Sixth meeting of the Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products project stakeholder group

Theme: Advancing Global Momentum: Interactive Consultations on Challenges, Regulatory Measures, and Pathways to Phase Out Mercury-Added Cosmetics

15 June 2026

Online, 14:30-15:30 CET



Before we start, please:

UN environment programme



Microphones are off – please raise hand if you would like to make an intervention



Use the **“Chat”** to ask technical questions or share views



The **meeting will be recorded**. Please indicate if you have any objection



AGENDA

1. **Minamata Convention - Briefing on Invitation to Parties and stakeholders** to submit information on challenges in preventing the manufacture, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics, including enforcement challenges

2. **WHO database of regulatory approaches** for mercury in skin lightening products

3. **Global momentum, sustainability and linkages** with actions across broader cosmetics sector



Briefing on Invitation to Parties and stakeholders to submit information on challenges in preventing the manufacture, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics, including enforcement challenges

Eisaku Toda,

Minamata Convention Secretariat

Minamata Convention on Mercury

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

- Global treaty to protect human health and the environment from mercury.
- 153 Parties
- Address the whole life cycle of mercury – supply, trade, use, emission, release, waste…
- Parties are to phase out the manufacturing, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics by 2020 (or 2025, for countries with exemptions).



Minamata Convention: Work for COP-7 (Sep 2027) on Mercury-added cosmetics

- COP Decision MC-6/4 encouraged Parties without national legislation or other measures, or otherwise facing challenges in implementing their obligations regarding mercury-added cosmetics, to inform the Secretariat and to consider the application of Article 14 and/or 15 to their situation.



* Article 14: Capacity- building, technical assistance and technology transfer
Article 15: Implementation and Compliance Committee

- The Secretariat issued a letter on 22 May 2026 to invite Parties and stakeholders to **submit information by 30 June 2026**, noting that the following information will also be taken into account:
  - ✓ National reports pursuant to Article 21
  - ✓ Submissions for the intersessional work for COP-6 pursuant to decision MC-5/5
  - ✓ WHO database of regulatory approaches
  - ✓ Information from relevant meetings, **including this stakeholder group meeting**.

Minamata Convention: Work for COP-7 (Sep 2027) on Mercury-added cosmetics

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

What would you propose to the Minamata Convention Conference of the Parties to eliminate mercury from cosmetics?



What would you propose to the Minamata Convention Conference of the Parties to eliminate mercury from cosmetics?

Guidance on features of good regulatory practice

Capacity building for enforcing regulations

work with UN org to increase awareness and advocacy to take urgent action to protect enc and health

Strengthen the regulation. Mandate a figurative value for the least accepted

Engage the private sector through a producer responsibility framework

- The COP needs to ensure that all Parties have the tools and capacity to have the laws in place, and to implement and enforce them correctly.

- Ensure that as per COP6 decision - together with Interpol and other international organisations provide and organise investigation, ensuring manufacture of HgSLPs stops at the source

Unintentional presence at trace levels should be permitted. This level is technically unavoidable through GMP and may be present in raw ingredients at very low levels.

regular webinars

Identify manufacturers and prohibit the use of mercury to produce SLPs

Unintended presence that does not

What would you propose to the Minamata Convention Conference of the Parties to eliminate mercury from cosmetics?

Strengthen the regulation. Mandate a figurative value for the least accepted level of mercury in cosmetics

Ensure that a global database of SLPs analysed is published on the UNEP website , and provide whatever needed for that.

Priority to be given to assist and ensure that manufacturing countries (of HgSLPs) - identify and stop such manufacturing.

organise investigation, ensuring manufacture of HgSLPs stops at the source

Global detention list

Assist governments to assure they have the tools (e.g. XRFs) to screen rapidly SLPs on the local markets, when they enter the countries ' borders.

Unintended presence that does not cause harm should be acceptable

Large awareness raising, in mainstream media to bring the issue of HgSLP to the attention of population - trying at the same time changing the notion of colourism - therefore driving away of SLP use

Minamata Convention: Work for COP-7 (Sep 2027) on Mercury-added cosmetics

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

- As requested at COP-6, the Secretariat is putting together:
  - ✓ Information on mechanisms for supporting enforcement and the identification of mercury in cosmetics, including field sampling and analysis equipment
  - ✓ Regulation gap, enforcement challenges and other challenges in preventing the manufacture, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics.
  - ✓ Further investigate the major sources of manufacture, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics in cooperation with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and other international organizations
- The European Union provides financial support to this intersessional work



- WHO is to:
  - ✓ Work with UNEP and BRI to put together the lessons learned from the GEF project
  - ✓ Prepare an illustrative national public health system-wide strategy focused on reduction measures for mercury-added cosmetics.

WHO Global Database on Legally Binding Controls on Mercury in Cosmetics

6th SLP stakeholder group meeting
15 June 2026

Dr. Elena Jardan
World Health Organization (WHO)



1. Introduction
2. What database shows?
3. Findings
4. Trends
5. Enforcement
6. Limits
7. Challenges

→ WHO solution (Model Law)



World Health Organization

What is the problem?

Mercury is a **toxic substance** used in some cosmetics, especially **skin-lightening products**.

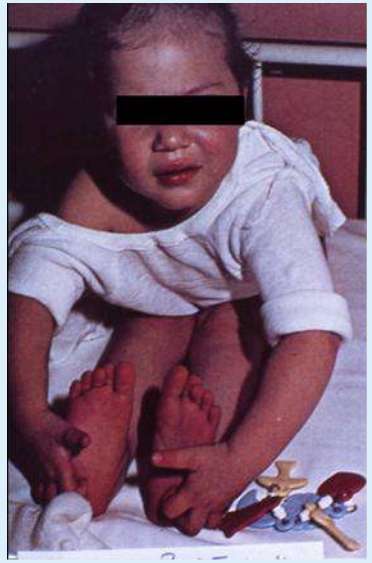
Skin lightening products are widely used globally, with **~28% lifetime prevalence**, and up to **70% in some populations**

Exposure can cause **serious health effects** (neurological, kidney damage, harm to unborn children) and environmental contamination.

All health effects from mercury in cosmetics are preventable through strong regulation and better better awareness and safer product use.

Under the **Minamata Convention**, countries commit to **phase out mercury-added products**, including cosmetics.

Despite global commitments, **mercury in cosmetics persists**, especially where regulation is weak.







World Health Organization

Cosmetic skin lightening is a big business

The growth of the market is driven by a combination of social, cultural, and economical factors

Demand for SLP is associated with economic growth – as it drives consumer spending power, urbanization and lifestyle shifts

Beauty and personal care industries thrive as economies expand – advertising is a huge driver

Emerging economies – create new opportunities for cheap affordable mid-range affordable solutions

Aging population also impacts global SLP markets- hyperpigmentation, age spots and uneven skin tones

Not all Skin Lightening Products contain Mercury.

The Skin Lightening Products Market was valued at USD **9,228.45** M in 2023 and is expected to reach USD **13,974.30** M in 2032,



Active ingredients in Skin lightening products include Hydroquinone, mercury, corticosteroids and plant-based extracts such as fruit acids. Many of these lead to skin irritation, hypersensitivity, thinning & consequent problems

KEY MILESTONES – LEGISLATION & REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

1. Toolkit for establishing legislation – comprehensive approach, including: Rationale for regulating mercury in SLPs; Global map of national laws; Global repository of laws; Fact sheets, infographics, product-testing database; Guidance on analytical methods & sampling; Global data base; Supply chain and demand side; Elements of effective regulation, model law, and case studies;

2. Model Regulatory Approach - based on legislative surveys and country situational analyzes.

3. WHO global survey expanded with data from 190 Member States - strengthening regulatory evidence.

4. Core regulatory responsibilities clarified: cosmetics oversight largely under Ministries of Health/medicines authorities; implementation varies by national context.

5. Proposed Model Law developed, including: Clear definitions & scope, List of regulated products, Mercury limits & testing methods, Compliance, enforcement, penalties, and general provisions; Implementation timelines & transition periods, etc.



Status of existing laws – to gauge awareness, find examples and document approaches

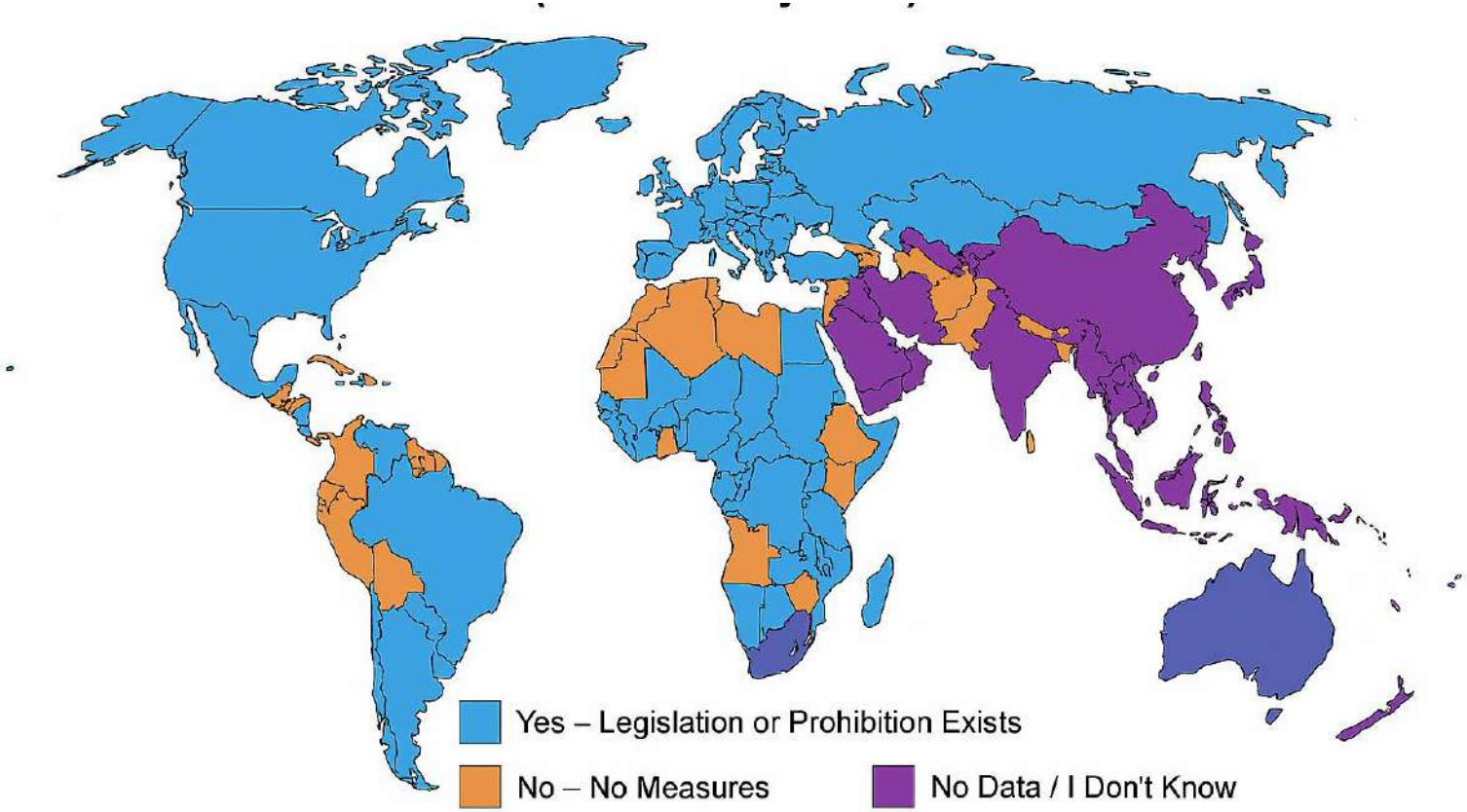
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Initial survey undertaken of regulatory approaches to cosmetics and mercury in cosmetics in particular - 75 countries responded PLUS 116 collected info

Legislation controlling cosmetic products reported in 190 countries (97%)

Small number of responses did not /did not know

23 Parties and 8 organizations responded to the **MC-5/5** call for information on challenges in preventing the manufacture, import and export of cosmetics.



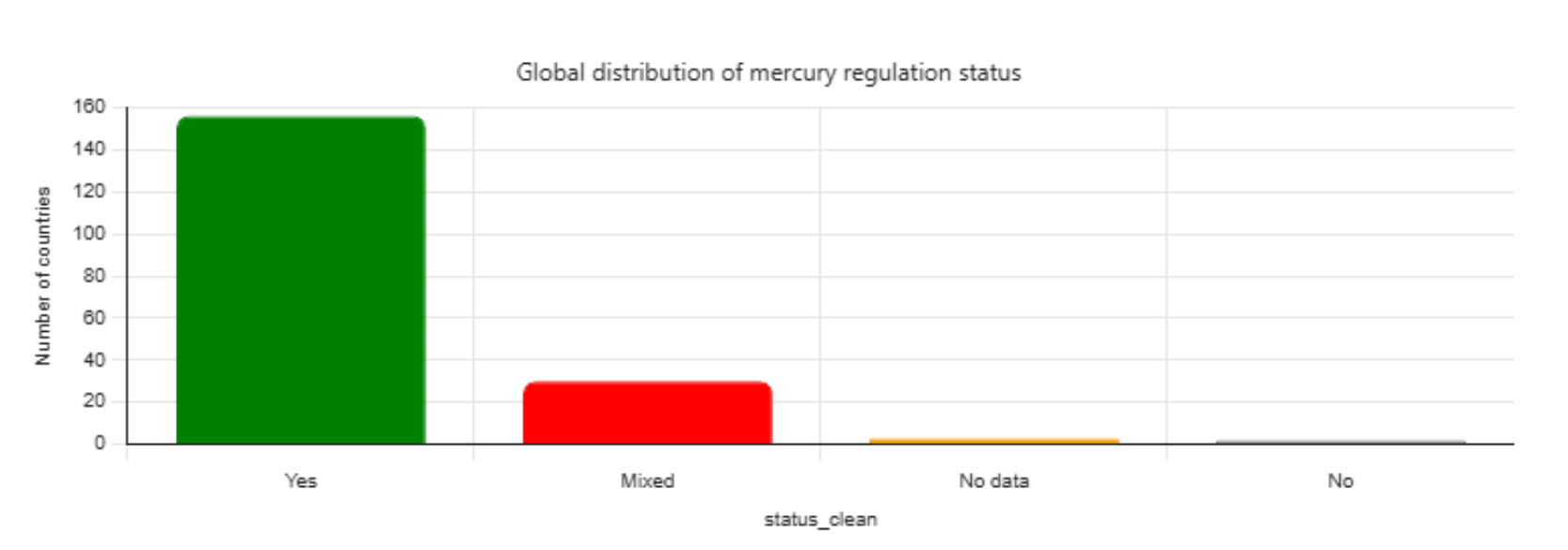
Disclaimer: WHO Global landscape of national regulations on cosmetics, including related to Mercury. Findings from WHO Survey – Global map and database to be published after confirming with governments

Key global finding

Most countries now have legally binding controls on mercury in cosmetics

- Mercury is **widely prohibited as an ingredient**
- Many countries go further:
  - Ban **manufacture, import, export, and sale**

Strong global alignment with **Minamata Convention obligations**



Yes: ~97% → majority of countries report some form of legally binding control

⚠️ No: ~1% → very few countries with no controls

⚠️ No data: ~2% → small information gap

World Health Organization

What does the database cover?

- Covers **countries across all WHO and UNEP regions**
- Tracks:
  - Presence of **legally binding controls (Yes/No)**
  - **Type of legislation**
  - **Implementation of Minamata Convention (Article 4)**
- Includes **detailed national examples and regulatory frameworks**



World Health Organization

Regional Trends

EU

Strongest and most harmonized framework

Based on:
O EU Cosmetics Regulation
O REACH
O Mercury Regulation (EU) 2017/852

Mercury is fully prohibited (Annex II)

Asia-Pacific

•Very high level of regulation
Examples:
oASEAN countries: ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ban + 1 ppm trace limit)
oChina, Japan, Korea: strict bans + import/export controls
•Many countries combine:
ingredient bans, market surveillance, customs enforcement

Americas (Latin America & Caribbean)

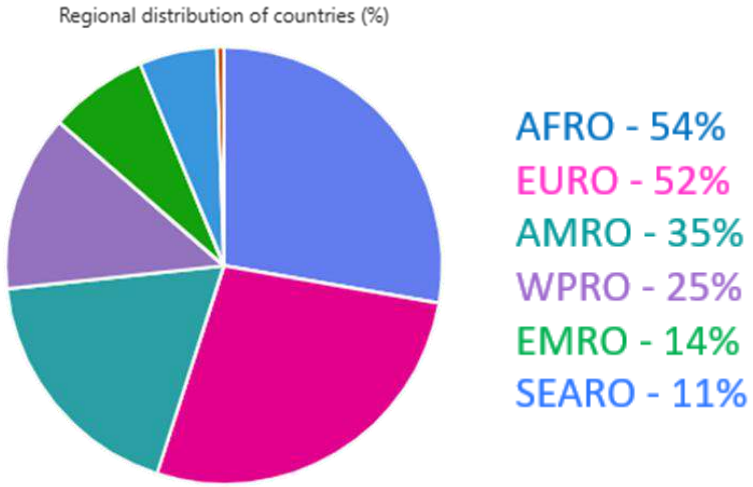
Strong regional harmonization:
oMERCOSUR, Andean Community, RTCA
•Common measures:
oMercury on prohibited ingredient lists
oPre-market approval systems
oImport/export restrictions

Africa

Rapid progress but more variability
Many countries:
- Ban mercury under public health laws
- Use regional frameworks (UEMOA, CEMAC)
•Increasing focus on:
skin-lightening products
awareness campaigns

West Asia

•Harmonized through GSO 1943/2024
•Mercury prohibited in cosmetics
•Enforcement via:
- ministerial orders
- multi-agency controls

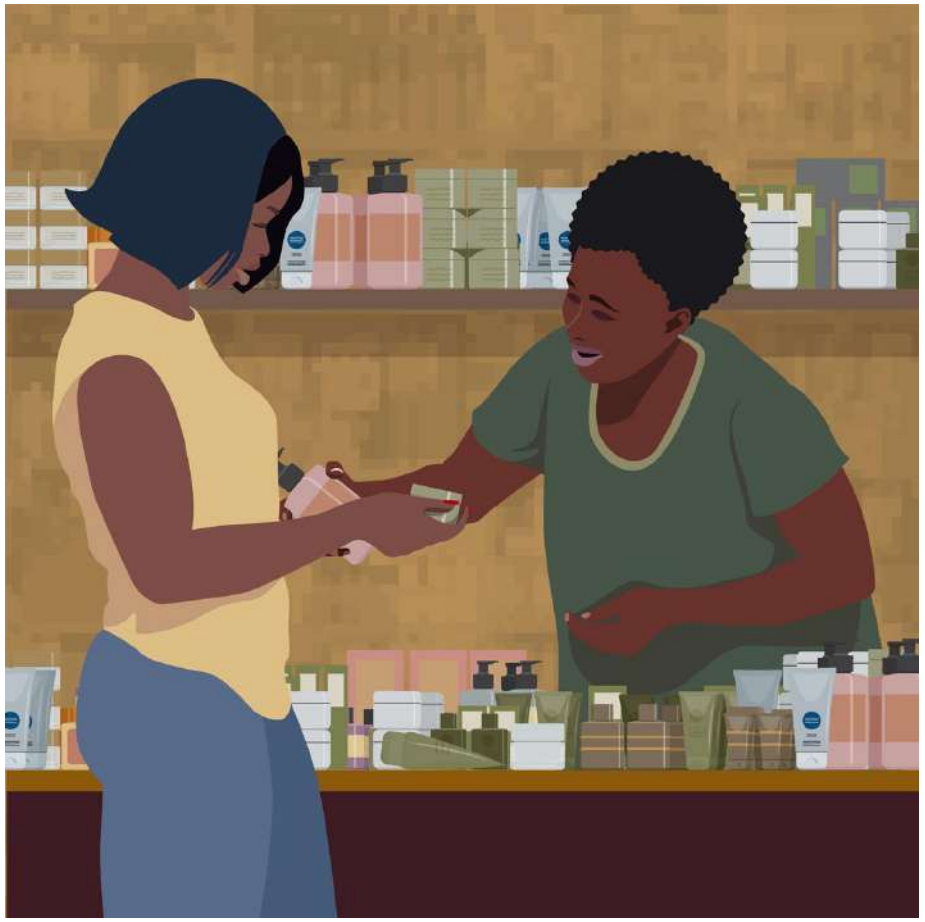


World Health Organization

How countries enforce these laws

Common enforcement tools:

- Pre-market approval / registration
- Customs and border controls
- Market surveillance
- Electronic chemical registries
- Public awareness campaigns



Mercury in cosmetics is generally prohibited, with only limited exceptions such as trace impurities (≤1 ppm), rare preservative use in eye-area products, and specific applications for research or technical calibration.

World Health Organization

What is the WHO Model Law

What it is?

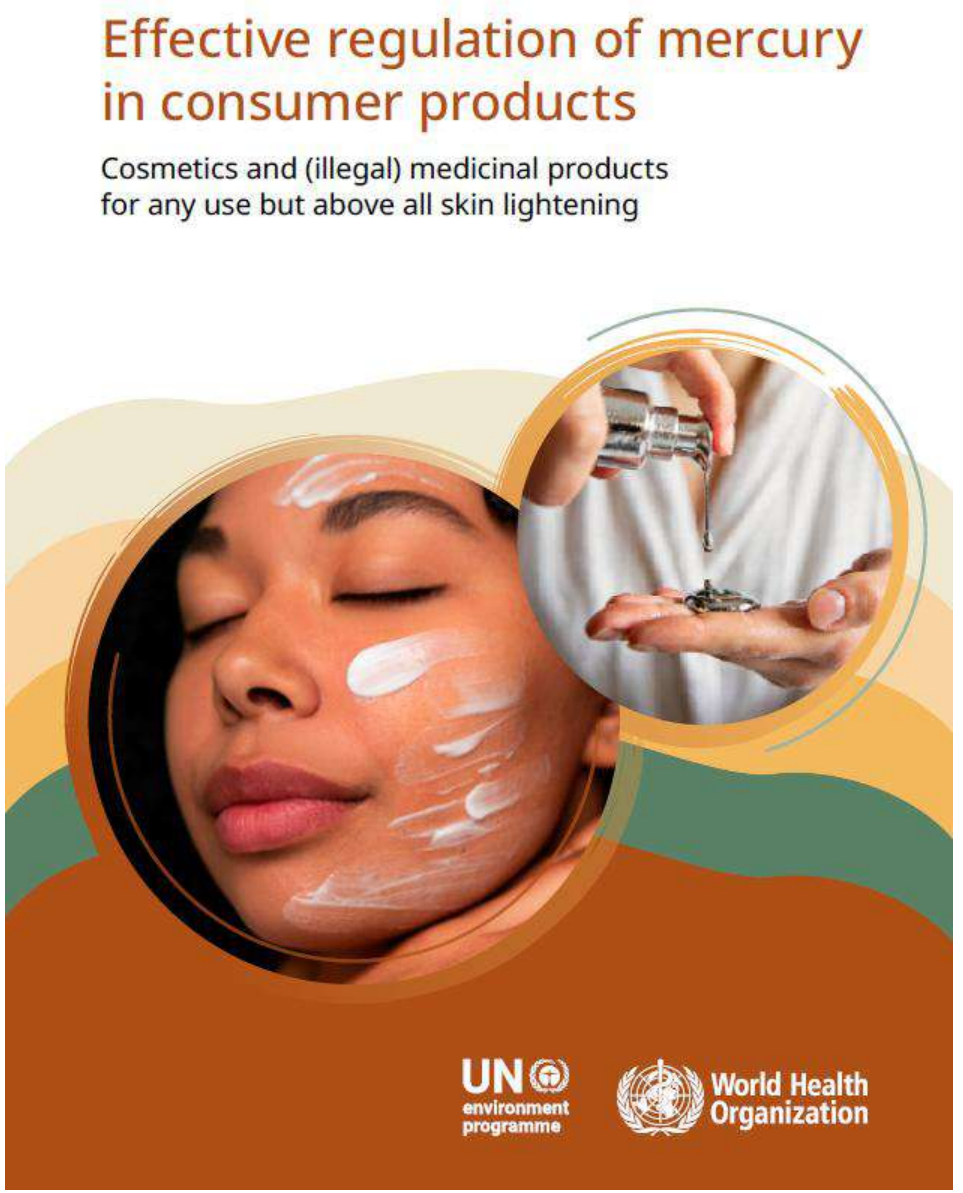
✅ A technical guidance document

✅ A model legislative framework

✅ A practical tool for drafting or strengthening laws

What it is NOT ❌ Not a one-size-fits-all law

❌ Not mandatory — adaptable to national systems



World Health Organization

What does the Model Law provide?

A. Legal pathways

Countries can regulate mercury in cosmetics through:

Chemicals legislation

Consumer protection laws

Dedicated cosmetics regulations

B. Core elements of strong legislation

Ban manufacture, import, and sale of mercury cosmetics

Control marketing and misleading claims

Establish regulatory authorities and enforcement systems

Define responsibilities across the supply chain

C. Implementation tools

Pre-market controls (safety, notification systems)Market surveillance & border control

Sanctions and enforcement mechanisms

Regulation of e-commerce

World Health Organization

Challenges in preventing the manufacture, import and export of mercury-added cosmetics (per Secretariat Report under MC-5/5) UNEP/MC/COP.6/6/Add.1

World Health Organization

Many Parties still lack basic legislation, preventing them from enforcing bans or phasing out mercury-added cosmetics.

- Enforcement remains weak, even where laws exist, due to limited capacity, insufficient resources, and weak cross-agency coordination.
- Online and cross-border e-commerce complicates control, as illegal products are easily marketed and shipped without oversight.
- Informal markets and unregulated supply chains hinder traceability and compliance with national regulations.
- Deeply rooted socio-cultural drivers of skin-lightening reduce the effectiveness of legislation alone, requiring complementary awareness measures.
- Absence of detention lists, banned-product lists, and licensing systems makes systematic enforcement difficult.
- Interagency coordination gaps limit effective implementation between customs, health, standards, environmental, and enforcement bodies.

Call for information (Minamata Convention)

- In May 2026, the Secretariat invited Parties and stakeholders to submit information on challenges in implementing obligations on mercury-added cosmetics, including enforcement gaps.

- Submissions (deadline 30 June 2026) will inform a global synthesis drawing on national reports, WHO data, and previous COP inputs.



World Health Organization

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Ref: MC/ES/2026/36 Geneva, 22 May 2026

Subject: Invitation to Parties and stakeholders to submit information on challenges in implementing the obligations regarding mercury-added cosmetics

Dear Madam/Sir,

Further to my letter MC/COP6/2026/1 dated 9 February to follow up on the decisions of the Conference of the Parties at its 6th meeting, in which I invited the submission of information on challenges in implementing the obligations regarding mercury-added cosmetics pursuant to decision MC-6/4 of the Conference of the Parties by 30 June 2026, I am providing some background information that may be helpful in your consideration of submissions.

In decision MC-6/4, the Conference of the Parties encouraged Parties without national legislation or other measures, or otherwise facing challenges in implementing their obligations regarding mercury-added cosmetics, to inform the Secretariat and to consider the application of Article 14 and/or Article 15 to their situation.

With regard to national legislation or other measures, the World Health Organization (WHO) has offered to the Secretariat the information on regulatory approaches to mercury-added cosmetics from its survey undertaken as part of the GEF project #10810 "Eliminating mercury skin lightening products". WHO is verifying the information with the health ministries of the member states before making the data publicly available as part of the Global Health Observatory. The Secretariat will send individual emails to the national focal points on that information so that they can cooperate with the health ministries in the verification of the information. This information may be helpful in considering the application of Article 14 or 15 of the Convention.

Article 14 of the Convention provides for capacity-building and technical assistance to developing country Parties and Parties that are countries with economies in transition, which may be delivered through regional, subregional and national arrangements, including existing regional and subregional centres, through other multilateral or bilateral means, and partnerships through those involving the private sector. The Conference of the Parties is to make recommendations on how capacity -building, technical assistance and technology transfer could be further enhanced.

Article 15 of the Convention provides for the establishment of the Implementation and Compliance Committee, which may consider issues on promoting implementation and reviewing compliance, on the basis of written submissions from any Party with respect to its own compliance, national reports or requests from the Conference of the Parties. The Committee is to examine issues on the basis of submissions and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Conference of the Parties. The Committee plans to have its 8th meeting (online) from 7 to 8 September 2026 and its 9th meeting (face to face) from 26 to 28 January 2027. As per COP decision MC-3/9, Parties may make submissions on their own compliance for the consideration of the Committee using the template included in that decision no later than 8 weeks before the opening of the meetings. Submissions shall reach the Secretariat, by **13 July 2026** to be considered at the 8th meeting, and by **1 December 2026** to be considered the 9th meeting of the Committee.

As requested in decision MC-6/4, the Secretariat will compile and synthesize information submitted by Parties. In addition to the information submitted pursuant to decision MC-6/4, the Secretariat will take into account existing information including the following:

Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury
International Environment House 1
Office address: 11-13 chemin des Anémones, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Postal address: Avenue de la Paix 8-14, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
MEA-MinamataSecretariat@un.org | www.mercuryconvention.org | www.unep.org

UN environment programme

THANK YOU

Dr. Elena Jardan

jardane@who.int

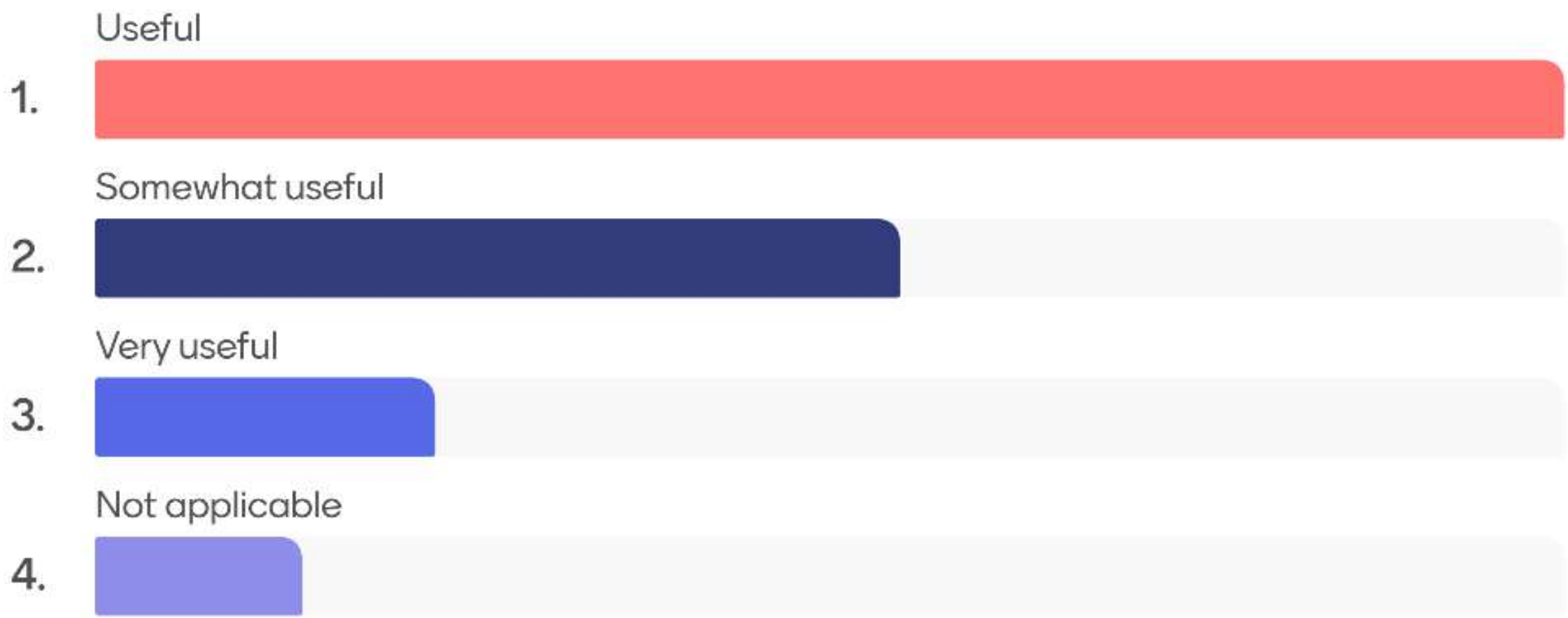



menti.com
9477 6666

What is the biggest challenge in regulating mercury in cosmetics in your country?



How useful is the Model Law for your country context?



The color of beauty

(Teaser)



Key achievements, sustainability and linkages with actions across the broader cosmetics sector

Malgorzata Stylo, UNEP

Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products





Timelines

2021- 2026

2026- 2032

Sri Lanka

Pakistan

Cambodia

Philippines

Jamaica

Mexico

Antigua Barbuda

Gabon

Burkina Faso

Comoros

Cote d'Ivoire

Ethiopia

Guinea

Madagascar

Mauritania

Niger

Nigeria

Sierra Leone

South Africa

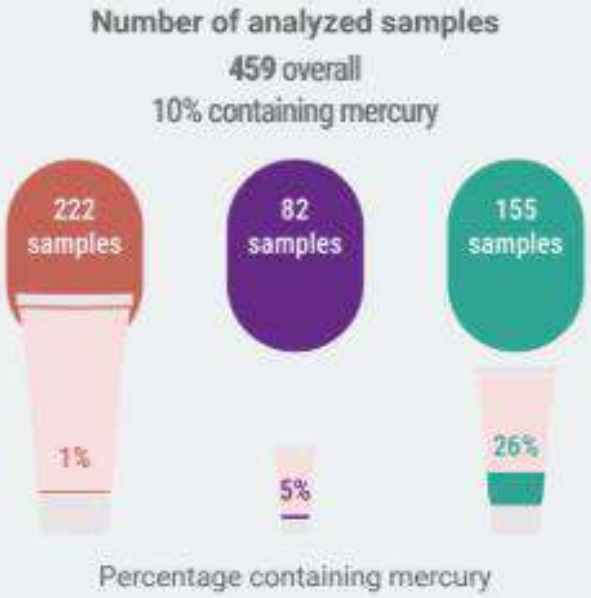
Togo

Uganda

gef UN environment programme World Health Organization bri GLOBAL MERCURY PARTNERSHIP



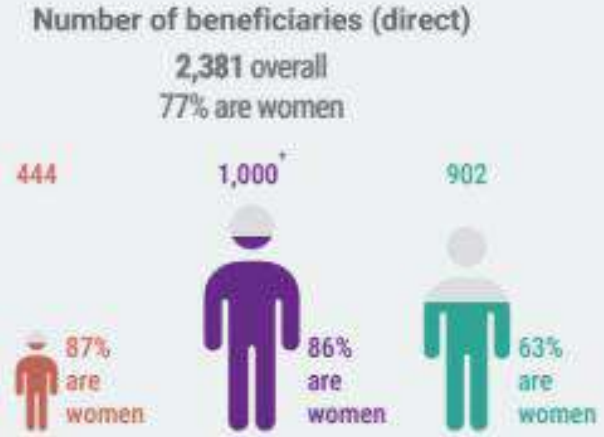
Key achievements of pilot GEF funded project on mercury in cosmetics











Funded by gef
Led by UN environment programme
in Partnership with World Health Organization
bri

Key lessons learned

Eliminating mercury skin lightening products

Legislation and Regulatory Frameworks



Strong, enforceable laws are foundational banning Hg SLP manufacture, import, export and sale in local and online markets: clear standards, defined regulatory roles, and consistent public oversight enable effective control of mercury-added SLPs.

Inter-agency cooperation, particularly between health, environment, standards bodies, and enforcement authorities, such as consumer affairs, market surveillance is essential for drafting, updating, and operationalizing legislation that keeps pace with evolving products and markets including online markets.

Monitoring and Surveillance



Evidence generation must be continuous, with standardized tools, sampling protocols, and risk-based surveillance approaches to ensure reliable, comparable data.

Close coordination between customs, laboratories, regulators, and market surveillance teams builds a coherent monitoring system, while standardized SOPs increase accuracy and support enforcement.

Trend tracking is essential as product availability and distribution routes shift rapidly.

Supply Chain Oversight



Effective control requires a full-chain perspective, from source material to manufacturers to importers to distributors to informal sellers to digital platforms.

Online sales are reshaping enforcement needs, making traceability systems, digital monitoring, and engagement with e-commerce platforms increasingly important.

Supply-chain mapping must directly inform enforcement actions, and collaboration across all actors, including informal producers, is critical to reducing market entry points for prohibited products.

Awareness & Behavior Change



Awareness efforts must be continuous, community-anchored, and culturally grounded. Tailored messaging, ethical storytelling, and trusted messengers, including health workers, influencers, and community leaders, are key to shifting norms.

Awareness should be coupled with behavior-change approaches, and outcomes must be measured through meaningful indicators (e.g., behavioral shifts, reduced purchases), not just outreach volume.

Community ownership needs to be ensured as it significantly enhances long-term impact.

Evidence, Knowledge Management and Multistakeholder Engagement



Robust data systems and accessible knowledge platforms, ideally available in multiple languages, are essential for supporting countries, informing policies, and enabling regional and global experience exchange.

Strong multistakeholder collaboration across sectors and levels enables shared learning, consistent messaging, and coordinated action.

The lessons learned from addressing mercury in cosmetics, and the expertise and partnerships developed through this work, can be leveraged to tackle broader challenges across the cosmetics sector, including for example, the chemicals of concern.

Do not edit
How to change the design



Which aspect of the pilot countries' experience is most useful for ensuring continuity and scalability of the actions?

ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

slido

Tools to eliminate mercury-added skin lightening cosmetics

Click on the image to navigate to the tools.



Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products



Overview | Why it matters? | Projects | Countries | Thematic pillars | Community of Practice

www.unep.org/mercuryfreecosmetics

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Which of the tools are you most likely to use?

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Leveraging your experience with addressing mercury in cosmetics, what other issues of concern in the cosmetics sector could be tackled at the same time?

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Leveraging your experience with addressing mercury in cosmetics, what other issues of concern in the cosmetics sector could be tackled at the same time?

- Address broader social and env injustice link to the sector
- Link it to fashion and fast changing trends
- Addresse online sales of other cosmetics products
- Leverage network of multisetoral actors established under SLP work to tackle other issues
- Education or Model Laws on other harmful chemicals used in cosmetics
- Address social drivers such as advertisements promoting SLPs



Join the Community of Practice (CoP)

Eliminating mercury containing skin lightening products

*Save **metals@un.org** in your contacts to ensure good reception*

* Email Address

* First Name

* Last Name

* Organisation

* Country

* Area(s) of interest

- [x] Mercury in products - Skin-lightening (SLPs)

Join the Community of Practice

Submit SLP Sample

Request for Skin-Lightening Cream Samples (for Mercury Analysis)

Eligible Products

- Over-the-counter skin-lightening creams purchased outside of Japan
- Products obtained from online shopping platforms (e-commerce sites)

※Unopened products are preferred.

Cost & Results

- Analysis is free of charge
- Shipping costs are the responsibility of the sender
- Results will be individually communicated by email

環境省
国立水俣病総合研究センター
NIMD
National Institute for Minamata Disease

17th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

Mercury as a Global Pollutant



t of the Minamata Convention:
admap for the Future

17th ICMGP 2026
HYDERABAD | INDIA

4th - 9th OCTOBER 2026

CONVENTION CENTRE, IIT HYDERABAD

The Toxic Trail of Beauty: Unpacking Mercury in Cosmetics through Data and Action