

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

Date: 17th July 2025

Koror, Palau

Tentative Programme Agenda

Background and Objectives

Effective mercury trade enforcement requires tailored national strategies that align with each 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 illicit mercury trade, which remains a persistent challenge across the Asian and Pacific Region.

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. Ultimately, this approach will bolster national enforcement capacity and contribute to regional efforts to eliminate mercury trade.

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

Thursday 17 July 2025 (UTC+9 Time zone)		
8:30 - 9:00	Registration – housekeeping announcements.	Bishal Bhari, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)
9:00 – 9:20	Opening remarks	Thomas Verbaere, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Mr. Michael Blesam, Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) Bishal Bhari, AIT
9:20 – 9:40	Introduction of Participants, Group Photo and Short Break	All
9:40 – 10:00	- Objectives, expected outcomes, and schedule of the training. - Introduction of Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)	Ashley Bastiansz and Cassie Gilham, Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)
10:00 – 10:20	Status of Mercury in Palau based on the Minamata Initial Assessment and Overview of Minamata Convention Obligations Regarding Trade and Waste Management	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
10:20 – 10:35	Implementation of the Minamata Convention in Palau	Mr. Michael Blesam, EQPB
10:35 – 10:50	Existing National Customs Capacity for Identifying/Confiscating and Exporting Hazardous Substances	Representative from the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP)
10:50– 11:05	Existing National Management (Handling, Storage and Disposal) of Hazardous Waste	Ms. Jessica Emesiochel, Division of Solid Waste Management (DSWM)
11:05 – 11:25	Mercury Mass Flow in Palau	Kyaw Nyunt Maung, UNEP- <i>virtual</i>
11:25 - 11:40	Tools to Enhance Mercury Trade Management: Identifying Mercury-added Products	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
11:40 – 12:30	Mercury Impacts on the Environment, the Importance of Mercury Biomonitoring in Palau and the Pacific Region - Discussion and Practical Hair Sampling Exercise	Cassie Gilham and Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
12:30-13:30	<i>Lunch</i>	

13:30 – 14:35	Practical Exercise: Developing a National Action Plan for Phasing out Mercury-Added Products and Management of Mercury Waste	Facilitator: Ashley Bastiansz, BRI All participants Note-takers: Cassie Gilham, BRI and AIT
14:35 – 14:55	Understanding the role of Customs and the available resources for enhancing implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/other environmental agreements	Anna Kobylecka, World Customs Organisation (WCO)- <i>virtual</i>
14:55 – 15:10	Short Break	
15:10 - 15:15	Sharing of experiences and knowledge gained from equipment use and workshops attended	Mr. Darwin Florencio, EQPB
15:15 – 15:45	Atmospheric Survey and Analysis (Manual Active Sampling Method)	AIT
15:45 – 16:00	Cross-Agency Collaboration in Mercury Trade Enforcement	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
16:00 – 16:20	Wrap up of Discussions and Closing Remarks	BRI and all participants.

Half Day Field Visit is scheduled for 18 July 2025 with BRI, AIT and EQPB