Minamata Convention on Mercury

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PURPOSE: to approve, on behalf of the Union, the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: mercury is recognised as a global threat to human health and the environment. **Mercury is characterised by its transboundary nature.** Global action is therefore necessary to ensure the protection of the individuals and of the environment within the Union as a complement to domestic measures.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, concluded under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is the main international legal framework for cooperation and measures to control and limit the use and anthropogenic emissions of mercury and mercury compounds to air, water and land.

The Convention was adopted and opened for signature at a Conference of the Plenipotentiaries in Kumamoto, Japan, in October 2013. The European Union and twenty-one Member States signed the Convention on 10 October 2013 while Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia and Poland did so on 24 September 2014 and Malta on 8 October 2014.

The EU has made significant progress for the last 10 years in addressing mercury domestically as a follow-up to the adoption in 2005 of the Community Strategy Concerning Mercury, as supported by the Council of the European Union and the **European Parliament** in its resolution dated 14.3. 2006.

The Strategy was reviewed in 2010 and was supported by the Council of the European Union.

The Seventh Environmental Action programme established the long-term objective of a non-toxic environment and stated, for that purpose, that action is needed to ensure the minimisation of significant adverse effects of chemicals on human health and the environment by 2020.

CONTENT: with the present draft Decision, the Council is called upon to **approve, on behalf of the Union, the Minamata Convention on Mercury**.

The Convention addresses the whole life-cycle of mercury with the objective to protect human health and the environment. It:

- sets restrictions on primary mining and international trade of mercury;
- prohibits the manufacture, import and export of a wide range of mercury-added products;
- foresees prohibitions or operating conditions for several manufacturing processes using mercury and calls for discouraging new uses of mercury in products and industrial processes;
- provides for measures to be taken to reduce mercury emissions from Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining ("ASGM") and major industrial activities, including through the use of best available techniques;
- requires also interim storage of mercury and management of mercury waste to occur in an environmentally sound manner.

In parallel to this proposed Decision, the Commission has put forward a proposal for a Regulation by the European Parliament and the Council to transpose the limited number of provisions of the Convention that are not yet implemented into EU legislation.