



United Nations Environment Programme



Distr.
RESTRICTED

UNEP/MED-HG/2
1 October 1980

ENGLISH ONLY



UNEP/FAO/WHO Meeting of Experts on
Environmental Quality Criteria for
Mercury in Mediterranean Seafood

Geneva, 3 - 6 November 1980

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. The First Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Geneva, 5-10 February 1979) endorsed the development of environmental quality criteria in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan. It was stated in particular that:
2. "Work should be continued on the development of the scientific rationale for the criteria applicable to the quality of recreational waters, shellfish-growing areas, waters used for aquaculture, and seafood. Based on this rationale and taking into account existing national provisions and international arrangements and agreements, the criteria should be formulated on a scientific basis and submitted to the Governments and the EEC for their consideration." (UNEP/IG.14/9, Annex V, paragraph 13).
3. The meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties (Geneva, 26-27 June 1979) considered the matter and urged the Secretariat to take steps in developing the environmental quality criteria for bathing waters and mercury in seafood.
4. Interagency consultations were held in November and December 1979 on the design and implementation of a co-operative programme on health-related aspects of mercury levels in edible marine organisms. The objectives of such a programme were formulated as follows:

- (i) to obtain reliable information on mercury contents in fish and shellfish in various parts of the Mediterranean region;
 - (ii) to establish patterns of consumption of fish and shellfish in selected communities around the Mediterranean and to identify high risk groups;
 - (iii) to gather epidemiological information on health effects in high and low risk groups and general populations;
 - (iv) to review the recommended national and international limits and guidelines for mercury levels and intake by man in the light of latest available information and in relation to consumption patterns of fish and shellfish in the Mediterranean region;
 - (v) to establish environmental and health monitoring systems and to recommend safeguards and measures for the reduction and control of exposure to mercury from consumption of fish and shellfish.
5. In view of the necessity to provide the member states of the Mediterranean region with advice related to consumption of mercury-contaminated seafood prior to the meeting on the long-term monitoring and research programme, it was agreed to undertake preparatory activities as follows:
- (i) compilation and evaluation of data on concentration of mercury in seafood;
 - (ii) collection, evaluation and interpretation of available data on seafood consumption patterns, giving emphasis to high exposure groups, including results of pilot studies in selected countries;
 - (iii) collection of available data on mercury levels in blood and other tissues and, if possible, augmentation of these data by biological monitoring of selected groups;
 - (iv) review of latest available data on health effects of mercury in seafood, with particular reference to dose-response relationships;
 - (v) review of national legislation and enforcement practices related to the subject;
 - (vi) updating the data profiles on mercury.

Most of these tasks are completed by now and the results are reflected in the papers listed in the provisional list of documents (UNEP/MED-HG/3).

7. The present meeting is expected, in particular, to:
 - (i) evaluate the hazards related to the intake of mercury by populations through seafood in the Mediterranean region, and
 - (ii) develop recommendation(s) on desirable environmental quality criteria for mercury in Mediterranean seafood.
8. The results of the present meeting will provide a direct input to the Meeting of Experts to Evaluate the Pilot Phase of MED POL and to Develop a Long-term Monitoring and Research Programme for the Mediterranean Action Plan (Geneva, 8-12 December 1980). This programme for the second phase of MED POL is expected to contain major components related to the monitoring of mercury as well as for research on the health effects of hazardous substance listed in the legal agreements adopted as part of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

Item 1 : Opening of the meeting

9. The meeting will be opened by the representative of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme at 10:00 hours on 3 November 1980 in the Pavillon du Petit Saconnex of the United Nations.

Item 2 : Organization of the meeting

10. The meeting should elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and a Rapporteur.
11. It is proposed that the work of the meeting be carried out in plenary and without simultaneous interpretations using English as the working language.

Item 3 : Adoption of the agenda

12. The provisional agenda suggested by the secretariat has been circulated under the symbol UNEP/MED-HG/1.

Item 4 : Review of results obtained from recent expert meetings and studies

13. Relevant reports, as listed in document UNEP/MED-HG/3, will be introduced by the participants concerned and briefly reviewed by the group.

Item 5 : Assessment of presently available knowledge on the problem and identification of existing gaps

14. Based upon the information available and reviewed, a summary evaluation of the state-of-the-art will be undertaken by the meeting. This includes assessment of the general knowledge as well as of its aspects specific to the Mediterranean. Existing gaps will be identified that are in particular existing in the Mediterranean region.

Item 6 : Evaluation of hazards related to the intake of mercury by populations through seafood in the Mediterranean Region

15. On the basis of the review and assessment carried out under the two previous agenda items the meeting is expected to evaluate the health hazards which may result from the intake of mercury by various groups of populations (population at large, specifically exposed or vulnerable groups, tourists, etc.) through Mediterranean seafood.

Item 7 : Development of recommendations on desirable environmental quality criteria for mercury in Mediterranean seafood

16. The main task of the present meeting is to develop recommendations on desirable environmental quality criteria for mercury in Mediterranean seafood which may be applicable in the Mediterranean Region and suitable as the basis for national regulations.

Item 8 : Other business

17. The meeting is invited to discuss any related matter which has not been considered under other items.

Item 9 : Adoption of the report

18. The meeting should approve its final report. It will be used by the Secretariat (UNEP/FAO/WHO) to formulate a proposal for draft environmental quality criteria for mercury in Mediterranean seafood which will be submitted for review to the meeting of experts on MED POL (see paragraph 8 of this document) and to the Second Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its Related Protocols (March 1981) for further consideration.

Item 10: Closure of the meeting

19. The meeting is expected to close by 18:00 hours on 6 November 1980.