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Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy

Male', Republic of Maldives

Press release:

Maldives Joins the Minamata Convention on Mercury

The Maldives has officially joined the Minamata Convention on Mercury, following a decisive move by President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu. This decision was made after careful consideration by the parliament, which reviewed the proposals submitted by the Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy to join the convention.

The Maldives will be joining 149 other countries in acceding to this convention. The Minamata Convention, which came into force in 2017 under the United Nations Environment Programme, aims to protect human health and the environment from the dangers posed by mercury and its compounds. The convention regulates the entire lifecycle of mercury, including its supply, trade, usage, emissions, releases, storage, and waste management.

While artisanal and small-scale gold mining is the largest source of mercury emissions globally—a sector not present in the Maldives—the country faces other significant sources of mercury contamination. These include open burning of waste and the disposal of mercury-containing products. Common imported items that may contain mercury include batteries, fluorescent lamps, skin whitening cosmetics, pesticides, thermometers, and dental amalgams.

Under the convention, Maldives is obligated to identify mercury-containing products and phase them out, ensuring their environmentally sound disposal. Following accession, the Maldives can also access funding to support these initiatives, with the Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy serving as the focal point for implementation.

In 2019, the Ministry published the Minamata Initial Assessment, which identified the status, challenges, and regulatory framework necessary for effective mercury management in the Maldives. With the generous support from the Government of Japan, the Ministry continues to monitor ambient mercury levels in the air as well. Additionally, under the guidance of the United Nations Environment Programme's Mercury project, the Ministry is conducting the first studies to assess the extent of mercury exposure among the Maldivian population.

Historically, human activities have released hundreds of thousands of tonnes of mercury into the environment, significantly polluting the atmosphere and oceans. This highly toxic and persistent pollutant disrupts ecosystems and poses serious health risks, particularly to infants and unborn children. At elevated exposure levels, mercury can lead to debilitating health effects or even be fatal. The World Health Organization lists mercury among the top ten chemicals of major public health concern.

The Maldives' accession to the Minamata Convention is a significant step toward mitigating the harmful impacts of mercury on both the environment and public health. The government



remains committed to implementing effective strategies to safeguard the health of its citizens and preserve its unique ecosystems.