National Training on Strengthening Country-Level Inter-Agency Coordination on Trade of Mercury

Summary Report

Workshop Date: 17 July 2025, Koror, Palau

National Training on Strengthening Country-Level Inter-Agency Coordination on Trade of Mercury

Meeting Location: West Plaza Hotel at Lebuu Steet, Koror, Palau

Meeting Date: 17 July 2025

Organised by: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) *in collaboration with* Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), and the Government of Palau as a joint initiative under the Japan-funded “Project for promoting the Minamata Convention on Mercury by making the most of Japan's knowledge and experiences to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention”.

Workshop Report Developed by:

Ashley Bastiansz, Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)

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Meeting Background

A one-day in-person National Training workshop was developed to provide practical guidance on combatting issues related to the trade of mercury, mercury compounds and mercury-added products (MAPs) in alignment with the Minamata Convention on Mercury. This activity was a joint initiative developed under the Japan-funded “Project for promoting the Minamata Convention on Mercury by making the most of Japan's knowledge and experiences to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention” implemented regionally by UNEP.

The project has a special focus on the area of information exchange, awareness and education, research, development, and monitoring. A comprehensive programme was designed to strengthen capacity, build on the resources in and around Minamata, and employ technologies held by institutions in Japan for the effective implementation of the Convention’s obligations.

The meeting was held for a full day on Thursday 17 July 2025 at the West Plaza Hotel at Lebuu Street located in Koror, Palau.

The meeting was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), and the Government of Palau via the Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB).

The workshop focus was on representatives from Palau Customs with several governmental/related agency representatives also in attendance.

Opening Remarks and Introduction to the Session

Mr. Vaughn Kyota, from the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP), commenced the workshop with a morning prayer delivered in Palauan. The workshop was chaired by Mr. Bishal Bhari, AIT. Introductory remarks were provided by Mr. Michael Blesam, Chief Executive Officer, EQPB, who opened with an introduction of key topics on mercury trade, monitoring, and pollution, and encouraged active participation and knowledge sharing throughout the workshop. Mr. Blesam acknowledged the vital role of Customs and Border Protection, along with partners from environment, fisheries, health, and solid waste management. He emphasized the importance of technical exchange for meeting the obligations of the Minamata Convention to better protect both public health and the environment and closed by thanking all participants for their contributions. Representing AIT, Dr. Guilberto Borongan, Director of the Regional Resource Center for Asia and the Pacific at

AIT, expressed appreciation to participants, organizers and the host country of Palau, as well as acknowledged the leadership of UNEP along with contributions from BRI and the World Customs Organization (WCO). Dr. Borongan followed with a brief introduction to the Japan-funded project under the Minamata Convention to provide a background for the workshop and highlighted the importance of strengthening interagency collaboration and building national capacity to address mercury trade challenges. While noting ongoing issues such as outdated trade data and information gaps, Dr. Borongan emphasized his hope that this training would equip participants with practical tools and knowledge to more effectively combat illegal mercury trade.

Following a round of introductions from participants, Ms. Ashley Bastiansz, BRI, provided an overview of the objectives and goals of the workshop to:

- Build country-specific enforcement capacity through hands-on training.
- Improve coordination between national agencies to close enforcement gaps.
- Train officers in forensic detection and risk assessment for mercury shipments.
- Initiate a national action plan for mercury trade control.

Ms. Bastiansz additionally discussed the expected outcomes of the workshop to:

- Strengthened inter-agency coordination for mercury trade enforcement.
- Improved capacity of national authorities to detect and prevent illicit mercury trade.
- Standardized procedures for customs and law enforcement authorities.
- Initiation of country-specific action plans and policy recommendations.
- Gather up to date information on illegal mercury trade data and national challenges.

It was also noted that the Palau national workshop was one of three national trainings provided under the Japan-funded project including two previously held workshops in Colombo, Sri Lanka (2 June 2025) and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (23 – 24 June 2025), and supplementary online training webinars from May – August 2025. Ms. Cassie Gilham, BRI, concluded the introductory session by presenting a short presentation on BRI and their various research centers, programs and laboratories to familiarize participants with BRI's work.

Implementing the Minamata Convention in Palau: Status Trade, and Waste Management

Ms. Ashley Bastiansz, BRI, started off the presentations by providing an overview of the status of mercury in Palau by drawing on findings from the Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA). Ms. Bastiansz provided implementation measures and identified key stakeholder roles and coordination requirements to assist in meeting the obligations of the Minamata Convention. Her presentation also addressed implementation challenges, proposed practical solutions and governance improvements before transitioning to briefing participants on Minamata Convention obligations regarding trade and waste management, more specifically Article 3 of the Convention. Ms. Bastiansz then pivoted to handling and disposal of mercury waste by outlining what is classified as mercury waste, and how to manage waste under the Minamata Convention and referencing the technical guidelines from the Basel Convention. Following this background, Ms. Bastiansz further discussed safe handling of mercury waste (i.e., personal protective equipment, specific training, key considerations for storage) and treatment of disposal and mercury wastes (i.e., treatment of waste, minimize emissions, disposal of waste in a specially engineered landfill or permanent storage).

Next, Mr. Michael Blesam, EQPB, presented on the implementation of the Minamata Convention in Palau, emphasizing that Palau is committed to protecting the health of its people and environment, while safeguarding fishing and farming livelihoods. Mr. Blesam highlighted that Palau's mercury management efforts focus on preventing contamination, especially in marine ecosystems, protecting workers health and safety, strengthened monitoring, safe storage, transport and disposal of mercury and MAPs. He touched upon the importance of biomonitoring as a key priority to help assess mercury bioaccumulation through aquatic food webs before segueing into Palau's MIA completed in 2024. Palau is now progressing toward a formal action plan focused on long-term sustainability, with priorities identified through a chemical baseline report. Mr. Blesam further discussed in detail the draft national plan which includes enhancing mercury management in which all initiatives will align with the Minamata and Basel Conventions to ensure compliance and protect human and environmental health. Despite the importance of these initiatives, Mr. Blesam outlined present challenges related to limited

lab capacity, technical capabilities, and finances, which need to be strengthened.

Moving forward, Palau aims to:

- Strengthen interagency collaboration and stakeholder engagement.
- Improve infrastructure for mercury waste management.
- Expand awareness and monitoring of mercury-added product (MAP) imports.
- Build capacity through technical assistance and training.
- Operationalize tracking systems to better monitor mercury use and trade.

Palau remains diligent in fulfilling the commitments to the Minamata Convention.

Existing National Customs Capacity and National Management of Hazardous Waste

To provide a better understanding of Palau's current capacity for identifying, confiscating and exporting hazardous substances, Mr. Vaughn Kyota, from the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP), discussed an overview of the processes at Customs. For Palau, Mr. Kyota explained that mercury is a relatively new concern, often linked to fish consumption (i.e., tuna), but awareness of its impacts remains limited. Customs primarily focuses on revenue collection through import taxes, as well as enforcing bans on chemicals and prohibited drugs. All importers must submit entry forms with necessary permits, Mr. Kyota used the EQPB permits for fertilizers as an example. Mr. Kyota elaborated on the role of validators at Customs, which is namely reviewing documents, invoices and licenses to ensure compliance (i.e., enforcing bans on substances such as freon), after validation, shipments are referred to inspectors and field officers who coordinate with EQPB. He stressed that Customs do not export prohibited items, and the responsibility typically falls on EQPB or the importing company, respective of the situation. Customs has equipment to detect banned items, however, Mr. Kyota stated that they do not have storage facilities for banned items, and in such cases, companies are responsible for returning prohibited imports at their own expense. Mr. Kyota provided two examples of outcomes of prohibited items: (1) EQPB may assist with storage of larger items and quantities; and (2) Companies must manage disposal for waste such as old fuel. During the Q&A period, a concern was raised regarding policies in place for importing restricted items, Mr. Kyota responded that despite the policies, the issue

lies with catching illegal smuggling at the border. Additionally, Palau does not have the capacity to regulate mercury at the border. Another participant raised a concern surrounding companies that lack the capacity to return prohibited items and exporting countries that do not want to claim responsibility for prohibited items (i.e., exporting countries claim products are counterfeit). Mr. Kyota concluded by saying that they work with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) but there are cases where the EPA cannot assist, thus the Customs are currently searching for disposal options in these cases.

After Mr. Kyota remarks, Ms. Jessica Emesiochel, Division of Solid Waste Management (DSWM), presented on the hazardous waste that is currently accepted in landfills in Palau. Ms. Emesiochel expanded on the various types of hazardous waste accepted at landfills in Palau:

- **Medical waste**: either incinerated or buried, depending on decisions made by the Ministry of Health
- **Used cooking oil**: currently mixed with general waste, although a dedicated KSG recovery program is under trial
- **Mercury-containing waste**: crushed and mixed with general waste for disposal
- **Vehicle batteries**: given to EQPB to send off for recycling while smaller batteries are stored on site until disposal can be arranged by EQPB
- **End of life vehicles**: managed collaboratively – parts are separated and sent to a partner organization for disposal, while oils are contained by EQPB and sent to PPUC power plant.

Looking ahead, Ms. Emesiochel discussed that Palau aims to enhance hazardous waste management under the Palau National Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy (2025–2035), which includes improving infrastructure, expanding partnerships with EQPB, and developing long-term solutions for safe disposal and environmental protection.

Mercury Mass Flow in Palau

Mr. Kyaw Nyunt Maung, UNEP Consultant, virtually presented on the mercury mass flow analysis conducted for project countries of the Japan-funded project, which aims to better understand and quantify the flows and stocks of mercury in the country due to its sources and releases. Mr. Nyunt Maung explained that the mercury mass flow analysis in Palau is based on data from the Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) 2024, Material Flow Analysis (MFA), and the UNEP Level 3 Toolkit (estimated mercury releases

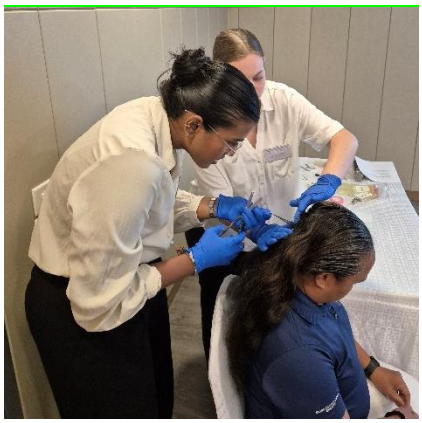
from toolkit - ~0.5 tons air, ~0.3 tons water, and 0.4 tons land). Mr. Nyunt Maung briefly explained the 2024 Mercury Inventory for Palau, developed under the MIA, which covers the period up to 2021 and draws on a wide range of data sources including government sources, private businesses and surveys. The MIA for Palau identified waste management including landfills and wastewater treatment as the largest source of mercury releases (~10 kg), followed by MAPs, and notably, dental amalgams.

Mr. Nyunt Maung provided a further explanation of the MFA methodology, which was employed to move beyond a basic inventory of mercury emission and releases to enable a more comprehensive life cycle perspective. MFA quantifies the flows and stocks of mercury across different stages of use and disposal, guided by principles such as system boundaries and process balance modeling. MFA supports applications in national resource accounting, industrial process optimization, and product lifecycle analysis, aiming to produce concrete, quantifiable data rather than theoretical models. For Palau, Mr. Nyunt Maung underlined that mercury mass flow analysis can assist in identifying priority sources of national mercury for the implementation import regulations and trade control enforcement, as well as better inform targeted mitigation strategies.

Mercury Impacts on the Environment, the Importance of Biomonitoring and Practical Hair Sampling Exercise

Ms. Cassie Gilham, BRI, opened with contextual information on the on the global sources and flows of mercury, the mercury cycle, main sources of mercury compounds, and bioaccumulation of mercury across food chains primarily in aquatic ecosystems. Ms. Gilham offered context on mercury-added products, and the respective human and environmental exposure from these products and processes before addressing the importance of biomonitoring to assess human mercury exposure and effect levels. Fish consumption was identified as a key exposure pathway, Ms. Gilham expressed choosing fish that are high in nutrients and low in mercury as outlined by the US EPA. This is information is especially important in countries like Palau where fish consumption is large part of their diet. Ms. Gilham followed with a summary of hair sampling as an effective biomonitoring method to assess mercury exposure from fish consumption. She concluded by highlighting that these efforts offer a valuable model that can be scaled regionally or globally to better understand and manage mercury exposure.

To provide a more context to Ms. Gilham's presentation, BRI organized a hair sampling exercise where participants were asked to voluntarily partake in a hair sampling exercise where they completed a consent form and questionnaire before participation. Ms. Ashley Bastiansz and Ms. Gilham, BRI, performed the hair sample collections, which were later transported to the BRI laboratory in Portland, Maine, USA for analysis using the Nippon Direct Mercury Analyzer (DMA). Results will be shared with participants once after analyses are concluded.



Tools to Enhance Mercury Trade of Mercury-added Products: Skin-lightening Products Case Study

After the hair sampling exercise, Ms. Ashley Bastiansz, BRI, shared a presentation highlighting the significance of risk assessment in identifying mercury exposure and supporting regulatory monitoring and risk management. Ms. Bastiansz noted that effective mercury risk assessment depends on robust analytical detection techniques, which are essential for protecting human health, informing policy decisions, illegal transport of mercury, and advancing global commitments such as the Minamata Convention. For the purpose of the presentation, Ms. Bastiansz chose to use mercury-added skin-lightening products as a case study, since it represents an emerging issue and is more difficult to identify in comparison to elemental mercury. She provided a brief overview of Article 4 of the Minamata Convention, as well as high level summary of mercury-added skin-lightening products and associated health risks to humans and the environment. Ms. Bastiansz addressed the need for testing skin-lightening products for mercury and common analytical instruments used. Her presentation concluded with a video, previously filmed at the BRI laboratory, demonstrating skin-lightening products analyzed for mercury using an X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) instrument.

Practical Exercise: Developing a National Action Plan for Phasing Out Mercury-Added Products, Managing Mercury Waste, and Understanding the Role of Customs and Available Resources for Implementing the Minamata Convention

Following the lunch break, Ms. Ashley Bastiansz, BRI, organized a practical exercise for participants adapted from a checklist developed in 2017 by the European Environmental Bureau/Zero Mercury Working Group (EEB/ZMWG) product project team. Ms. Bastiansz divided participants into four groups, with each group intentionally composed of representatives from all participating agencies to form collaborative inter-agency teams. This practical exercise focused on developing a national action plan for phasing out MAPs and management of mercury waste. The participants outlined a list of present challenges with developing an action plan, beginning with stakeholder engagement that stems from lack of foundational structures, such as the absence of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), as well as limited appropriate personnel and technical expertise. They also listed insufficient data to support identified gaps, lack of funding, and inadequate designated storage for mercury, mercury compounds and MAPs, and laboratory equipment for analysis. Furthermore, no personnel in Palau are currently trained in the relevant areas of handling mercury and identifying the appropriate individuals/agencies remains difficult due to limited awareness of the issue. To address these challenges, proposed actions included hiring technical expertise, reaching out to local donors and partners, developing clear definitions and standardized processes, creating and implementing training programs, strengthening monitoring and enforcement capacity, and launching education and awareness campaigns.

For the proposed draft national action plan, participants identified the EQPB and PSWM as the lead agencies for each phase as well as a ~1 month to ~1 year timeframe for successful implementation. Participants responses to phases in the draft national action plan exercise were listed as follows:

A. **Institutional**: Identify key stakeholders, initiate an introductory meeting outlining the roles for each agency.
B. **Legislative**: Present plan to Palau National Congress (OEK) to create policies for approval and

implementation through funding and national support.

C. **Infrastructure**: Identify a storage space and equip personnel with the adequate training to manage the space.
D. **Data**: Define measurable data and create a standard operation procedure (SOP) for implementation.
E. **Capacity Building**: Training to build capacity from external experts in the field.
F. **Public Awareness**: Design resources to education leadership, vendors, users and schools.

After the practical exercise discussion, Ms. Anna Kobylecka, WCO, virtually presented on understanding the Minamata Convention and tools available for implementation. Ms. Kobylecka began her presentation by emphasizing the critical role Customs agencies plays in supporting the Minamata Convention and related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), particularly at borders where trade is monitored and regulated. Ms. Kobylecka explained that only 15 of about 250 MEAs contain trade-related measures such as bans, prior informed consent, and phase-outs, and expressed that Customs must be well-versed in these provisions—especially those in the Minamata Convention, including Articles 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11. She called attention to the importance of accurate HS code classification to prevent mislabeling—intentional or accidental—and noted Customs should coordinate with environmental agencies for safe storage and disposal, as these responsibilities fall outside Customs agencies direct expertise. The Basel Convention "take-back" procedure was also highlighted, reinforcing that the country of export bears responsibility for illegal shipments.

During the discussion period, a question was raised to Ms. Kobylecka regarding how Palau should handle mercury waste if it lacks the capacity to manage it locally. In response, Ms. Kobylecka explained that under the Minamata Convention, the legal export of mercury waste for environmentally sound management is permitted with the appropriate authorizations. However, she recommended that Palau's environmental agency should lead the efforts to facilitate and oversee such exports given their knowledge and experience.

Quantifying Atmospheric Mercury through Manual Active Sampling Methods

AIT presented a recorded video highlighting the importance of atmospheric mercury monitoring for assessing environmental exposure and pollution risks. The video explained the three primary methods used

for mercury sampling: automated active sampling, passive sampling, and manual active sampling. Each method has distinct advantages and is suited to different goals, timeframes, and available resources. As confirmed by the EQPB, Palau currently employs the passive sampling method.

The video primarily focused on manual active sampling, emphasizing its cost-effectiveness and portability compared to automated systems. Manual active sampling involves pumping air through a soda lime trap to remove interferences, then passing it through a gold amalgamation cartridge that captures mercury. The collected mercury forms a stable gold amalgam, which can be safely stored and later analyzed in the laboratory. This method typically operates over a 24-hour period, using inexpensive, reusable equipment such as a low-flow pump (~0.5 L/min), making it well-suited for short-term surveys and emergency monitoring, especially in remote or resource-limited settings.

Unlike automated systems, which provide continuous, high-resolution, and speciated data but require costly equipment and skilled operators, manual active sampling strikes a balance between reliability and practicality. The video highlighted the critical role of atmospheric mercury testing in expanding monitoring efforts and supporting informed environmental health decisions in affected regions.

Cross-Agency Collaboration in Mercury Trade Enforcement

The last presentation of the workshop was led by Ms. Ashley Bastiansz, BRI, who focused on the importance of cross-agency collaboration and Customs agencies critical told in ensuring compliance with both national and international regulations by preventing illegal trade. Ms. Bastiansz touched upon the key challenges associated with enforcement of trade regulations as well as the roles and responsibilities of key enforcement stakeholders (i.e., Customs agencies, environmental authorities, law enforcement, health authorities, judiciary and prosecutors, trade ministries, international partners). To strengthen inter-agency coordination, Ms. Bastiansz emphasized that a structured and secure communication framework is essential, which includes establishing designated communication channels and secure platforms to enable real-time information exchange. Standardized templates—such as seizure reports and risk alerts—and shared databases should be used to centralize data on flagged traders, suspicious shipment routes, and permit histories. Regular coordination mechanisms, including scheduled meetings, briefings, and joint

situation reporting, help align efforts and contribute to building comprehensive risk profiles. Real-time alerts and intelligence sharing are critical for immediate responses to suspicious activities. Ms. Bastiansz stressed that to maintain trust and legal compliance, all data sharing must be governed by strict data protection protocols and confidentiality measures, in addition to appointing focal points within each agency ensures streamlined communication and accountability across the network. Ms. Bastiansz followed this information by underlying the need for and essential elements of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as a strategic tool for planning, inspection and a centralized reference. She discussed efforts to monitoring, compliance and enforcement as the Palau MIA recommended that mercury management coordination be formally established with the EQPB acting as the Chair. Although barriers to effective collaboration exist, including as Ms. Bastiansz mentioned, budget constraints, low public awareness and limited expertise in this field, she also followed up with recommendations to strengthening collaboration that included creating national enforcement plans for mercury trade and providing dedicated funding for joint operations and technology upgrades. Ms. Bastiansz concluded with referencing the Standard Operating Procedures for controls of waste shipments (2024) published by the WCO to aid enforcement plans.

During the discussion period after Ms. Bastiansz's presentation, a participant raised concerns about the lack of funding and over delegating additional work to the same agencies. Ms. Bastiansz noted the comments down and expressed that she would reach out to them with additional resources to address these comments.

Summary of Opportunities for Collaboration and Closing Remarks

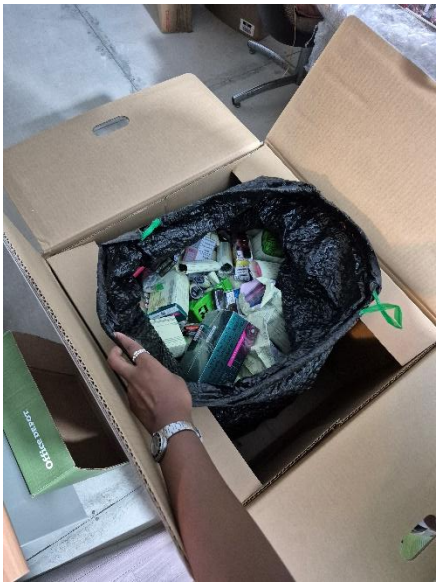
To close off the workshop, final takeaways and remarks were shared by participants. Palau Customs representatives noted that the workshop was important in understanding the context of the issues of mercury in addition to monitoring mercury trade. EQPB and Customs authorities brought up the issue of space for storage and tools for disposal of prohibited items including electronic vapes and cigarettes as they are currently being stored in the Customs office. Participants also mentioned the lack of funding and laboratory equipment for testing hazardous products, more specifically products containing mercury at the border. Lastly, Customs representatives emphasized the difficulty with sending back prohibited items to the respective countries

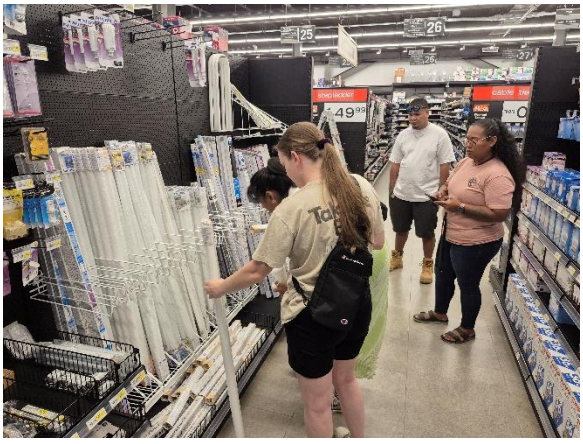
or companies as exporters in the past have claimed these products to be counterfeit. Ms. Bastiansz noted these concerns down in hopes of providing future solutions. Ms. Bastiansz also mentioned that this workshop is just one aspect of the coordinated effort between the "Project for promoting the Minamata Convention on Mercury by making the most of Japan's knowledge and experiences to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention" and the project, "Eliminating Mercury Skin Lightening Products" with supporting online webinars being held between June – August to exchange information on different topics related to mercury trade. Further reports and guidelines on managing trade of mercury-added skin lightening products will be shared later in the year.

The meeting was closed with thanks to all participants for their engagement and support in phasing out mercury.

Half Day Field Visit

After the meeting concluded, EQPB organized a half day field visit the following day (18 July 2025) for colleagues from AIT (Mr. Bishal Bhari) and BRI (Ms. Ashley Bastiansz and Mr. Cassie Gilham) to visit the main landfill in Palau, then to a supermarket to evaluate existing MAPs being sold in Palau, as well as the BCBP office. While at the supermarket (Surangels 9G76+824, Airai) in Palau, colleagues from BRI identified many compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) containing mercury including some CFLs that did not have any surrounding packaging material. Skin-lightening products were also purchased at this supermarket by BRI for further mercury testing as mercury was not listed as an active ingredient. At the landfill, there was no dedicated facility for the storage of mercury, mercury compounds, or MAPs. As a result, consumers—whether knowingly or unknowingly—are disposing of mercury-containing waste alongside general waste. Although a small bin was available for battery collection, there is currently no designated method or location for their proper disposal. Alternatively, there is a program in place led by EQPB for vehicle batteries waste, where vehicle batteries are exported for proper disposal. A key ongoing issue is the storage and disposal of electronic cigarettes and vapes at the BCPB office. Currently, these products are kept in workspaces, which not only strains limited office space but also exposes staff to potentially harmful fumes. BCBP and EQPB are seeking an alternative site to store these devices, along with additional existing and future confiscated mercury and MAPs.





Annex 1- Meeting Agenda

National Training on Strengthening Country-Level Inter-Agency Coordination on Trade of Mercury

Date: Thursday 17 July 2025

Venue: West Plaza Hotel at Lebuu Steet, Koror, Palau

Tentative Programme Agenda

Background and Objectives

Mercury remains a major environmental and public health threat, with illegal trade continuing to challenge enforcement efforts across the region. Despite international regulatory frameworks, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury, gaps in policy implementation, border control, and intelligence-sharing allow mercury smuggling to persist. The Asian region serves as both a transit hub and an end market, particularly for artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), which accounts for the largest source of global mercury emissions[1]. Mercury-added cosmetics (mainly skin lightening products) are also prevalent across the region. Lack of information, weak enforcement and informal supply chains exacerbate these challenges, exposing vulnerable populations to severe health risks.

The Minamata Convention mandates signatory countries to regulate mercury trade (Article 3), phase out mercury-added products [including mercury-added skin lightening products] (Article 4), and control emissions among other obligations. However, many nations across the region lack systematic trade monitoring mechanisms, making it difficult to track illegal flows and enforce compliance. Strengthening customs enforcement, forensic detection, and inter-agency coordination is critical to tackling mercury smuggling.

[1] Global mercury assessment | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

Effective mercury trade enforcement requires tailored national strategies that align with each country's regulatory and operational context. This in-country training focuses on practical, hands-on exercises to enhance coordination among customs officers, environmental regulators, and law enforcement authorities. Strengthening inter-agency collaboration is essential for detecting, monitoring, and preventing illicit mercury trade, which remains a persistent challenge.

This initiative aims to equip national enforcement agencies with the technical skills and enforcement tools necessary to combat mercury smuggling. By integrating regional collaboration with country-specific training, the program fosters a comprehensive enforcement network, enhancing national and cross-border cooperation to improve compliance with the Minamata Convention and other trade regulations.

Objectives

1. Build country-specific enforcement capacity through hands-on training.
2. Improve coordination between national agencies to close enforcement gaps.
3. Train officers in forensic detection and risk assessment for mercury shipments.
4. Initiate a national action plan for mercury trade control.

Expected Outcomes

1. Strengthened inter-agency coordination for mercury trade enforcement.
2. Improved capacity of national authorities to detect and prevent illicit mercury trade.
3. Standardized procedures for customs and law enforcement authorities.
4. Initiation of country-specific action plans and policy recommendations.
5. Gather up to date information on mercury trade data and national challenges.

Tentative Agenda

Thursday 17 July 2025 **(UTC+9 Time zone)**		
8:30-9:00	**Registration** – housekeeping announcements.	Bishal Bhari, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)
Session 1: **Day 1: Strengthening National Enforcement Mechanisms**(9:30 – 12:30)		
9:00 – 9:20	**Opening remarks**	Mr. Michael Blesam, Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) Dr. Guilberto Borongan, AIT
9:20 – 9:40	**Introduction of Participants, Group Photo and Short Break**	All
9:40 – 10:00	• Objectives, expected outcomes, and schedule of the training. • Introduction of the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)	Ashley Bastiansz and Cassie Gilham, BRI
10:00 – 10:20	Status of Mercury in Palau based on the Minamata Initial Assessment and Overview of Minamata Convention Obligations Regarding Trade and Waste Management	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
10:20 – 10:35	Implementation of the Minamata Convention in Palau	Mr. Michael Blesam, EQPB
10:35 – 10:50	Existing National Customs Capacity for Identifying/Confiscating and Exporting Hazardous Substances	Mr. Vaughn Kyota Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP)
10:50 – 11:05	Existing National Management (Handling, Storage and Disposal) of Hazardous Waste	Ms. Jessica Emesiochel, Division of Solid Waste Management (DSWM)
11:05 – 11:25	Mercury Mass Flow in Palau	Kyaw Nyunt Maung, UNEP-*virtual*
11:25 – 12:15	Mercury Impacts on the Environment, the Importance of Mercury Biomonitoring in Palau and the Pacific Region - Discussion and Practical Hair Sampling Exercise	Cassie Gilham and Ashley Bastiansz, BRI

12:15 – 12:30	Tools to Enhance Mercury Trade Management: Identifying Mercury-added Products	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
12:30 – 13:30	***Lunch***	
13:30 – 14:35	Practical Exercise: Developing a National Action Plan for Phasing out Mercury-Added Products and Management of Mercury Waste	Facilitator: Ashley Bastiansz, BRI All participants Note-takers: Cassie Gilham, BRI and AIT
14:35 – 14:55	Understanding the role of Customs and the available resources for enhancing implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/other environmental agreements	Anna Kobylecka, World Customs Organization (WCO)- *virtual*
14:55 – 15:15	**Short Break**	
15:15 – 15:45	Atmospheric Survey and Analysis (Manual Active Sampling Method)	AIT
15:45 – 16:00	Cross-Agency Collaboration in Mercury Trade Enforcement	Ashley Bastiansz, BRI
16:00 – 16:20	Wrap up of Discussions and Closing Remarks	BRI and all participants.

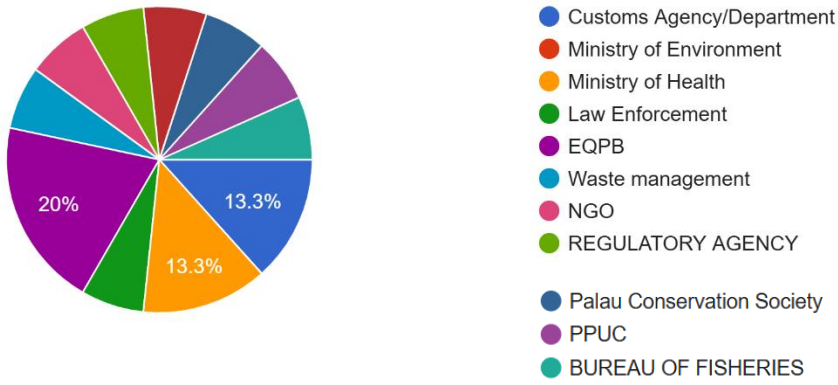
Half Day Field Visit is scheduled for 18 July 2025 with BRI, AIT and EQPB

Annex 2 – Post-Training Survey

Post-training Survey – Responses from 15 Participants

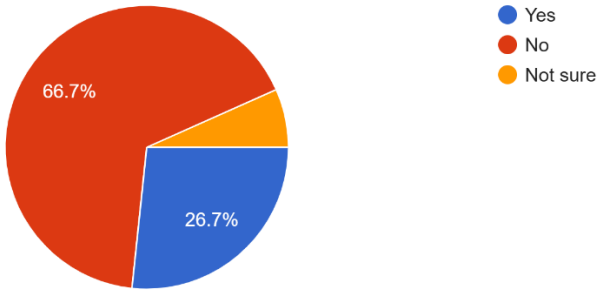
Which organization/agency are you affiliated with?

15 responses



Prior to this workshop, have you ever received any mercury training or do you have prior understanding of the issues related to mercury, ...compounds or the Minamata Convention on Mercury?

15 responses



1. **What session(s) did you take the most interest in from the workshop's discussions?**

Participants showed strong interest in a wide range of sessions, with many highlighting all topics as valuable. Specific areas of interest included mercury-added products, health and environmental impacts of mercury, disposal methods, mercury biomonitoring in Palau and the Pacific region, atmospheric surveys, mercury mass flow in Palau, and understanding roles and action plans related to mercury management.

2. **Were there any topics discussed that you would have like to get further information on?**

Participants expressed interest in gaining further information on topics such as proper disposal of amalgam mercury in clinics, identification and disposal of mercury, successful international models for phasing out mercury-added products (MAPs), mercury in skin lightening products, and

the current status of mercury in Palau. Additional suggestions included more training and insights into cross-agency collaboration in mercury trade enforcement.

3. **Were there any topics NOT discussed today that you would have like to get more information on?**

Some participants indicated no additional topics were needed, while others expressed interest in data availability, identifying mercury-added products (MAPs), understanding products containing mercury, and learning about current gaps and next steps for effective implementation.

4. **How would you rate the overall experience of the workshop?**

Participants rated the overall experience of the workshop 4.20 out of 5.

5. **Please provide any further feedback on how we could improve the workshop and recommendations for future potential workshops.**

Participants generally found the workshop valuable and praised the knowledgeable moderators. Suggestions for improvement included offering more practical activities, extending the session duration to allow deeper discussions, and providing more introductory information on mercury for those less familiar. Some noted the content was dense for participants not directly involved in enforcement or regulation, and recommended clarifying roles and responsibilities across sectors. There was also interest in holding similar workshops in the future, inviting the same agencies and individuals to continue building capacity.

Annex 3- List of Participants

	Name	Country	Organization/Ministry
Participants			
1	Alzena Fleetwood	Palau	EQPB
2	Aloma Osima	Palau	BOE-MAFE
3	Bachat Arsenio	Palau	KSG-SWM
4	Antonette Tengeluk	Palau	MHTS Oral Health
5	Daemi Ngirmidol	Palau	BOF/MAFE
6	Kayleen Mario	Palau	Oral Health
7	Selly Etibek	Palau	KSG-SWM
8	Dan Carlo Carolino	Palau	EQPB
9	Darnelle Worswick	Palau	MHHS
10	Charley Simeon	Palau	MHHS
11	Albert Philip	Palau	PPUC
12	Naveen K Rejeti	Palau	ADB/PPUC
13	Sylvia Tmodrang	Palau	DEH
14	Vaughn Kyota	Palau	Customs
15	Harlen N Herman	Palau	BOF
16	Olefil Yacel	Palau	EQPB
17	Herbie Ngirasol	Palau	EQPB

18	Etison Sadang Jr	Palau		BCBP
19	Darwin Florencio	Palau		EQPB
20	Clint Nakamura	Palau		MHHS
21	Mayer Julius	Palau		BCBP
22	Jessica Emesochol	Palau		DSWM-PPOW
23	Kliu Basilius	Palau		EQPB
24	Haque Blesam	Palau		BCBP
25	Heather Ketebengang	Palau		PCS
26	Michael Blesam	Palau		EQPB
27	Bridget Adachi	Palau		PCS
Name		**Country**	**Position**	**Organization**
Organizers, Partners, and Resource Speakers both in person and virtual				
28	Ms. Cassie Gilham	USA	Toxicology Lab Specialist	Biodiversity Research Institute
29	Ms. Ashley Bastiansz	Canada	International Environmental Specialist	Biodiversity Research Institute
30	Dr. Guilberto Borongan	Philippines	Director	Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific Asian Institute of Technology
31	Mr. Bishal Bhari	Nepal	Programme Officer	Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific Asian Institute of Technology
32	Ms. Anna Ewa Kobylecka	Poland	Technical Officer	World Customs Organization
33	Dr. Kyaw Nyunt Maung	Myanmar	Data Analyst	United Nations Environment Programme

Annex 4 – Presentations and Supporting Information

All meeting presentations and supporting information is available at the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F_gV7CPmlzLZxlKSVIL3-h7KiG5N8CoQ