



## Mercury in Lighting a Focus at the Minamata Convention

### *Countries encouraged to adopt standards now to reduce mercury in lighting products*

**Kumamoto, Japan: 7th October September 2013** – At the Diplomatic Conference on the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Kumamoto, Japan on 7 October, Gustavo Mañez, Project Manager for the en.lighten initiative presented at the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership side event. As successful public-private partnership, supported by private sector manufacturers Philips and OSRAM and financed by the Global Environment Facility, the en.lighten initiative was asked to present to provide expertise on the topic of mercury as it pertains to lighting.

From a life-cycle perspective, the phase-out of inefficient incandescent lamps and their replacement with energy efficient alternatives, such as CFLs and LED lamps, reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and mercury pollution from fossil fuel burning. However, because CFLs contain mercury, a more integrated policy approach is required that addresses the principles of pollution prevention and environmentally sound management. This approach includes maximizing energy efficiency and lamp life and minimizing toxicity at the design and manufacturing stages, while taking into account the sustainable management of spent lamps.

This is consistent with the newly adopted Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

Countries are encouraged to adopt standards to gradually reduce and limit the amount of hazardous substances, such as mercury. The target of the Minamata Convention is for the reduction of mercury in lamps by 2020 but en.lighten recommends policy makers not to wait and to put in place regulations that limit the content of mercury and other hazardous substances in lamps now. Annex 1 of the Minamata Convention sets limits for mercury-added products however; some countries are aiming for progressively lower levels of mercury in energy-saving lamps.

Potential concerns about mercury-added lamps have resulted in viable methodologies and good practices for environmentally sound management of spent lamps. Collection and recycling systems coupled with technologies that capture and securely contain mercury can be effective. Further processing to recover mercury and recycle other lamp components is manageable and affordable if an appropriate system is designed and properly implemented. If effectively designed and managed, approaches that encourage the collection and recycling of mercury-added lamps can also create jobs in collection and recycling.

It is important to note that CFLs do not release mercury, unless the lamp is broken during installation, storage or transportation. Mercury releases from broken CFLs can be minimized by providing the

public with information on how to prevent breakage and properly clean up and dispose of broken CFLs. The amount of mercury entering the environment from CFLs can be further minimized when the mercury is recovered from spent lamps.

The en.lighten initiative offers guidance on this important topic. [The Efficient Lighting Toolkit](#) provides environmentally sound management best practices, mercury limits, and details for extended producer responsibility. The new Ambilamp International Academy for the Recycling of Light has been established for en.lighten Partner countries to receive hands-on training on establishing legislation and take-back schemes.

Additionally, en.lighten can provide expert support and help countries to work with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to obtain funding for national efficient lighting strategies that include the sound disposal of lamps.

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