

Address by the Chief Guest, Mr. Hameed Ullah Jan Afridi, Federal Minister for
Environment

Mr. Abid Ali, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) & SAICM National Focal Point
Dr. Mario Yarto, UNEP Chemicals Expert, Mexico
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel privileged and honoured to be here to inaugurate the Inception Workshop of National Stakeholders on "Management of Mercury and Mercury containing Waste Project in Pakistan" organized by the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Chemical Branch.

Government of Pakistan is fully committed to contribute towards the global efforts for the conservation of environment to ensure sustained life on the Earth Planet for our existing and future generations. In this regard, Pakistan is a signatory to a number of international conventions and protocols on various environmental issues especially hazardous chemicals which include Basel Convention, Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention, Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol.

Environment is one of the priority agendas of our Government. That is why the Government of Pakistan has declared 2009 as the National Year of Environment with a view to creating awareness among all stakeholders especially the members of the civil society at grass root level. I am glad to share with you that this is for the time in the environmental history of Pakistan that the Ministry of Environment has taken initiative with the support of the UNEP's Chemical Branch, Geneva to address the challenge of mitigation of Mercury. Mercury is globally recognized harmful chemical that has adverse impacts on human health particularly central nervous system, kidney and fetus.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This important workshop is aimed at focusing on the exchange of information with the national stakeholders to identify major mercury waste sources in various sectors in order to develop an effective and viable national mercury waste management plan. I assure you that Ministry of Environment is fully committed to replace the mercury based technology into environment friendly technology in Pakistan. Nevertheless, due to our technological constraints, it is not possible for us to address this gigantic challenge alone without the technical support and guidance from the UNEP and other relevant international agencies. I would like to mention here that the Ministry of Environment had organized a workshop on this issue at Islamabad in 2008 that brought together the national stakeholders including members of the civil society. There is a dire need to hold a series of awareness workshops and publish awareness material to sensitize the people on the hazards of mercury. I would, therefore, urge upon the funding agencies to explore feasibility of the allocation of maximum funds for mass awareness on this toxic chemical.

I wish and hope that the participants of the workshop will make useful recommendations through engaging themselves in discussions and deliberations to formulate a comprehensive policy on the Mercury Waste Project in Pakistan.

Thank you.

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