

**LIBREVILLE COMMITMENT ON THE ELIMINATION OF MERCURY-CONTAINING SKIN-
LIGHTENING COSMETICS IN AFRICA**

Libreville, 22 January 2025

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We, the African Ministers in charge of Health and the Environment, meeting in Libreville (Gabon) on 22 January 2025 with other Ministers and representatives of international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, on the occasion of the Regional Workshop on the elimination of mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products in the African region:

1. *Recalling* the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa of 2008;
2. *Taking note* of the 2010 Luanda Commitment on the implementation of the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa;
3. *Noting* with great concern the scientific reports on the health and environmental consequences of exposure to skin-lightening cosmetic products containing mercury, both for users and for family members, in particular children and pregnant and breastfeeding women;
4. *Recalling* the resolution of the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly welcoming the formal adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and encouraging Member States to take the necessary national measures to sign, ratify and implement the Convention and to address the health aspects of exposure to mercury and mercury compounds through their uses in the health sector;
5. *Recalling* the crucial importance of effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action to combat climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as underlined in the Ministerial Declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session held in Nairobi on 29 February 2024;
6. *Stressing* the importance of the decisions adopted by the fifth Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury at its fifth meeting MC-5/4: Amendments to Annexes A and B and feasibility of mercury-free alternatives for Annex B manufacturing processes on the implementation of Articles 4, 16, 17 and 18 of the said Convention;
7. *Bearing in mind* the WHO report A71/rev.1 of 10 May 2008 on the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030) presented to the Seventy-first World Health Assembly;
8. *Welcoming* the results achieved by Gabon in conducting project GEF 10810 'Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products', conducted simultaneously in Jamaica and Sri Lanka to strengthen the legal and institutional framework for the elimination of mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products;
9. *Acknowledging* the progress made in the implementation of the project to strengthen the legal framework and institutional capacities of the ECOWAS countries (Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo) for the implementation of Articles 3 and 4 of the Minamata Convention, financed by the International Specific Programme;
10. *Aware* of the widespread practice of skin lightening and whitening in all social strata in Africa;
11. *Recognizing* with concern the dangerous effects of anthropogenic mercury, mercury compounds and mercury wastes on human health, wildlife and the environment;
12. *Stressing* the importance of effective awareness raising and enforcement activities to reduce and eliminate the mercury-added cosmetics industry, the informal trade, both online and in shops, of unauthorized cosmetics and the development of unauthorized local production;
13. *Noting* the complexity of human behaviour, and in particular the psychological/cognitive, social-cultural and environmental factors of skin lightening practices, which in turn underlines the need for scientific approaches to understand and address behaviour and its factors in this context;
14. *Recognizing* the inadequate sampling, testing, waste management, regulatory frameworks and enforcement capacity in many African countries to address mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products;
15. *Recognizing* the need to increase analytical capacity to identify mercury in skin lightening cosmetic products in order to effectively enforce the monitoring of manufacture, import and export;
16. *Noting* the progress made by the pilot countries: Gabon, Jamaica and Sri Lanka, in the fight against mercury-containing skin-lightening cosmetic products;
17. *Reiterating* the urgency of implementing the African Health Strategy 2016 - 2030 in the context of the African Union's Agenda 2063: 'The Africa We Want' and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda on health and well-being;
18. *Acknowledging* the collaborative efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Mercury Partnership (GMP), and the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury to mobilize resources from the Global Environment Facility and other bilateral and multilateral partners;

19. *Appreciating* the contributions of the Global Mercury Partnership to the elimination of mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products through the strategic engagement of civil society, academia, public and private sector actors, as well as global awareness raising and knowledge management initiatives.

1. We commit ourselves, together with other Ministers, representatives of international and regional organizations, civil society and academia, to:
 - a) Create incentives for online platforms to adopt voluntary agreements to identify, remove and prevent the sale of cosmetics containing more than 1 ppm of mercury;
 - b) Mobilize sufficient resources from governments and partners to intensify efforts to eliminate mercury-containing skin-lightening cosmetic products;
 - c) Equip and/or strengthen national regulatory authorities for medicines and other health products, including skin lightening cosmetic products, with technical analytical and logistical capacity;
 - d) Strengthen capacities for the management of waste from mercury-containing products added;
 - e) Undertake the following actions:
 - i. Extend the project to eliminate skin-lightening cosmetic products containing mercury to additional African nations;
 - ii. Support the establishment of national, sub-regional and/or regional public databases on mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products;
 - iii. Establish standardised and comprehensive border and in-country monitoring and control systems for mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products;
 - iv. Establish national, sub-regional and/or regional commitments to promote voluntary agreements by online platforms to ensure that mercury-containing cosmetic products are not sold, offered for sale and, where identified, removed in a timely manner;
 - v. Develop public awareness programmes and media training regarding the deleterious effects of skin bleaching and the acceptance of natural skin colour in order to counteract harmful skin lightening and bleaching practices;
 - vi. Employ behavioural science methodologies to investigate the underlying factors contributing to skin lightening practices, and utilise these findings in the development of public health interventions and community engagement strategies aimed at altering behaviour and addressing societal influences;
 - vii. Facilitate collaboration amongst diverse stakeholders, including civil society organisations, community leaders, academic institutions, and professional groups such as dermatologists, primary healthcare providers, educational establishments, and religious organisations, as well as the private sector, in concerted efforts to counteract skin whitening practices;
 - viii. Utilise behavioural science to elucidate the factors underlying skin lightening practices and apply the findings to public health interventions and community engagement initiatives aimed at modifying behaviour and addressing societal factors;
 - ix. Engage all stakeholders, including civil society organisations, community leaders, academia, and professional groups such as dermatologists, primary care practitioners, educational institutions, and faith groups, as well as the private sector, in efforts to address skin whitening practices;
2. *Invite* the Government of the Gabonese Republic to submit this Commitment to the African Council of Ministers in charge of the Environment (AMCEN) and to the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, with the objective of its presentation at the 6th Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention to be convened in Geneva, Switzerland, in November 2025.
3. *Request* WHO, UNEP, GEF, BRI, the Global Mercury Partnership and the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury to:
 - a) continue and expand their support for developing countries' initiatives to eliminate products containing added mercury, in accordance with the decisions of the Conference of the Parties;
 - b) support the work of the Global Mercury Partnership by extending it to other intergovernmental organisations, civil society and the private sector and by strengthening a global alliance to eliminate mercury-containing skin-lightening cosmetic products and to promote equitable beauty standards for all skin pigmentations;
 - c) develop and disseminate tools to enhance global awareness of the health risks associated with skin lightening
 - d) Present the empirical evidence acquired in Gabon, Jamaica and Sri Lanka to other nations, regions and international fora, including the subsequent Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury;
 - e) Provide assistance to Parties to mitigate and eliminate the large-scale manufacture of mercury-containing skin lightening cosmetic products;
 - f) Support the expansion of voluntary product safety commitments by online platforms, as has been implemented by the European Union, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Canada, as well as India and the United Arab Emirates.
4. *Invite* the Parties, at the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to follow up on the COP5 decisions on mercury-containing skin cosmetics and to adopt a work programme, including a budget, to accelerate their elimination.

ATTENDED

- **His Excellency Raymond NDONG SIMA**, Premier Ministre, Gabon ;
- **Dr. Iziaq Adekunle SALAKO**, Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Nigeria;
- **Mme Monika Stankewich**, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention (online);
- **Dr. Rose Mwebeza**, UNEP Regional Director for Africa (online);
- **Mme Lesley ONYON**, Head Chemical Safety and Health Unit, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organization;
- **Mays MOUISSI**, Ministre de l'Environnement et du Climat, Gabon ;
- **Pr. Adrien MOUGOUGOU**, Ministre de la Sante, Gabon ;
- **Mme Laurence MENGUE ME NZOGHE épouse NDONG**, Ministre de la Communication et des Médias, Gabon ;
- **Mme. Marie Paulette Parfaite AMOUYEME OLLAME**, Ministre du Commerce des Petite et moyenne Entreprises & des Petites et Moyennes Industrie, Gabon ;
- **Mme. Armande LONGO épouse MOULENGUI**, Ministre de la Culture et des Arts, Gabon ;
- **Mme. Angélique NGOMA**, Président de la Commission des Affaires Sociales, Assemble Nationale du Gabon ;
- **Mme. Ines Roselyne NDUWIMANA**, Assistante du Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Lutte contre le Sida, Burundi ;
- **M. Parfait KOUADIO KOUAKOU**, Directeur de Cabinet du Ministre de l'Environnement, du Développement Durable et de la Transition Écologique, Côte d'Ivoire ;
- **M. Fidèle YAMEOGO KOUILGA**, Inspecteur de l'Environnement, Chargé de mission du Ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement, Burkina Faso ;
- **Pathé DIEYE**, Conseiller Technique du Ministre de l'Environnement et de la Transition Ecologique, Sénégal ;
- **Dr Christopher MUSHAVA**, Director Environmental Protection, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Wildlife, Zimbabwe;
- **Mme. ITSIEMBOU Aimé Bertille** Secrétaire Générale du Conseil Economique, Social et Environnemental, Gabon.