



Project for
**Promoting
Minamata
Convention
on Mercury**
by making the most of Japan's
knowledge and experiences

**Eliminating
Mercury
Skin
Lightening
Products**



National Training on Strengthening Country-Level Inter-Agency Coordination on Trade of Mercury

Date: Monday 2 June 2025, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Tentative Programme Agenda

Background and Objectives

Mercury remains a major environmental and public health threat, with trade continuing to challenge enforcement efforts across the region. Despite international regulatory frameworks, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury, gaps in policy implementation, border control, and intelligence-sharing allow mercury smuggling to persist. The Asian region serves as both a transit hub and an end market, particularly for artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), which accounts for the largest source of global mercury emissions¹. Mercury-added cosmetics (mainly skin lightening products) are also prevalent across the region. Lack of information, weak enforcement and informal supply chains exacerbate these challenges, exposing vulnerable populations to severe health risks.

The Minamata Convention mandates signatory countries to regulate mercury trade (Article 3), phase out mercury-added products [including mercury-added skin lightening products] (Article 4), and control emissions among other obligations. However, many nations across the region lack systematic trade monitoring mechanisms, making it difficult to track mercury flows and enforce compliance. Strengthening customs enforcement, forensic detection, and inter-agency coordination is critical to tackling mercury smuggling.

Effective mercury trade enforcement requires tailored national strategies that align with each

¹ [Global mercury assessment | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

country's regulatory and operational context. This in-country training focuses on practical, hands-on exercises to enhance coordination among customs officers, environmental regulators, and law enforcement authorities. Strengthening inter-agency collaboration is essential for detecting, monitoring, and preventing mercury trade, which remains a persistent challenge.

This initiative aims to equip national enforcement agencies with the technical skills and enforcement tools necessary to combat mercury smuggling. By integrating regional collaboration with country-specific training, the program fosters a comprehensive enforcement network, enhancing national and cross-border cooperation to improve compliance with the Minamata Convention and other trade regulations.

Objectives

1. Build country-specific enforcement capacity through hands-on training.
2. Improve coordination between national agencies to close enforcement gaps.
3. Train officers in forensic detection and risk assessment for mercury shipments.
4. Initiate a national action plan for mercury trade control.

Expected Outcomes

1. Strengthened inter-agency coordination for mercury trade enforcement.
2. Improved capacity of national authorities to detect and prevent mercury trade.
3. Standardized procedures for customs and law enforcement authorities.
4. Initiation of country-specific action plans and policy recommendations.
5. Gather up to date information on mercury trade data and national challenges.

Tentative Agenda

Registration		
8:30-9:15	Registration – housekeeping announcements.	AIT
Session 1: Day 1: Strengthening National Enforcement Mechanisms(9:30 – 12:30)		
9:15 – 9:35	Opening remarks	Malgorzata Stylo, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) M K H S Karunarathne, Sri Lanka Customs Dr Farrukh, OiC WHO Sri Lanka Anna Kobylecka, World Customs Organisation (WCO) Solomon Huno, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)
9:35 – 9:45	Introduction of Participants	All
9:45 - 10:10	Introduction: - Objectives, expected outcomes, and schedule of the training. - Presentation on the impact of mercury pollution on health - Overview of the Minamata Convention Obligations regarding Mercury Trade	Tahlia Ali Shah, Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), Elena Jardan, WHO HQ
10:10 – 10:25	Mercury Mass Flow in Sri Lanka	Kyaw Nyunt Maung, UNEP
10:25 – 10:40	Overview of trade of mercury-added products with a special focus on mercury-added skin lightening products	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
10:40 – 11:00	<i>Short Break and Group Photo</i>	
11:00 – 11:15	Understanding the role of Customs and the available resources for enhancing implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/other environmental agreements	Anna Kobylecka, WCO
11:15 – 11:30	National Institutional Capacity - Understanding the interlinkages amongst Customs, Environmental Agencies and Law Enforcement	Chalani Rubesinghe, National Project Coordinator - Eliminating Mercury Skin

		Lightening Products
11:30 – 11:45	National Customs Existing Procedures for sound handling of seized commodities	Sri Lanka Customs Representative
11:45 – 12:30	Practical exercises on customs inspection procedures and mercury shipment profiling (to include case studies on smuggling tactics and interception methods and identifying and handling mercury shipment scenarios)	All participants Facilitator: Anna Kobylecka, WCO
12:30-14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 14:45	Continuation of Practical Exercise	All participants Facilitator: Anna Kobylecka, WCO
14:45 – 15:15	Training in mercury detection and forensic analysis techniques	Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board
15:15 – 15:30	Mercury Skin Lightening Products Database Development- Global Platform	BRI
15:30 – 15:45	National Information Gathering on Mercury Skin Lightening Products	Sri Lanka Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA)
15:45 – 16:00	Coordination with Project: Integrated Management and Environmentally Sound Disposal of POPs Pesticides in the Agriculture Sector and Mercury & Waste in the Healthcare Sector in Sri Lanka	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Project Representative
16:00 – 16:30	Developing national action plans and SOPs for enforcement agencies	Anna Kobylecka, WCO
16:30 – 17:30	Closure of Training: • Q&A • Wrap up of the training's outcomes and next steps • Conclusion remarks	All Participants