



Mercury Pollution and Minamata Convention

MERCURY POLLUTION AND MINAMATA CONVENTION

Mercury

- Symbol - Hg; Atomic No - 80
- Naturally occurring element (rocks in earth's crust, deposits of coal),
- Toxic effects on nervous, digestive and immune systems, lungs, kidneys etc.
- One of the top 10 chemicals/groups of chemicals of major public health concern (WHO)

Methylmercury vs Ethylmercury

- Methylmercury (MeHg) is linked to health issues
- Ethylmercury is utilized as a preservative in some vaccines

MERCURY POLLUTION

Sources

- Volcanic eruption and weathering of rocks
- Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) (major source)
- Industrial processes (chlorine production, cement manufacturing etc)
- Improper disposal of e-waste (fluorescent bulbs and batteries)

Impact:

- MeHg accumulates in aquatic organisms (later consumed by humans)
- MeHg carries a higher risk of causing Minamata disease (neurological symptoms)

MINAMATA CONVENTION

Objective

- Protect human health and environment from adverse effects of Hg and its compounds
- Controlling anthropogenic releases of Hg throughout its lifecycle (key obligation)

Agreed at

- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (5th session), Geneva, Switzerland (2013)

Covers Control on

- Mercury mining
- Manufacture/trade of Hg and related products
- Disposal of Hg waste
- Emissions of Hg from industrial facilities

Members

- 144 parties (India has ratified)
- Member countries bound to put the above controls in place



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