

Dallas, 13 June 2000

COUNCIL RESOLUTION: 00-06

Adoption of the Phase II North American Regional Action Plan on Mercury

THE COUNCIL:

ACKNOWLEDGING the direction provided by Resolution 95-05 on the Sound Management of Chemicals;

RECOGNIZING that atmospheric emissions of mercury can be transported by air currents across national boundaries;

AWARE that mercury is a neurotoxin which can and has adversely impacted human populations and ecosystems within North America and elsewhere;

CONCERNED that North Americans who frequently consume fish, especially women of childbearing age, may be exposed to dangerous levels of toxic methyl mercury compounds;

FURTHER CONCERNED that fetuses and children are more susceptible to harmful effects of mercury and its compounds at lower concentrations than adults;

NOTING that there is recent scientific evidence indicating that the viability of some predator species is compromised by consumption of mercury-contaminated fish;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that the most effective and efficient means of reducing mercury releases may include pollution prevention and control initiatives for emissions of other pollutants;

ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING that while mercury is a natural constituent of the earth's crust, atmospheric emissions of mercury from human activity have increased globally two- to five-fold over the last century;

AWARE that deposition of mercury in North America originating elsewhere is not under the control of the countries of North America;

ALSO AWARE of the need to set an example in the sound management of mercury globally—given that anthropogenic sources of mercury from other nations contribute to the global pool and to deposition of mercury within North America, and that emissions of mercury within North America also contribute to the global circulation and deposition of mercury; and

BUILDING on significant reductions of mercury releases resulting from initiatives already underway in North America, and on the exchange of regional and global perspectives related to international activities on mercury;

HEREBY:

1. ADOPTS the Phase II North American Regional Action Plan on mercury and recommends that the Parties undertake, as soon as possible, the actions set out therein aimed at reducing mercury releases from human activities, with the goal of approaching naturally occurring levels of mercury in North America; and
2. DIRECTS the Sound Management of Chemicals Working Group to work with the Council, the Secretariat and the Joint Public Advisory Committee in undertaking, as soon as possible, the actions assigned to it in the action plan, placing initial priority on the following, in recognition of their importance for the protection of human health and the environment:
 - Action 4e, v) pertaining to development of a North American inventory, including sites where elevated levels of mercury may occur;
 - Action 1a, iii) pertaining to collaboration with other regional jurisdictions in North America, regarding evaluation of and recommendations for efficient/effective atmospheric reduction protocols and ensuring that recommended control technologies promote significant reduction of a range of other pollutants;
 - Action 3a, iv) pertaining to a review of national reporting mechanisms used to track the ultimate fate of mercury-containing wastes within North America, particularly waste transported across national boundaries for storage, handling, processing, disposal or long-term containment and recommendations for improving these mechanisms;
 - Action 6a, iii) pertaining to public reporting to the Council on progress in implementing commitments;
 - Action 5, pertaining to communication activities, in terms of their advancement of Action 3 of the Phase I North American Regional Action Plan on mercury, the development of an Information and Communications Clearinghouse and, specifically, their implementation of the Phase II plan; Action 5a) development of a trinational communications strategy for informing the public of how to reduce risks of and exposure to mercury and building capacity to develop outreach programs and communicating the regional action plan to the public in North America; Action 5b, i) establishment of mechanisms for sharing success stories; and Action 5c) generating a recycling directory database of enterprises (for near- and mid-term handling of mercury recovered from products); and

- Action 4b, coordinating implementation of this Phase II North American Regional Action Plan on mercury with the development and implementation of the action plan on environmental monitoring and assessment that was mandated in June 1999 (Council Resolution 99-02) and is now being developed;

3. FURTHER DIRECTS the Sound Management of Chemicals Working Group, as part of the North American Agenda on Children's Health and the Environment, to identify and accelerate actions that could support the elimination of harmful exposures of children to mercury.

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL:

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