

**GEF# 10810**  
**Eliminating Mercury**  
**Skin Lightening Products**

Global Kick-off Meeting  
and Stakeholder Consultation

**Meeting Report**



## **GEF #10810: Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products Global Kick-off Meeting and Stakeholder Consultation**

**Meeting Location:** World Health Organisation Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

**Meeting Date:** 14 – 15 February 2023

**Organised by:** World Health Organisation (WHO), Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), Chemical and Health Branch, Economy Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (GMP), under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Funded Project: Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products.

### **Workshop Report Developed by:**

Tahlia Ali Shah, BRI

Malgorzata Stylo, UNEP GMP

Imelda Dossou Etui, UNEP GMP

Grace Halla, Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division, UNEP

**Report Date:** April 2023



## Contents

Meeting Background .....	1
Opening Remarks and Keynote Address .....	1
Project Overview and Goals .....	3
Understanding National Circumstances on SLPs in Project Countries .....	5
“Skin Lightening, its Roots, and the Social and Cultural Dimensions” Panel Session .....	7
“Developing and Strengthening Legislation and Regulations to Phase Out Mercury SLPs in line with the Minamata Convention” Panel Session .....	11
“Strengthening National Capacities in Testing and Monitoring SLPs” Panel Session .....	13
“Engaging Governments in Encouraging Supply Chain Actors in Stopping the Production, Trade and Sales of Mercury SLPs” Panel Session .....	17
“Multiplying the Project’s Benefits through Community of Practice - Identifying opportunities and modalities for regional and global collaboration, based on common or complementary areas of work” .....	20
Summary of Opportunities for Collaboration and Closing Remarks .....	22
Annex 1- Meeting Agenda .....	24
Annex 2: List of Participants	

## Meeting Background

The project, “Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products (SLPs)” was developed to reduce the risk of exposure to mercury-added products through activities targeted at better regulation, reducing production, trade and distribution, capacity-building, awareness-raising and knowledge management at the global level.

Project funding is provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with significant co-financing from partners and participating project countries. The project is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), co-executed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) with additional targeted technical assistance provided by the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (UNEP GMP). The participating project countries are Gabon, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka.

To initiate project activities with each of the project country focal points, introduce related stakeholders to the project and share information on the issues related to eliminating mercury-added SLPs, a Global Kick-off Meeting and Stakeholder Consultation meeting was held from the 14 – 15 February 2023 at WHO Headquarters (WHO-HQ) in Geneva, Switzerland. Online participation was also facilitated via the

Zoom platform. The meeting agenda is contained in [Annex 1](#).

The meeting was organized by WHO in collaboration with the UNEP and BRI. Each of the project countries were represented by focal persons from their respective environment ministries and health ministries.

Representatives from several project co-financing partners attended in-person or virtually. Attendees from various related sectors provided input in panel discussions that were held over the two-day meeting. A list of virtual and in-person participants is contained in [Annex 2](#).

## Opening Remarks and Keynote Address

Ms. Lesley J Onyon, *Head of the Chemical Safety and Health Unit, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, WHO*, facilitated the meeting’s proceedings.

Introductory remarks were provided by Mr. Anil Sookdeo, *Chemicals and Waste Focal Area Coordinator and Senior Environmental Specialist, Programs Unit, GEF*, who expressed gratitude to the project countries and implementing/executing agencies for taking on the initiative of eliminating mercury-added SLPs. Mr. Sookdeo highlighted that the knowledge gained from the project is expected to help build a framework that can be used by other countries in addressing the issue. Representing the implementing

agency, Ms. Jacqueline Alvarez, *Chief of the Chemicals and Health Branch, UNEP*, highlighted the social changes needed to address skin-lightening practices and the need to specifically target the potentially harmful components of mercury-added products..

Opening remarks were also provided by representatives of each of the project countries. Representative from Gabon, Mr. Jean Hervé MVE BEH, *Director General of Aquatic Ecosystems in the Ministry responsible for the Environment (Ministère des Eaux, des Forêts, de la Mer, de l'Environnement, chargé du Plan Climat et du Plan d'Affectation des Terres)*, stressed the need for the project in Gabon and noted the linkages between environmental health and human health that the project would address.

Dr Heather Brown, *National Coordinator, Dermatology Services and Leprosy Control, Health Services Planning and Integration Branch, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Jamaica*, remarked on the social and cultural popularity of SLPs in her country as well as the direct and indirect exposure routes for mercury from these products. Both aspects were relevant to be addressed during the project.

Sri Lanka's representative, Dr Buddhika Sudasinghe, *Consultant Community Physician, Directorate of Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Food*

*Safety, Ministry of Health*, highlighted the importance of the project's goals to build regulatory and enforcement capacities to manage the manufacture, import and export of mercury-added SLPs in her country

The final welcoming remarks were made by, Dr Maria Neira, *Acting Assistant Director-General, Division of Universal Health Coverage and Healthier Populations, WHO*. Dr Neira spoke from personal experience and concern about the readily access to these products and their targeting at certain population groups. She encouraged participants to share their experience to enrich the planned project and achieve results that could be widely disseminated and help all countries with eliminating these dangerous consumer products.

The keynote address, "Why Eliminating Mercury SLPs (SLPs) Matter", was given by Ms. Amira Adawe, *MPH, Executive Director of The Beautywell Project* - an initiative aimed at ending skin lightening practices and associated toxic chemical exposure.



*Image 1: Ms. Amira Adawe, The Beautywell Project, providing the keynote address.*

Ms. Adawe, who was born in Somalia, provided a background of her personal experience with the cultural and social stigmas associated with being more darker skinned than her contemporaries. She recalled that even when she migrated to the United States of America (USA), these stigmas persisted. Through her graduate programme, Ms. Adawe collected and analysed samples of SLPs that were widely available in retail outlets and markets targeted at African, Asian and Latin communities. High concentrations of mercury were found in many samples. Ms. Adawe explained that while her efforts to educate communities initially focused on health impacts, more meaningful discussions were achieved by first shifting perspectives to the underlying social issues that cause people to feel the need to use SLPs. She observed that using non-judgmental language to begin discussions on the use of SLPs followed by comprehensive scientific-based information on health impacts often was the most effective method of communication. She proposed that such experience should be incorporated in the awareness raising strategies to be developed in the project.

Other issues highlighted in Ms. Adawe's remarks included the need to address the widespread global promotion of SLPs containing harmful chemicals and their continued availability even in countries

where action had been taken to ban them. Direct importation in personal luggage was often difficult to detect. Ms Adawe highlighted the need to work with community health workers, medical associations and dermatologists to engage them further in communication and advocacy against the use of these products.

In closing, Ms. Adawe provided examples of the work being done in some parts of the USA to regulate *over-the-counter* purchasing of beauty products and stressed the importance of partnering with local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other groups to address the multi-layered facets of the issue.

## **Project Overview and Goals**

An overview of the three year project (August 2022- August 2025) project were presented by Dr David Evers, *Ph.D. Executive Director, Chief Scientist, Co-director–Center for Mercury Studies, Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)*. In addition to explaining the roles of each of the key project entities, Dr Evers described the administrative arrangements

The project will focus on activities designed to engage project country stakeholders to regulate mercury- added SLPs and reduce or stop their production, trade and distribution

nationally and globally through three main components:

- **Component 1:** National capacity building on legislation, enforcement, compliance, and awareness raising strategies.
- **Component 2:** Reduce or stop production, trade, distribution of SLPs in project countries.
- **Component 3:** Knowledge management at global level.

Dr Evers also detailed the gender equality objectives to be achieved through direct and indirect actions such as, gender specific communication strategies, and ensuring gender-balanced participation in meetings. The importance of preparing quarterly progress reports, and project evaluations and audits as risk management tools were noted.

In addition to the core project team, the following stakeholder groups were described:

- **Global Project Steering Committee:** a small, decision-making body, which serves to guide and oversee implementation of the project in accordance with the GEF project document and legal agreements.
- **National Project Steering Committee:** within each country,

comprising of key national stakeholders to provide overall guidance and review of in-country project activities.

- **Global Project Stakeholder Group:** an additional mechanism to function as a forum for information exchange between global stakeholders, the project execution team and Project Steering Committee and to provide linkages to the broader UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

It was confirmed that stakeholder engagement meetings would also be held at national levels to complement the dissemination of information and project outcomes. Significant interest was shown in the collection and testing of SLP products on the market and it was noted that the collection of locally available SLPs would be facilitated through the use of a standard protocol developed by BRI. Collection of samples would be coordinated with national focal points and national project consultants for analysis by BRI and national laboratories to the extent possible. National workshops were also planned for the mid-term stage of the project that would also involve key activities for stakeholder engagement and a more targeted round of SLP sampling and analysis.

Multi-country meetings on a sub-regional basis would also be an important part of

presenting the findings and outputs from the project to other neighbouring and regional countries and to share lessons learnt for their further benefit. A final wrap-up meeting would be held in Geneva, Switzerland at the project's end.

## **Understanding National Circumstances surrounding SLPs in Project Countries**

Ms. Onyon invited each project country's representative to share their insights on the key issues with SLPs in their respective countries.

- **Jamaica** – *presented by Dr Heather Brown Henry, National Coordinator Dermatology Services and Leprosy Control, Health Services Planning and Integration Branch, Ministry of Health and Wellness*

Dr Brown emphasised that the use of SLPs is a complex issue that is rooted in various cultural and societal norms that have developed throughout the centuries. She said that the use of SLPs has become more popular in recent years and had been promoted through some popular cultural channels. It was noted that studies in Jamaica identified more than 127 SLPs manufactured in numerous countries were on sale, including from the USA, Ivory Coast India and Jamaica.. While mercury may not be present in all of the products sold,

discrepancies in product labelling have made it difficult to identify the ingredients in many products. Previous research conducted had identified six products sold in Jamaica with mercury concentrations exceeding 1ppm. Research by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in its Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey, and the Department of Physics at University of West Indies had found that more males than females used SLPs in Jamaica, particularly products with higher strengths . National surveys have been carried out to understand consumer demand for these products and these had highlighted the need for a change in cultural mindsets and the need for awareness raising.

Following the presentation, Ms. Adawe commented on import of SLPs from the USA and noted that in January 2023, new legislation, “Cosmetic Establishment Registration and Product Listing” had been enacted by the US Congress that will hopefully lead to better regulation of products being exported from the USA to other countries like Jamaica.

Ms. Marianne Bailey, *Program Management Officer, Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury*, asked about the potential causes of the popularity of SLPs in recent years. Dr Brown stated that while popularity had increased since the 1990s the exact cause is unknown and should be explored further.



- **Gabon** - presented by Dr Mouhamed Bakary Ozavino, Medical Specialist, Ministry of Health

Dr Ozavino noted that skin lightening is a widespread societal issue across several African countries including Gabon and while it has been found to be more common amongst women, trends have shown that the use of SLPs is increasingly occurring amongst men in Central Africa. Use of SLPs appears to be linked to several societal stigmas and misleading promotional advertisements. During a 2019 clamp-down on illicit products, 12,475 SLPs were seized in Gabon. Dr Ozavino requested that the project provide assistance to Gabon by addressing cross-border trade, building laboratory capacity to detect mercury in products and conducting a national survey to better understand the issue.

When asked about the expectations for the national survey, Dr Ozavino responded that a survey was needed to better understand several dimensions of the SLP problem and in particular to devise and target effective interventions. Additional information about the type of health and wellness surveys used in Jamaica may be helpful.

- **Sri Lanka** - presented jointly by Mr H S Premachandra, Director, Central Environmental Authority and Dr Buddhika Sudasinghe, Consultant Community Physician, Directorate of

*Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Food Safety, Ministry of Health*

Mr Premachandra and Dr Sudasinghe described the skin lightening product industry in their country. Use of SLP was predominantly targeted towards women due to a range of cultural biases that associate lighter skin tones with better marriage prospects and social standing. Such biases were continued to be perpetuated by the media. The Government of Sri Lanka had participated in several initiatives aimed at identifying and reducing mercury releases, addressing regulatory issues associated with mercury-added products (including SLPs) and raising awareness. A voluntary registration process for cosmetic manufacturers is implemented by the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA), which includes product testing, however further work was needed to address the gaps in legislation and enforcement.

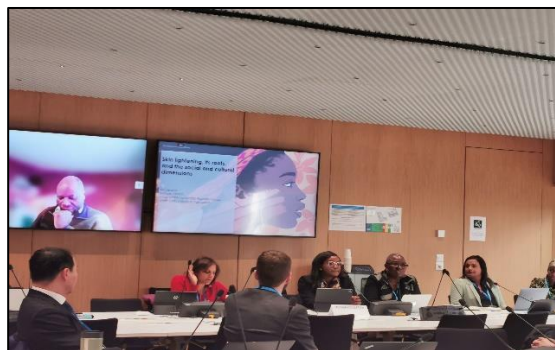
Mr. Farrukh Qureshi, *WHO Regional Office, Sri Lanka*, enquired about the methods that would be used under the project to address the legislative, regulatory, and institutional gaps. Dr Evers confirmed that approaches specific to national circumstances would be needed including assessing existing regulatory capacities and developing feasible recommendations per country.

Dr Brown queried the effectiveness of the registration process for cosmetic manufacturers if it is voluntary, to which Dr Sudasinghe responded that if the cosmetic manufacturers wish to export their products, many other countries request the provision of certification from the registration process.

## **“Skin Lightening, its Roots, and the Social and Cultural Dimensions” Panel Session**

Mr Rodges Ankrah, *Chair of the Partnership Advisory Group, UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (GMP)*, moderated the panel discussion which included the following panellists:

- Amira Adawe, *MPH, Executive Director, The Beautywell Project*
- Catherine Tetteh, *CEO/Founder, Melanin Foundation*
- Bhavna Shamasunder, *Chair & Associate Professor, Urban & Environmental Policy & Public Health, OXY Occidental College*
- Meera Senthilingam, *Editor of “White Lies- Exposing the dangers of skin whitening”, As Equals, CNN International*



*Image 2: Panellists for the discussion on, “Skin Lightening, its Roots, and the Social and Cultural Dimensions”.*

### **Cause and motivations**

Mr. Ankrah began the session by asking panellists for their opinions, based on their extensive experiences, on the causes and motivations for lightening skin. Ms. Shamasunder began by detailing her research work at the Oxy Occidental College that involved interviewing immigrant women of colour about their use of SLPs. She noted that the pressures to use SLPs take different forms including pressure from families and pressures from employers, and gave the opinion that while these pressures were experienced primarily at the individual level they were largely reflective of racialised economic systems that remain in many communities and institutions.

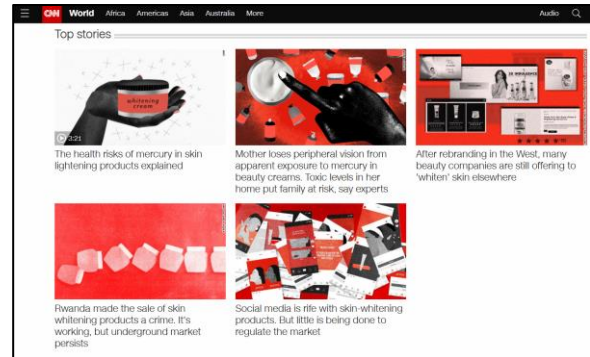
Ms. Tetteh<sup>1</sup> also had the view that motivations to use SLPs vary widely across countries and regions based on history and

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation from French to English was provided by Ms. Imelda Dossou Etui, UNEP GMP

cultural influences. For example, based on her own work, some African regions where polygamy customs exist SLPs have been used by some women and their children to lighten their skin in the hope that they will be preferred in the polygamous relationship structure. SLPs have also been observed to be used by some women to cover bruises from domestic violence. Overall, she noted that a harmful colonial mindset remained in some countries that associated lighter skin tones with higher societal status. Ms. Adawe agreed and noted that cultural issues that influenced SLP use were often broadly systemic and far-reaching including marriage, family pressures and even in preference for political candidates.

Ms. Senthilingam discussed the findings of [the CNN's "White Lies" series](#) which included a user-generated story where hundreds of persons provided responses on how SLPs affected their lives. She stated that many of the contributing factors which stood out from this work had already been mentioned by earlier speakers, notably the view that social status and success were often linked to lighter skin tones. The role of social media had also been explored in the CNN series and this was found to be a contributing factor among younger generations in particular due the activities of social media influencers.



*Image 3: Screenshot of the CNN's "White Lies" series webpage.*

### ***Additional harmful practices***

Mr. Ankrah then asked panellists to comment on other harmful practices that had been observed such as combining products or ingredients to obtain faster results

Ms. Shamasunder added that from her research, the process of using SLPs can be almost addictive for some persons despite the suffering negative health effects. For example, persons who may have experienced immediate negative reactions such as rashes, may stop using one product but would switch to other concoctions. It was also noted that from interviews, some groups would buy SLPs in bulk and distribute or test products amongst their groups in social settings. Ms. Tetteh noted different methods of application had been observed; one method included the application of SLPs together with wrapping of the skin in plastic overnight to booster or enhance lightening effects. This was sometimes a preliminary step to the more continued frequent use of

the product to maintain the colour change. Other methods included the use of various chemical peels, laser treatments and other methods to remove layers of skin in a preliminary procedure. In some cases that Ms. Tetteh observed in Mali, SLPs were even used on newborns in the hopes that the lightening effects would be maintained as the child develops.

Ms. Senthilingam noted that intravenous drips that are promoted as having skin lightening effects have been promoted on social media across the United Arab Emirates and Southeast Asian region. Ms. Adawe also commented that the industry had become even more creative over the years with the use of plastic bags fashioned into cover-up dresses to help incubate the skin after SLP application being promoted in some countries. Other SLP methods had also been developed to address areas more difficult to lighten such as knuckles and feet.

Mr Ankrah highlighted that these observations showed additional efforts would be needed to address emerging non-conventional practices that could be even more hazardous for users and the environment.

### ***Effective methods to motivate change***

He then asked panellists about the most effective methods to motivate change

amongst communities and their related governments.

Ms. Shamasunder's research sought to understand who users trust for information about the safety of SLPs and impacts on their health. Her preliminary research had found that SLP users tended to trust their own informal research, information gathering and testing more widely than other sources. Such information gathering is often conducted through online product reviews, endorsements from celebrity dermatologists, social media and other unregulated sources. She found some distrust in public health authorities and saw the need for educating communities and focusing on behavioural change activities.

In her view, Ms. Tetteh said that several approaches would be needed to address the different factors influencing the use of SLP. Through her work in the African region, over the past 10 years, 50% of the women she has worked with have recognized the harmful effects of SLPs and have stopped their use. Among the youth, the use of visual messaging had been particularly effective. Ms. Tetteh hoped that the project would foster the development of visual tools emphasizing the harmful effects on the body.

Ms. Senthilingam spoke of the importance of encouraging those affected by stigmas associated with skin-lightening to speak openly about it. The engagement of

influencers and local celebrities speaking against the use of SLP could also have an important positive impact on helping to stop the practice

Research in some countries had shown that vendors were sometimes unaware of the ban on mercury-added products or that their products contained mercury and so this group also needed to be included in awareness-raising

Another key point highlighted by Ms. Senthilingam was the need to influence multi-national beauty brands which may not necessarily have mercury-added SLPs but still promote the practice of skin lightening. Under the CNN “White Lies” series, the contrasting narrative that many multi-national beauty brands used had been assessed. It was observed that, some brands discouraged the use of skin lightening messaging, in marketing aimed at western countries whereas in the Asia and Africa, the same brands used marketing that highlighted skin lightening in their advertisements. While the series saw some brands discontinuing this practice greater ongoing vigilance was needed.

Ms. Adawe stressed the importance of community engagement through training community leaders and associated groups. For example, training leaders in youth groups and teachers had been effective in some situations. Improving awareness among

government personnel and legislators was also found to be beneficial to ensure continuity over time on the regulatory amendments needed.

### ***Priority actions needed to reduce and eliminate SLPs***

The final question posed by Mr. Ankrah was on the priority actions needed to reduce and eliminate SLPs. Ms. Adawe highlighted the need for further research and data gathering; engaging governments at the local level to begin policy change work and training stakeholders such as health care providers to identify the issues. She also noted the need to incentivise change rather than administer punishments. Ms. Senthilingam agreed and reiterated that there is scope at the industry-level, for governments to emphasise the need for accountability from companies that profit from SLPs.

Ms. Tetteh highlighted the need for strengthening consumer product regulations at the political level; reforming the educational system through training of trainers approaches and integrating the knowledge generated into curriculums and developing campaigns to capture the wide audiences affected by the issue. She reiterated the need for tools to communicate health impacts in a visual way and the need for addressing the issue at the root.

Ms. Shamasunder advocated for an emphasis on multi-pronged efforts that will be needed to target all the aspects related to the issue.

## **“Developing and Strengthening Legislation and Regulations to Phase Out Mercury SLPs in line with the Minamata Convention”**

### **Panel Session**

Ms. Onyon moderated this session that was aimed at understanding the legislative and regulatory expectations and needs to implement the obligations of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in relation to mercury-added SLPs.

Mr. Eisaku Toda, *Senior Programme Management Officer, Minamata Convention Secretariat*, provided an overview of the Minamata Convention on Mercury’s obligations related to managing mercury-added SLPs. These include:

- **Article 16: Health Aspects-** this includes measures such as, encouraging Parties to promote the development and implementation of strategies to identify and protect at-risk populations; promote appropriate health-care services for prevention, treatment and care for affected

populations and establishing and strengthening institutional and health professional capacities for managing mercury-related health risks as needed. The consultation and collaboration with the WHO and other relevant intergovernmental organizations where appropriate was also highlighted.

- **Article 4: Mercury- added Products and Annex A-** which notes that as of 2020, Parties shall not all the manufacture, import or export of SLPs with more than 1 ppm of mercury.

Under the first full national reporting period, Parties were asked to report if any appropriate measures had been taken under article 4 of the Convention. Responses varied with approximately 30 Parties indicating that no measures had been taken. The Secretariat was committed to providing, capacity building activities and project opportunities to enhance and catch-up with 2020 mercury in product deadlines and other aspects.

Next, Mr. Michael Bender, *Mercury Policy Project Director, and Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) International Co-coordinator*, introduced participants to the work being done by ZMWG, an international coalition of

non-governmental organizations that seek to reduce or eliminate mercury where feasible and implement the Minamata Convention., “Examples of country legislations and compliance measures that ban mercury in cosmetics were included in their report “Enforcement measures to restrict high mercury cosmetic products under the Minamata Convention. These included national product labelling requirements, development of detention lists for certain products and licensing systems for manufacturers, importers and retailers.



**[Image 4: Report developed by ZMWG on enforcement measures to restrict high mercury cosmetic products.](#)**

The need for international cooperation and information exchange was noted for example, the European Union (EU) Gate Rapid Alert System on potentially risky non-food products could provide a model.

Project country representatives were then invited to summarize their national regulatory capacities and needs. Mr. Guy Mbayo from

the WHO Africa Regional Office provided the English translation for the representatives from Gabon. In summary, actions will need to recognize that the majority of SLPs in Gabon are imported and so be undertaken in coordination with customs authorities. Ms. Tetteh’s previous comments on the need for community-level awareness campaigns were also seen as relevant in the national context.

Mr. Kevoy Osbourne, *Director, Projects and Enforcement, Environment and Risk Management Branch, Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Jamaica* highlighted the need for close coordination and cooperation among the various agencies across the government sector that relevant to the management of SLPs. Based on a preliminary assessment, additional measures to identify manufacturers and supply chains of mercury SLPs; training of Customs officers and the development of public awareness campaigns were emphasised.

From Sri Lanka, Dr Inoka Suraweera, *Consultant Community Physician, Directorate of Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Food Safety, Ministry of Health*, highlighted the need to understand the complexity of the SLP issue to strengthen legislation and regulations. Following changes in national legislation, a review of arrangements for addressing skin-

lightening cosmetics and soaps under the National Medicines Regulation Authority was underway. Mr. Premachandra added the need to define Customs codes and the need to consider mercury releases to the environment from these products. Public consultations and involvement of NGOs to broach the socially sensitive subject had also been recognized.

Ms. Tetteh raised the question of how products that are needed for medical treatment but have skin bleaching side effects could be addressed. Ms. Onyon noted that this will need to be explored further to inform how to address the misuse or off--label use of such products.

### **“Strengthening National Capacities in Testing and Monitoring SLPs” Panel Session**

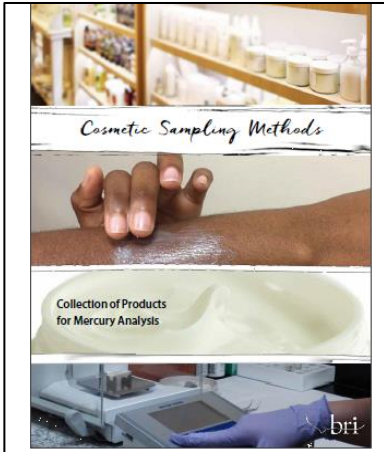
This panel session, moderated by Tahlia Ali Shah, *International Environmental Specialist*, BRI and Mark Burton, *Data Specialist and Ecologist*, BRI, aimed to highlight the existing initiatives and potential opportunities for quantifying of the level of mercury in SLPs on local and global markets and; assessing trends in their manufacture and trade.

Mr. Burton summarized the scientific work that had been conducted by BRI to develop

a global baseline for the mercury content in SLPs. This had included analyses of SLP as part of Minamata Initial Assessment work in many countries. Results to date have shown a wide range in mercury concentrations in certain products - from below the detection levels to thousands of parts per million. A protocol on “Cosmetic Sampling Methods” was available for screening, sampling and analysing SLPs under the project.

Mr. Qureshi commented on the importance of the sampling protocol and queried whether the development of an SLP database is a requirement under the Minamata Convention. Ms. Ali Shah responded that while a specific mercury-added SLP database is not specified, countries are encouraged to conduct inventories of mercury releases initiated under Minamata Initial Assessments in order to demonstrate progress. Mr Toda added that under Article 3 of the Convention, identifying stocks of mercury compounds used for the manufacture of SLPs would be relevant.





**Image 5: Cosmetic Sampling Protocol Document developed by BRI.**

Mr. Mve Beh asked whether persons in-country will be trained in the sampling protocol and whether equipment would be provided. Ms. Ali Shah answered that there was a need to determine the best way ahead in this regard taking into account all relevant authorities and personnel that should be involved. It is the intention that the project's national inception workshops would discuss the collection of SLPs and analytical approaches to be followed.

Mr Bender noted that there is a ZMWG database of SLP products was available [online](#) that could be a useful project resource. He also enquired as to whether sampling will be randomized or targeted and about the possible role of product detention lists. Ms Ali Shah mentioned that part of the Customs training aspect of project hoped to use the example of detention lists. Dr Evers clarified that the sampling method would use previous research and databases, to identify

the appropriate approach for the country. During the second mid-term workshop, a more targeted approach would be developed. Online products would also be included at a later stage of the project as government stakeholders will first needed to be engaged to discuss the status of online trade platforms.

Mr. Toda noted the differentiation between how skin-lightening soaps and creams are categorised. Ms. Onyon note that part of WHO's contribution to the project will look at e categorisation of products.

Ms. Onyon asked about the timelines for national baseline development, to which Dr Evers emphasised the benefit in beginning work on the initial product sampling strategy prior to the national inception workshop.

The second presenter was Mr. Jakob Maag, *Senior Expert, UNITAR, Chemicals and Waste Management Programme*, who presented virtually on the "Stronger Training and Increased Knowledge for better Enforcement against Waste and Mercury" (STRiKE) project which is funded by the EU Internal Security Fund- Police and implemented by a consortium led by the University of Limerick. The project involves various activities to assist compliance officers in addressing mercury waste and product trade crimes. It comprised development of forensic tools to detect mercury on-site, the implementation of

quantitative methods to estimate the impact of mercury releases from illegal trade and the development of guidelines to implement enforcement strategies. Training materials have also been made publicly available and it was noted that methodologies used could be adapted to address mercury added mercury-added SLPs.

Mr. Thomas Groeneveld, *Lead of Mercury in Products Partnership Area, UNEP Global Mercury Partnership* also joined virtually to provide some insight into the overarching monitoring and awareness raising measures from the USA Government and the UNEP GMP perspectives. It was noted that in the USA, regulation of toxic chemical products including mercury is generally split between the Toxic Substances Control Act administered the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act administered by the US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA). Regulation of cosmetics generally falls under the remit of the US FDA but also may have input from the US EPA. Work may include issuing import alerts to allow for confiscation of unlawful products at the border. The USA FDA also posts warnings to consumers regarding the mercury content of products and the health impacts of exposure. The US FDA provides an online portal where consumers can post online websites offering sales of unlawful products. The US EPA provides product-specific information and

fulfils reporting requirements to monitor mercury sources, inclusive of the manufacture, import and export of mercury products and processes.

Under the UNEP GMP, the issue of SLPs has been one of the most active partnership areas with activities led by ZMWG across Latin America, Asia and other regions. Mr. Groeneveld stated that the UNEP GMP is eager to continue to build on capacity-building activities. For example, a webinar on SLPs, conducted in collaboration with WHO, showed the strong public interest in the issue. Further resources will continue to be made available through the UNEP GMP platform.

The panel session continued on Day 2 of the meeting followed by an overview and feedback session facilitated by Grace Halla, *Programme Officer, Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division, UNEP*.

The second half of the panel session focused on the testing and monitoring capacities of the project countries.

Dr Brown provided an overview of the existing testing and monitoring capacity in Jamaica. A number of laboratories in the public, private and quasi-private domain in Jamaica have the capacity for analysing products for mercury. For examples, the International Centre for Environment and Nuclear Sciences Centre housed at the

University of the West Indies which has a Direct Mercury Analyser and other relevant equipment. The Department of Physics and Chemistry has handheld devices with the capability of identifying products with more than 1 ppm mercury content and the Environmental Health Unit within the Ministry of Health and Wellness as well as the Mining Division Unit also have varying capacities among other institutions. It was noted that under the Standards Act, a national standard can be established through coordination with the Bureau of Standards and such a standard can then be used to enforce labelling requirements by the National Compliance Regulation Authority. can then use the labelling standards to verify compliance and have mislabelled products removed. In terms of Customs, more capacity building is needed as currently only X-ray and physical inspection methods are used.

The representatives from Gabon provided a summary of the ongoing **Central Africa Region Mercury Monitoring and Evaluation Network** which was enabled under the third round of the Specific International Programme of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. It was noted that this initiative aimed to provide a forum for communication, networking and collaboration of laboratory and field personnel as well as policymakers across the region with the goal of creating a regional

mercury monitoring hub to enable laboratory analyses of mercury and other environmental assessments.

For Sri Lanka, Dr Suraweera highlighted that while certification testing is carried out, capacities for product testing are limited by the cost of testing and other constraints. Differences in mercury content may occur batch-wise for certain brands which adds another layer of complexity to the analytical process. Private sector laboratories and certain university laboratories exist in Sri Lanka but these cannot meet all needs.. Capacities for biological monitoring are also limited and samples are often sent to other countries for analysis which adds to costs.

Mr. Qureshi asked about the mechanisms under the Minamata Convention to foster multi-country or regional assistance. He also asked about whether the Minamata Convention's maximum 1 ppm mercury content' consideration needed to be included in national regulatory measures to address its obligations.

Mr Bender suggested that, from a legislative standpoint, banning all mercury-added SLPs rather than focusing only on those SLPs with mercury concentrations exceeding 1 ppm (as stated in the Minamata Convention) may be practical from a resource perspective as it would allow the use of more cost-effective testing equipment, such as handheld XRF

equipment, that identify mercury presence overall

Mr. Nasir Hassan from the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office commented that cooperation for regional testing capacities should be explored and the involvement of regional bodies in national activities under the project may be beneficial. He also stressed the need to address sustainability of project activities following the end of the project.

In response to the comments, Mr. Toda noted that the maximum mercury concentration of 1 ppm for cosmetics was established by negotiators at the time of the Convention's development based on available information at that time. Any questions about implementation of the Convention can be directed to the Convention's Implementation Committee.

In response to the regional capacity building comments, Ms. Ali Shah referenced Gabon's presentation on their Central Africa Region Mercury Monitoring and Evaluation Network, which had been facilitated through funding under the Minamata Convention.. Ms. Lymberidi-Settimo also referenced the similar work being done for the Caribbean region through the Caribbean Mercury Monitoring Network. She added that in terms of the XRF equipment, the ZMWG has assessed correlations between laboratory-based results and the handheld XRF

equipment and found that the latter fairly reliable.

Ms. Shamasunder commented on the importance of including community-level capacity building in relation to the monitoring aspects which may include providing communities with demonstrations of the XRF equipment and training relevant NGOs in its use where feasible. This would incentivise community participation and help bridge the gap between science and action.

### **“Engaging Governments in Encouraging Supply Chain Actors in Stopping the Production, Trade and Sales of Mercury SLPs” Panel Session**

In this session, moderated by Dr David Evers, organizations that had been involved in engaging supply chain stakeholders to restrict illicit products (including SLPs) were invited to discuss the lessons learnt and opportunities to address the issue under this project.

First, Mr. András Zsigmond, *Legal Coordinator - Consumer product safety, European Commission (EC)*, shared information on the work done in the EU on general product safety in relation to consumer products. He stated that in the EU, product safety is divided into two main

categories – the first provides minimal essential safety requirements in sectoral legislation for products including cosmetics; the second covers all other product types which fall into the general product safety framework of the EU. Challenges in product safety include traceability and lack of capacity and these are similar issues experienced globally. The complexity of monitoring online trade was also a challenge.

In the EU, an agreement to manage online sales was recently agreed upon that provides the minimum set of requirements for all online business to comply with. This includes the provision of product details or ingredient lists.

To encourage larger online marketers to go beyond what is required by law, the [Product Safety Pledge](#) was put in place in 2018 in the EU and now involves some global stakeholders and regional bodies. Mr. Zsigmond noted that educating traders is an effective preventative measure to ensure that consumers cannot access unlawful products. The Pledge has so far been very effective and discussions to extend its timeline are taking place. Other countries have also been inspired to adopt similar pledges tailored to their country or region, including Australia, South Korea, and Canada.

When asked for further details on the reporting requirements for companies, Mr

Zsigmond noted that a six-month reporting mechanism is in place whereby companies can send information directly on how they are meeting requirements and key performance indicators. The data received is then aggregated by the EC to evaluate key emerging trends or issues to be addressed.

On the listing of tested products regulated by the EC, Mr. Zsigmond stated that they rely on findings from market surveillance authority notifications, EU safety gate systems and other similar entities. It was also noted that under the Pledge's mechanism, testing of products is not facilitated.

Ms. Onyon enquired about the mechanisms used by global online marketplaces to meet the Product Safety Pledges in different countries in which they operate. Mr. Zsigmond responded that as many global companies have regional branches, and that these can coordinate to ensure global coverage. Mr. Bender added there are a number of challenges for example, the US branch of the online company Amazon may acknowledge their compliance with the EU's Product Safety Pledge but it is not binding.

Mr. Zsigmond described a pilot project has been launched to assess how product testing done by consumer organisations can be used to inform online marketplace actions, rather than waiting on product testing regulations to become legally binding.

Mr. Chi-wang Lam, *Coordinator, Public Health & Pharmaceutical Crime, Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme, Organized & Emerging Crime Directorate, INTERPOL General Secretariat*, made a presentation on the law enforcement aspect of products that are regulated under existing national or regional regulations and how INTERPOL can support action. As background, Mr. Lam noted that each of the project countries are members of INTERPOL and can gain access to a number of support tools to enforce national laws, mainly through their regional or national INTERPOL bureaux. INTERPOL maintains a number of databases with information on criminals who provide illicit products on the market and these can also be referenced to cross-check importing or manufacturing entities. Field support can also be considered in which INTERPOL enforcement officers would coordinate with national authorities to carry out fieldwork exercises for inspections or seizure of illicit products. These field operations result in strengthened enforcement and draw media attention to raise awareness on the issue.

To discuss what can be done to enforce mercury- added SLP trade, Mr. Lam provided the example of [Operation Pangea](#), a global programme being implemented by INTERPOL to combat the global trafficking of counterfeit pharmaceuticals marketed and sold online. Seizures of illicit pharmaceuticals, removal of websites with

counterfeit products and development of public awareness campaigns are some of the successful activities that can inform SLP manufacture and trade regulation. Enforcement can only be done however, if laws are developed to address the illicit manufacture, import and export of mercury-added SLPs in the first place

When asked for further clarifications on how countries can access INTERPOL's resources, Mr. Lam added that in addition to the previous points, countries can send alerts through their national or regional bureaux if they suspect related illicit activity for investigation.



*Image 6: Mr Chi-wang Lam, INTERPOL (centre) presenting at the session on “Engaging Governments in Encouraging Supply Chain Actors in Stopping the Production, Trade and Sales of Mercury SLPs”.*

Mr. Bender provided further background on his knowledge of Operation Pangea in which mercury-added cosmetics were seized in Hong Kong's operations and requested that any available information be shared. He

asked whether countries that suspect, but have not confirmed, illicit manufacture of regulated SLPs be assisted by INTERPOL to confirm their existence. Mr. Lam responded that this can involve several considerations in which existing national legislation would be assessed to determine if their definitions of 'illicit operations' apply to the suspected reports. INTERPOL can then assist if the operations are clearly defined for enforcement and can work with the regional bureaus to investigate further and determine if intervention is feasible. Databases can be reviewed to help trace accountability as well.

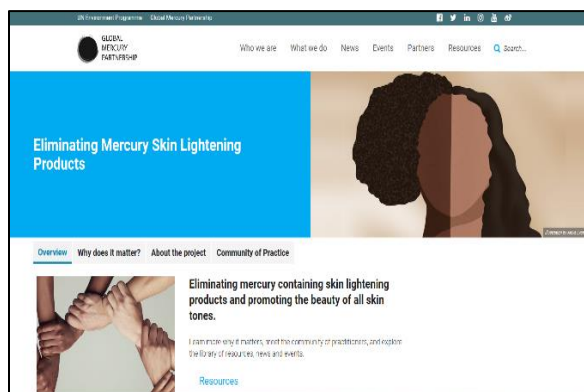
Mr. Qureshi asked if the Minamata Convention could consider including INTERPOL as an observer agency or other capacity within the context of the Convention. Mr. Toda and Mr. Lam agreed that this could be explored further.

Ms. Tetteh raised the issue of products being sold on the informal market, to which Mr.

Lam highlighted how the databases of INTERPOL could be utilised to help curb the sale of these products and encourage further action.

The final presenter for this session was Ms. Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, *Policy Manager, Zero Mercury Campaign, International Co-ordinator, ZMWG/ European Environmental Bureau (EEB)* who presented together with Mr. Bender on the ongoing ZMWG work to restrict mercury-added SLPs from local markets and online platforms and work to address the challenges of regulating transboundary online platforms. The need for inspections, sanctions and screening tools to be implemented by countries were noted. Voluntary agreements such as the EC's Product Safety Pledge detailed by Mr. Zsigmond were also seen as helpful and additional information in ZMWG [reports](#) was highlighted.

**“Multiplying the Project’s Benefits through Community of Practice - Identifying opportunities and modalities for regional and global collaboration, based on common or complementary areas of work” .**



**Image 7: Snapshot of the UNEP GMP's webpage developed for the project:**

[www.unep/mercuryfreecosmetics](http://www.unep/mercuryfreecosmetics)

Ms. Malgorzata Stylo, *Associate Programme Management Officer*, and Ms. Imelda Dossou Etui, *Project Development Analyst*, UNEP GMP facilitated the session. Ms. Dossou Etui described the role of the GMP as a global network that brings together stakeholders across all sectors relevant to mercury-related matters to further work related to the Minamata Convention. It was noted that GMP members already include governments such as the Government of Gabon. Jamaica and Sri Lanka were invited to consider joining.

Technical assistance and guidance can be provided on SLPs through the GMP's Mercury-added Products project group. In the past this group has included the preparation of a guidance document on Customs Codes for mercury-added products which had been submitted at the Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Minamata Convention. Ms. Stylo explained that under this SLP project, the GMP's role is targeted towards knowledge generation across the key project activities and would involve the development of a Knowledge Hub housed on the UNEP GMP website: [www.unep/mercuryfreecosmetics](http://www.unep/mercuryfreecosmetics). Following the completion of the project, the knowledge generated will be sustained through the website database. The different aspects of the website that will be developed throughout the project were highlighted.

Additionally, Ms Stylo informed that a Project Stakeholder Group was proposed as a broader community of practice involving the project country governments, as well as, broader stakeholders such as scientific communities, awareness raising groups and other relevant bodies. It was proposed that the Project Stakeholder Group would meet biannually to share project updates, get feedback/advice, coordinate awareness and identify and link the project with relevant initiatives.

Dr Evers and Mr. Bender commented on the great opportunity for continuity of project goals and related work through involvement of the UNEP GMP.

Clara Mottura, *Community Support Consultant, Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP)* presented on the related GEF-funded Programme, 'Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States' (ISLANDS). This project involves thirty-three (33) countries across three (3) geographical regions working to manage waste and toxic pollutants including mercury. As a communication tool under the ISLANDS programme, an online Green Forum has been developed housing several discussions and groups on a number of topics, including mercury-added products. The forum allows for the identification and sharing of knowledge generated on the topic; supports



activities for the phase-out and sound disposal of products and builds and sustains a global community of practice on mercury to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. It is also linked to the UNEP GMP and members can network and engage with peers, receive regular updates and promote activities.

To present on the communication aspects of the project, Theo Silberston, *Programme Management Associate, UNEP*, stressed the importance of communicating the issue of SLPs effectively to shift attitudes globally. The UNEP Press Release published ahead of the global inception meeting had already been picked up by several news platforms indicating a strong level of interest in the topic. Mr. Silberston noted that under the project, different communication methods would be used in different stages of the project to capture stakeholders across the government, health, private sectors and the public. He expected that communication methods and activity would evolve as the project progressed.

Ms. Stylo shared examples of awareness raising tools that have been used such as children's books and videos or short films. She then asked, using an online question and answer platform, for suggestions on awareness raising tools that might be effective for the SLP issue and for recommendations on communication actors that can be engaged for awareness raising.

It was noted that the messaging should be broad to capture the root causes behind the use of skin lightening products.

Ms. Adawe highlighted that the [Beautywell website](#) has a repository of communication pieces available in various languages that can be shared on the UNEP GMP platform and also noted that a follow-up initiative involving podcasts discussing skin lightening and colourism will soon be made available. Ms. Stylo noted that a priority of the UNEP GMP will be to compile and make readily available the tools developed by stakeholders.

## **Summary of Opportunities for Collaboration and Closing Remarks**

Ms. Halla thanked stakeholders for their participation and invited closing statements. Ms. Onyon highlighted that the discussions held over the meeting were greatly appreciated and raised many aspects that will be taken into consideration throughout the project. She reflected that addressing the issue of SLPs would require tailoring of national activities to national needs. Targeting behavioural changes through community empowerment would be considered the use of the UNEP GMP to continue dialogue through coordinated activities continued throughout the project.

Dr Evers added that from a technical standpoint, he looked forward to following up on how national laboratory capacities could be enhanced under the project and noted the opportunities to learn from each other for the improvement of activities. Ms. Halla closed the meeting with the proverb that, “we walk faster alone but better together” to highlight the benefits of the coordinated work to be done under the project.

# Annex 1- Meeting Agenda



World Health Organization



## GEF #10810: Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products

### Global Kick-off Meeting

14-15 February 2023

WHO-HQ, Geneva, Switzerland

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded project, "Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products" is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and co-executed by The World Health Organization (WHO) and Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) with technical support by the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

The project aims to reduce the risk of exposure to mercury-added skin lightening products. This meeting will bring together key stakeholders that work in the area of mercury-added skin lightening products, including governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector, to identify opportunities to work together in the implementation of the project.

### PROVISIONAL AGENDA

#### Day 1: Tuesday 14 February 2023

Time (CET)	Session	Speakers
9:00	Registration	
9:30	Opening and welcome	<p><i>Facilitator:</i>  <b>Lesley J Onyon</b>, Head, Chemical Safety and Health Unit, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, WHO</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <p><b>Anil Sookdeo</b>, Chemicals and Waste Focal Area Coordinator and Senior Environmental Specialist, Programs Unit, GEF</p> <p><b>Jacqueline Alvarez</b>, Chief, Chemicals and Health Branch, UNEP</p> <p><i>Project Country Representative- Gabon</i></p>

<b>Time (CET)</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
9:30	Opening and welcome (continued)	<i>Project Country Representative- Jamaica:</i> <b>Kevoy Osbourne</b> , Director, Projects and Enforcement, Environment and Risk Management Branch, Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Jamaica  <i>Project Country Representative- Sri Lanka</i>
10:00	Why Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products (SLPs) Matter	<b>Amira Adawe</b> , MPH, Executive Director The Beautywell Project
10:20	Coffee Break (15 - 20 minutes)	
10:40	Welcome from Host Organization	<b>Dr Maria Neira</b> , Acting Assistant Director-General, Division of Universal Health Coverage and Healthier Populations, WHO
10:50	"Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products" Project Overview and Goals	<b>David Evers</b> , Ph.D. Executive Director, Chief Scientist, Co-director—Center for Mercury Studies, BRI
11:10	Understanding National Circumstances: mercury SLPs in Jamaica, Gabon and Sri Lanka	<i>Moderator:</i> <b>Lesley J Onyon</b> , WHO  <i>Speakers:</i>  <i>Project Country Representative- Gabon</i>  <i>Project Country Representative- Jamaica:</i> <b>Dr Heather Brown</b> , National Coordinator Dermatology Services and Leprosy Control Health Services Planning and Integration Branch Ministry of Health and Wellness, Jamaica  <i>Project Country Representative- Sri Lanka</i>
12:00	Lunch Break (1 hour)	
13:00	Skin lightening, its roots, and the social and cultural dimensions	<i>Moderator:</i> <b>Rodges Ankrah</b> , Chair of the Partnership Advisory Group, UNEP Global Mercury Partnership ( <i>virtual</i> )  <i>Panelists:</i> <b>Amira Adawe</b> , BeautyWell  <b>Isabelle Mananga Ossey</b> , CEO/Founder, Label Beauté Noire  <b>Catherine Tetteh</b> , CEO/Founder, Melanin Foundation ( <i>virtual</i> )  <b>Bhavna Shamasunder</b> , Chair & Associate Professor, Urban & Environmental Policy & Public Health, OXY Occidental College

Time (CET)	Session	Speakers
		<b>Meera Senthilingam</b> , Editor of "White Lies- Exposing the dangers of skin whitening", As Equals, CNN International
14:00	Developing and Strengthening Legislation and Regulations to phase out Hg SLPs in line with the Minamata Convention	<p><i>Moderator:</i> <b>Lesley J Onyon</b>, WHO</p> <p><i>Panelists:</i> <b>Eisaku Toda</b>, Senior Programme Management Officer, Minamata Convention Secretariat</p> <p><b>Michael Bender</b>, Co-founder, Mercury Policy Project</p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Gabon</i></p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Jamaica</i></p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Sri Lanka</i></p>
15:00	<b>Coffee/Networking Break (20 minutes)</b>	
15:20	Strengthening National Capacities in Testing and Monitoring SLPs	<p><i>Moderators:</i> <b>Mark Burton</b>, Data Specialist and Ecologist, BRI; <b>Tahlia Ali Shah</b>, International Environmental Specialist, BRI</p> <p><i>Panelists:</i> <b>Mr. Jakob Maag</b>, Senior Expert, UNITAR, Chemicals and Waste Management Programme (<i>virtual</i>)</p> <p><b>Thomas Groeneveld</b>, Lead of Mercury in Products Partnership Area, UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (<i>virtual</i>)</p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Gabon</i></p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Jamaica</i></p> <p><i>Project Country Representative(s)- Sri Lanka</i></p>
16:20	Closing remarks for Day 1	All participants

### Day 2: Wednesday 15 February 2023

Time (CET)	Session	Speakers
9:00		Registration
9:15	Welcome and wrap up from Day 1	<b>Grace Halla</b> , Programme Officer, Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division, UNEP

Time (CET)	Session	Speakers
9:30	Engaging Governments in Encouraging Supply Chain Actors in Stopping the Production, Trade and Sales of Hg SLPs	<p><i>Moderator:</i> <b>David Evers</b>, BRI;</p> <p><i>Panelists:</i> <b>Michael Bender</b>, Mercury Policy Project</p> <p><b>Elena Lymberidi-Settimo</b>, Policy Manager, Zero Mercury Campaign, International Coordinator, Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG)/ European Environmental Bureau (EEB) (virtual)</p> <p><b>András Zsigmond</b>, Legal Coordinator - Consumer product safety, European Commission (virtual)</p> <p><b>Chi-wang Lam</b>, Coordinator, Public Health &amp; Pharmaceutical Crime, Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme, Organized &amp; Emerging Crime Directorate, INTERPOL General Secretariat (virtual)</p>
10:30	<b>Coffee break/Networking (20 minutes)</b>	
10:50	<p>Multiplying the Project's Benefits through Community of Practice</p> <p><i>Identifying opportunities and modalities for regional and global collaboration, based on common or complementary areas of work.</i></p>	<p><i>Facilitators:</i> UNEP Global Mercury Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Imelda Dossou Etui;</b></li> <li>• <b>Stephanie Laurelle;</b></li> <li>• <b>Malgorzata Stylo</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Speaker:</i> <b>Clara Mottura</b>, Green Growth Knowledge Platform (virtual)</p>
11:20	Summary of Opportunities for Collaboration	<b>Lesley J Onyon</b> , WHO; <b>David Evers</b> , BRI
11:45	Closing remarks	All Participants
12:00	Closure	
<b>NOTE: Afternoon session to be held for Project Steering Committee Members Meeting</b>		



**Kick-off meeting and stakeholder consultation for the GEF-funded Global Project on elimination of mercury containing skin lightening products**

*14-15 February 2023  
WHO-HQ, Geneva*

---

**Annex 2 - List of participants**

**PROJECT COUNTRIES**

**Gabon**

Mouhamed Bakary OZAVINO  
Ministry of Health

Jean Herve MVE BEH  
Ministry of Environment

**Jamaica**

Heather BROWN  
National Coordinator Dermatology Services and Leprosy Control  
Health Services Planning and Integration Branch  
Ministry of Health and Wellness

Kevo OSBOURNE  
Director, Projects and Enforcement  
Environment and Risk Management Branch  
Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

**Sri Lanka**

H.S. PREMACHANDRA  
Director  
Central Environmental Authority

Dr Buddhika SUDASINGHE  
Consultant Community Physician, Environment and Occupational Health Unit, Ministry of Health

Inoka SURaweera  
Consultant Community Physician  
Directorate of Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Food Safety  
Ministry of Health

## **PROJECT EXECUTING AGENCIES**

### **Biodiversity Research Institute**

David EVERS  
Executive Director and Chief Scientist  
Biodiversity Research Institute  
Portland, Maine, USA

Mark BURTON  
Biodiversity Research Institute  
Portland, Maine, USA

Tahlia ALI SHAH  
Biodiversity Research Institute  
Portland, Maine, USA

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

Jacqueline ALVAREZ  
Chief of the UNEP Economy Division's Chemicals  
and Health Branch

Ludovic BERNAUDAT  
Portfolio Manager  
UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Kenneth DAVIS  
Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Malgorzata STYLO  
Associate Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Stephanie LAURELLE  
Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Imelda DOSSOU ETUI  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch



## **World Health Organization (WHO)**

### **WHO Headquarters**

Lesley ONYON  
Chemical Safety and Health Unit  
Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health  
Geneva

### **WHO Regional Office for Africa**

Guy MBAYO  
Technical Officer – WASH  
Climate Change, Health and Environment (CHE) team  
Brazzaville

### **WHO Regional Office for the Americas (PAHO)**

Ana BOISCHIO  
Communicable Diseases and Environmental Determinants of  
Health  
Washington DC

### **WHO Regional Office for South East Asia**

Mohd Nasir HASSAN  
Regional Adviser (Air Pollution, Environment &  
Chemicals)  
New Delhi

### **WHO Country Office Sri Lanka**

Farrukh QURESHI  
Medical officer NCD  
Colombo

### **WHO Country Office Gabon**

Aboubacar INOUA  
Cluster Head  
Libreville

### **WHO Country Office Jamaica**

Serene JOSEPH  
Advisor, Health Surveillance, Disease Prevention and  
Control Navigate to hierarchy  
Kingston

## **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

Jacqueline ALVAREZ  
Chief of the UNEP Economy Division's Chemicals  
and Health Branch

Ludovic BERNAUDAT  
Portfolio Manager  
UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Kenneth DAVIS  
Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Malgorzata STYLO  
Associate Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Grace HALLA  
Programme Officer/Task Manager  
UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Stephanie LAURELLE  
Programme Management Officer  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Imelda DOSSOU ETUI  
Knowledge and Risk Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTING AGENCY**

Grace HALLA  
Programme Officer/Task Manager  
UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste Unit  
Chemicals and Health Branch

Theo SILBERSTON  
Communications Officer  
UNEP-GEF Chemicals and Waste  
Chemicals & Health Branch  
Industry and Economy Division  
Nairobi, Kenya

## **PROJECT SPONSOR**

### **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

Anil SOOKDEO  
Coordinator  
Chemicals and Waste  
GEF Programs Unit  
Washington, USA

## **PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS**

### **CNN**

Meera SENTHILINGAM  
Contractor

### **European Commission**

Kostas ALLIGIANNIS  
Policy Officer  
Directorate-General Justice and Consumers

Marta DELL'AQUILLA  
Policy Officer  
Directorate-General Justice and Consumers

András ZSIGMOND  
Legal Coordinator - Consumer product safety  
Directorate-General Justice and Consumers  
Product Safety and Rapid Alert System

### **European Environmental Bureau**

Elena LYMBERIDI -SETTIMO  
Policy Manager/International co-coordinator  
Zero Mercury Working Group  
Brussels, Belgium

### **Green Growth Knowledge Platform**

Melanie ASHTON  
Consultant - programme management  
UNEP

John BRITTAIN  
Communications Coordinator

Clara MOTTURA  
Community Support Consultant

### **International League of Dermatological Societies**

Arpita BHOSE  
Executive Director t  
United Kingdom

## **INTERPOL General Secretariat**

Chi-Wang LAM  
Coordinator, Public Health & Pharmaceutical Crime  
Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme  
Organized & Emerging Crime Directorate

## **Label Beauté Noire**

Isabelle MANANGA OSSEY Consulting  
(née Eyaa Ossey)  
Founder Spokeswoman & Executive Director  
San Francisco, CA, USA

## **Melanin Foundation**

Catherine Tetteh

## **Occidental College**

Bhavna SHAMASUNDER  
Urban & Environmental Policy Department  
California, USA

## **Pantheon of Women who Inspire**

Sema JONSSON  
Cannes, France

## **US Environment Protection Agency**

Rodges ANKRAH  
Chair of the Partnership Advisory Group  
UNEP Global Mercury Partnership

Thomas GROENEVELD  
Senior Advisor  
Existing Chemicals – Risk Management Division

## **Zero Mercury Working Group**

Michael BENDER  
Director  
Mercury Policy Project/Tides Center  
Montpellier, France

## **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention**

Marianne BAILEY  
Programme Management Officer for Capacity-building  
and Technical Assistance

Eisaku TODA  
Senior Programme Officer  
Geneva

## **United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)**

Jakob MAAG

Advisor

## **University of the West Indies**

Terry Mohammed

Deputy Dean

Outreach