



# Utilizing Minamata Resources for Contributing to the Minamata Convention on Mercury

To Prevent  
Global Mercury  
Pollution

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# Outline of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

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The Minamata Convention on Mercury is an international legal instrument on mercury management adopted at the Diplomatic Conference held in Kumamoto and Minamata in October 2013. The Minamata Convention comprehensively regulates the entire life cycle of mercury from mining, trade, use, emissions, release, and through to disposal.

Mercury is the only metallic element that is in liquid form at room temperature (20°C). It is highly volatile, and once released from various sources, it does not decompose and circulates globally. While the amount of mercury used in developed countries is decreasing, it is still widely used in developing countries. Owing to its high risk of environmental pollution and damage to health, global efforts need to be made against

mercury contamination. Under such circumstances, the momentum to promote mercury management rose globally, and eventually lead to the adoption of the Convention.

The Convention is named after the Japanese city, Minamata, similar to the Kyoto Protocol for climate change and Nagoya Protocol for biodiversity conservation, and expresses the determination not to repeat a tragic event like Minamata disease ever again.

The Convention entered into force in August 2017, and the international framework of mercury management is now underway. Japan enacted the Act on Preventing Environmental Pollution of Mercury, amended other relevant laws and regulations, and concluded the Minamata Convention in February 2016.

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## Diplomatic Conference held in Kumamoto City and Minamata City

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The Governing Council of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) adopted the decision that establishes a legally-binding instrument for mercury management by 2013. After the series of intergovernmental negotiations, the convention text was

finally adopted at the Diplomatic Conference on the Minamata Convention held in October 2013. Over 1000 participants from approx. 140 countries and regions, including over 60 cabinet-level participants, international organizations, NGOs, etc. attended the Conference.



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## Japan's response to the Minamata Convention

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Japan promulgated the Act on Preventing Environmental Pollution of Mercury and amended the Air Pollution Control Act and Order for Enforcement of Waste Management and Public Cleansing Act, etc. which included regulations beyond the level required by the

Convention. In consideration of available advanced alternatives and mercury-reduction technologies in Japan, more stringent mercury content thresholds or earlier phase-out dates were introduced.



## Past Events in Minamata

### Minamata Eco-Park (Environmental restoration)

As the residual presence of mercury in bottom sediment in Minamata Bay could cause contamination of water, fish and shellfish, environmental restoration work to remove bottom sediment was conducted. The reclaimed area formed through dredging and hauling of the bottom sediment, namely the Minamata Eco-Park, provides green parks with flowers a seaside promenade, roadside station, Japanese garden, and other attractions.



### Minamata disease

Minamata disease, which was officially acknowledged in 1956, is a toxic nervous disorder that occurred in and around Minamata Bay in Kumamoto Prefecture, and was caused by ingesting fish and shellfish contaminated with methylmercury compounds discharged from a chemical plant. The same disease was also acknowledged in the Agano River Basin in Niigata Prefecture in 1965. Minamata disease was an environmental pollution unprecedented in Japanese history in terms of its extent, the seriousness of damage to health, and the environmental destruction caused by the anthropogenic contaminants. It also left long-term and significantly negative impacts on society across the region.



### Moyai-naoshi (Social reconciliation)

National and local governments, Minamata disease supporting organizations, and local residents collaboratively implement an initiative called the 'moyai-naoshi'\* to reconcile society and regenerate community bonds by examining the issues of Minamata disease, and hold memorial services for the victims among other activities.

\* The Japanese term 'moyai' literally means a bowline rope connecting boats together. It also refers to cooperative activity in local communities.



# Current initiatives in Minamata

## National Institute for Minamata Disease

The National Institute for Minamata Disease (NIMD) is the only organization in the world that specializes in comprehensive mercury research and has accumulated a significant amount of mercury-related knowledge as well as analytical technologies and research outcomes. As the WHO Collaboration Center, NIMD conducts dissemination of information on mercury and Minamata disease via its information center, Minamata Disease Archives, and the training programs it provides, hoping that such information will help people around the world learn from Japan's experiences. NIMD is also engaged in surveys and research to assess exposure to mercury and to prevent its impact in countries suffering from environmental pollution by mercury.



## MOYAI Initiative

At the Diplomatic Conference, Japan announced the 'MOYAI Initiative', activities to support developing countries and to promote the dissemination and exchange of information from Minamata. To encourage developing countries to ratify and implement the Convention, Japan disseminates information that contributes to the implementation from Minamata to the world.

## Introduction of Japan's mercury management technologies

Pupils and students in Minamata City visited facilities and learned about advanced mercury management technologies, and produced videos introducing their outline in plain language. The videos are projected during the Minamata Convention COPs. They will also provide references for applications of the technologies as well as educational materials for awareness raising.



## Tumbler search

Tumblers, distributed to the participants of the Diplomatic Conference of the Minamata Convention held in Kumamoto and Minamata in 2013, contained pictures painted by the children in Kumamoto and Minamata. Ministry of the Environment (MOEJ) called for those who still possessed the tumblers to take a photo indicating the names of the painters written on the pictures and to e-mail MOEJ to find the painters. A few pairs of DipCon participants and local children have been successfully matched .

## Minamata Environmental Academia

Minamata Environmental Academia is a central facility for higher education and research, and collaboration among industry, academia, government and the public established in 2016. Through standardizing and systematizing the knowledge, wisdom, and lessons of Minamata, the Academia provides meaningful learning in Minamata for people from all over the world. Moreover, it creates opportunities to know, to think, and to learn from each other, connecting visitors to local residents. Through these actions, the Academia's mission is to become a center of sustainable development education and to contribute to a sustainable future, on both local and global scales.



## Minamata High School (Super Global High School)

Minamata High School has been designated as a Super Global High School (SGH) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology since 2016 (for five years). The SGH is a project for developing global leaders working in the world. The activities are undertaken by the students for deepening the insights into issues ranging from Minamata disease to the global environment.

## Environmental Model City

Minamata City was the first city to declare an Environmental Model City plan in 1992. Since then, the city has promoted waste segregation, establishing a unique Minamata environmental ISO policy, among other initiatives in collaboration with residents. The city will further strengthen its current environmental policies and promote its efforts towards achieving the SDGs, aiming to realize a sustainable society where both environmental conservation and the development of local industries can exist together.



## Co-benefit approach

The term 'Co-benefit' means an environmental activity for climate change that also contributes to mercury management at the same time. The following are some co-benefit examples in the Minamata region:

- Small-scale hydropower is one of the renewable energy sources contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and if it substitutes coal-fired power stations, it will contribute to the reduction of mercury emissions.
- Fluorescent lamps contain trace amounts of mercury, while LED lamps do not. LED lamps provide highly efficient and energy-saving lighting, which will be fully used in the new Minamata City Hall building.
- It is important to segregate mercury-containing products from the combustible waste stream in order to prevent mercury emissions into the atmosphere during incineration. Minamata City segregates waste into as many as 22 categories, including hazardous waste such as mercury.

# Communication from Minamata for the future

# Communication and exchanges from Minamata

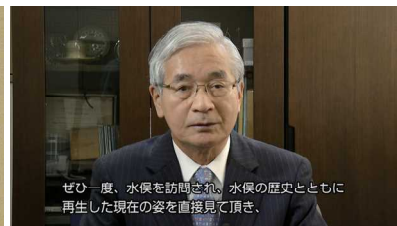
## Messages from Minamata to the world

The wishes of residents who promote progress of the Minamata Convention are conveyed during the COPs or other occasions through video letters, posters, etc. At COP1 held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2017, a special event, the 'Moment to Minamata', was organized, in which the Mayor of Minamata, a Minamata disease patient and a high school student who was appointed as the goodwill ambassador to the Convention by Ministry of the Environment directly called for the promotion of the Convention.

Notes) COP: Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention, INC: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee



COP Chair receiving a pair of kokeshi dolls of prayer crafted by a Minamata disease patient



A video letter from Minamata



An INC participant returning his message to the banner carrying many messages written by the junior high school students of Minamata



Goodwill ambassador to the Minamata Convention (a high school student) handing over a work of shodo calligraphy that reads "Minamata" to the President of Switzerland

## Resources available in Minamata

### Conference facilities



**Minamata City Cultural Hall**  
Main hall (1000 seats)



**Moyai Hall**  
Hall, meeting rooms



**Minamata City Community Center**  
Hall, meeting rooms



**Orange Hall**  
Hall, meeting rooms



**Minamata Environmental Academia**  
Seminar rooms, research space



**Umi-to-Yuyake at Yunoko**  
Meeting space, accommodation



**Event Hall Arase**  
Meeting rooms, reception facility

## Activities in Minamata in collaboration with various organizations

### UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)

UNIDO, in collaboration with Ministry of the Environment and Minamata City, organized a Minamata visit program for foreign diplomats in embassies in Japan in November 2018. Twenty-one diplomats, including those at ambassador level, from 16 countries visited the facilities on Minamata disease and the environmental model city program in Minamata, and exchanged information with local businesses.



### USEPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency)

USEPA implements activities for strengthening mercury monitoring in the Asia-Pacific region. It held an international workshop on atmospheric mercury monitoring in Minamata in collaboration with the National Institute for Environmental Studies in November 2016.

In May 2016, the then Administrator of USEPA visited Minamata.





## Commemorative events for the Minamata Convention

Since the adoption of the Minamata Convention, Ministry of the Environment, Kumamoto Prefecture and Minamata City have co-organized events in Minamata. Events commemorating the adoption were held every October with local junior high school students until its entry into force, and another event commemorating the entry into force in 2017 with international participants. The events ‘Commemorative Fora for the Minamata Convention’ continue to inform residents about various activities related to the Minamata Convention in collaboration with Minamata City Education Board, Minamata High School, and other entities.



Participants of the 1st Anniversary Forum for the Adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury



Junior high school students introducing one of the mercury management technologies in collaboration with the technology holder company



INC Chair participating in the Celebrating Event for the Minamata Convention on Mercury

## Information facilities



**Minamata Disease Municipal Museum**  
Preservation and display of valuable documents and materials related to Minamata disease



**Minamata Disease Archives**  
Research, academic exchange, and preservation of materials on Minamata Disease



**Minamata Kugino Airinkan**  
Facility for village promotion based on ecology



**Kumamoto Prefectural Environmental Center**  
Provision of opportunities to learn about various environmental issues



**Hotto Hausu**  
Workspace for Minamata disease patients



**Minamata Disease Museum - Soshisha**  
Display of lawsuit-related materials and information

## UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

UNEP implements the Minamata Initial Assessment projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). UNEP held a joint workshop for Pakistan, the Philippines and Cambodia as a part of the activities in Minamata in May 2018.



## WHO (World Health Organization)

WHO supports the implementation of the health sector of the Convention. It organized a workshop on the implementation of the Convention for officers in the health ministries from member states of its West Pacific Regional Office, including Japan, in July 2017 in Minamata. Approx. 40 participants, including 20 government officers, from 18 countries, and international organizations, researchers, etc. participated in the workshop.



## JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)

JICA implements training programs on the implementation of the Minamata Convention for developing countries. In addition to the Convention and Japan's implementation policies, the participants learn about the history of Minamata disease and mercury management technologies.





## Scenery in Minamata



Yunoko Hot Spring



Mount Nakao Park



Terrace paddy at Samukawa community



Lover's Sanctuary



Orange Railway



Yunotsuru Hot Spring



Sunset scene at Shiranui Sea



Minamata Rose Garden



Seven waterfalls at Yude

Facility	Tel
Minamata Municipal Government	0966-63-1111
Minamata Disease Municipal Museum	0966-62-2621
Administration Office, Minamata Eco-Park	0966-62-7501
National Institute for Minamata Disease	0966-63-3111
Minamata Environmental Academia	0966-84-9711
Kumamoto Prefectural Minamata High School	0966-63-1285

Facility	Tel
Minamata Disease Archives	0966-69-2400
Kumamoto Prefectural Environmental Center	0966-62-2000
Minamata City Cultural Hall	0966-63-6000
Moyai Hall	0966-62-3120
Economic and Tourism Division, Tourism Promotion Office, Minamata City	0966-61-1629
Minamata Disease Museum - Soshisha	0966-63-5800

1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
100-8975, Japan  
<http://www.env.go.jp/en/chemi/mercury/mcm.html>



環境省  
Ministry of the Environment



1-1-1 Jinnai, Minamata, Kumamoto  
867-8555, Japan  
<http://www.city.minamata.lg.jp/Category10-0-0.html>



水俣市



古紙ハルブ配合率60%再生紙を使用  
Utilizing 60% post-consumer  
recycled paper pulp