambitious reporting and effectiveness evaluation arrangements, the decision to locate the Secretariat in Geneva, including an annual host country contribution; a robust core budget; cooperation with the joint secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions; the establishment of the Specific International Programme; the adoption of the guidance to the GEF; as well as adoption of the Financial Rules and the Rules of Procedure, including on issues related to REIO/EU.

The next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 2) to the Minamata Convention will be held from 19 to 23 November 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.
