



Office of the Minister of State for Ecology

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PRESS RELEASE

French Presidency of the Council of the European Union Council of the environment ministers



Adoption of a roadmap to better regulate the mercury market Brussels – 4 December 2008

The EU roadmap was adopted at the morning session of the Council of EU environment ministers, presided over by Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, ahead of the international negotiations on mercury, which will take place within the framework of the 25th Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The dangers presented by mercury for human health and the environment are now internationally recognised. High doses of mercury can prove fatal for human beings; relatively low doses can have serious consequences on neurological development, and have recently given reason to suspect their toxic effects on the body's cardiovascular, immune and reproductive systems.

Since the last session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in February 2007, work has begun to examine the additional measures to be taken at international level to prevent mercury-related risks. At the next Governing Council session in February 2009, a draft decision authorising the implementation of these measures will be referred to the Party States.

The Council of the environment ministers has decided it is an opportune time for the European Union to draw up a multilateral agreement for the environment covering mercury. The European Union insists on the agreement factoring in the whole mercury cycle, and potentially including the priority areas identified by UNEP. The European Union recognises the technical and financial assistance requirements of non-developed countries and believes that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the appropriate instrument to respond to them, within its mandate.

The European Community, within the framework of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, is particularly mobilised with a view to obtaining this international-level agreement, in order to reduce the exposure to mercury and thereby prevent the compound's harmful effects on humanity and the environment.

Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet underlined that *“The fight against the dangers of mercury is a key challenge for health and the environment. Given the strong commitments made today, I am convinced that together we can improve the state of health of our children and that of future generations”*.

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