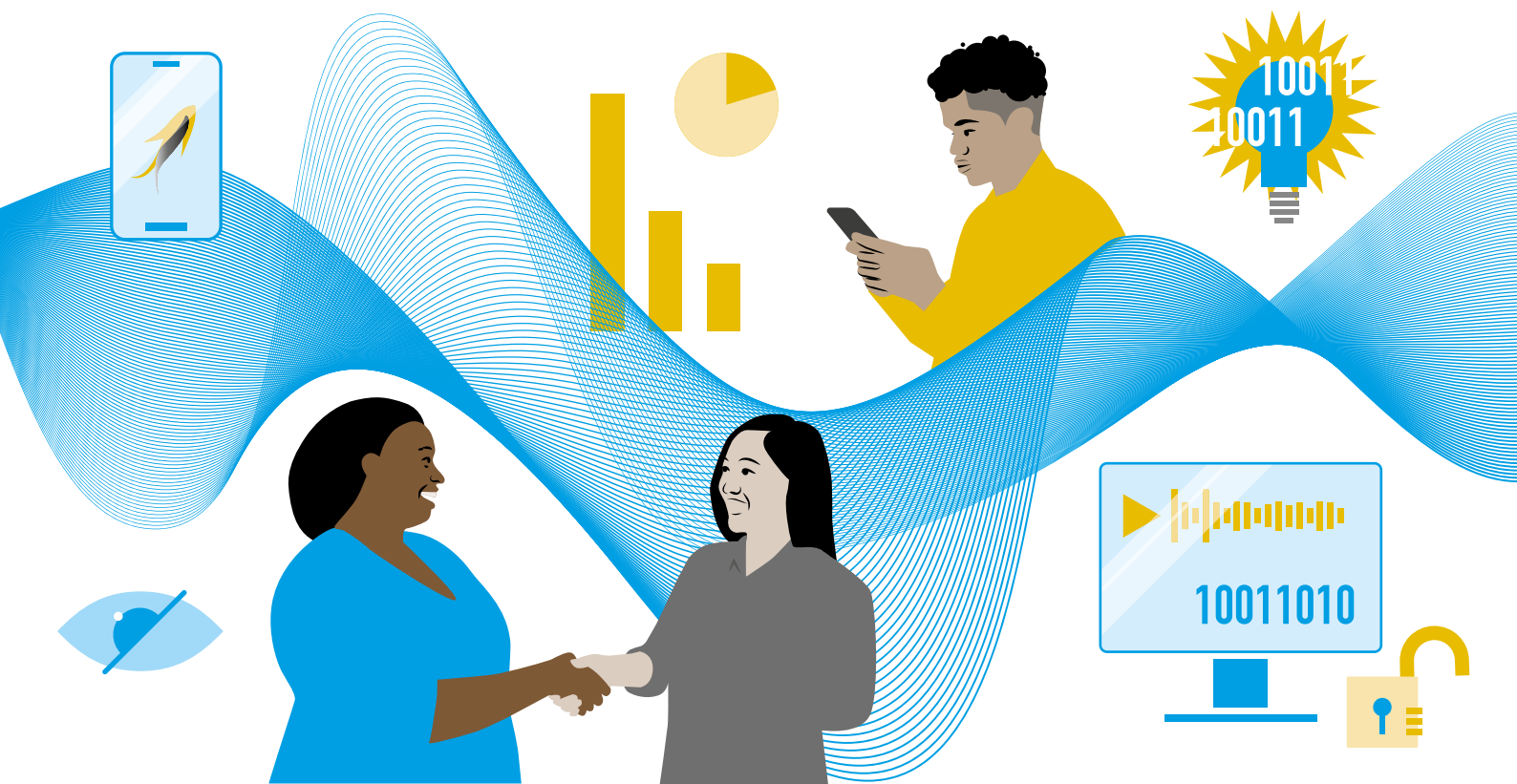


**MINAMATA
CONVENTION
ON MERCURY**

DIGITAL STRATEGY



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INTRODUCTION

A **digital strategy** is crucial in enabling the secretariat of the Minamata Convention to organize and direct its efforts to leverage technology and manage knowledge effectively, in order to achieve the Convention's objective of protecting human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. As the volume of information grows, **harnessing technological advancements becomes vital for streamlining knowledge management processes**. A digital strategy will help the secretariat to optimize its limited resources and direct them towards activities that yield the most significant impact. It will also empower the secretariat to harness shared experiences and capitalize on existing solutions, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and efficacy.

While technology can assist in knowledge management, it is not the main driver of action. The foundation of knowledge management lies in people who generate and share knowledge aligned with the organization's goals, with technology providing the tools that facilitate the process. A long-term vision is necessary to make digital solutions a catalytic force for change and progress and to ensure that our systems and work processes are appropriate and future-proof and enable the use of data and knowledge.

This digital strategy was developed in 2023 and presented to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It seeks to maintain and accelerate the momentum that has already been generated within the Minamata Convention secretariat and among its partners to enhance and strengthen its digital and knowledge management ecosystem. Many of the elements of the strategy are already in development, but it is necessary to continue developing them, along with new capacities, applying integrated digital approaches to generate a multiplier effect in supporting the parties to the Convention.

This strategy is in line with the digital transformation subprogramme of the United Nations Environmental Programme's medium-term strategy for 2022–2025, which aims to use digital products and services to **accelerate progress in key areas critical to environmental sustainability**; with Environment Assembly resolution 4/23, which seeks to develop a long-term data strategy in consultation with the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and take into account their credible and quality-assured data and information resources; with the Secretary-General's data strategy, which envisions building a whole-of-United-Nations ecosystem that unlocks the full potential of data, for better decisions and stronger support for people and the planet; and the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation, which calls for a concerted, multi-stakeholder, global effort to create digital public goods as a critical pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and thus tackling the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The digital strategy will undergo regular reviews to refine it as the secretariat makes progress in leveraging data-driven solutions and technologies and will be progressively implemented according to the availability of resources. This iterative process will enable the secretariat to adapt to emerging trends and evolving needs and ensure that the digital strategy remains relevant and effective in supporting the implementation of the Convention.

The digital strategy has two main goals:

- (a) **To expand and strengthen the services, processes and tools of the Minamata Convention digital ecosystem**, applying inclusive principles and criteria so as to leave no one behind, in order to amplify the benefits of information exchange, communication and knowledge management

activities to accelerate and scale parties' actions to reduce and eliminate mercury emissions and releases;

- (b) **To promote and accelerate digital transformation, innovation and the creation of new digital capacity** to improve the way the secretariat delivers products and services to parties and other stakeholders, and to guarantee that the work system, plans and processes are adequate and well prepared for the future and facilitate the development of successful strategic alliances based on creative dialogue and collaboration.

To achieve these goals, the current digital strategy is organized into three areas: **digital ecosystem; building partnership and digital literacy; and governance and innovation.**



DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

Website

The website is the main source of public information and knowledge about the Convention and as such is the core of the Minamata Convention's digital ecosystem. The website is maintained and improved on a regular basis. The secretariat will make an effort to digitalize submissions from parties, such as notifications of designation of national focal point, and will plan for a decision-tracking mechanism. Party profiles will be further enhanced in accordance with a data driven principle, and the information architecture will be revisited regularly to maintain a good user experience. In terms of accessibility, the website will be compliant with [web content accessibility guidelines](#) and [United Nations guidelines for accessibility](#), with content in English, French and Spanish and documents in the six United Nations official languages. The website will continue to comply with the privacy and data protection policies of the secretariat and monitoring tools will be used to track website uptime and promptly address service disruptions. Regarding website maintenance, the secretariat will seek parties' support to shift from relying on external service providers to having internal resources for this task, to avoid putting the secretariat's digital public goods at risk.

Digital services during Conference of the Parties meetings

During the preparation of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, special attention will be paid to ensuring smooth access to all relevant information, from the registration system to the management of pre-, in- and post-meeting documents. Providing a secure and seamless information space during the meeting is crucial, including access to the agenda, conference room papers and other submissions, information on side events, and the daily schedule. In that regard, it is imperative to maximize digital opportunities to contribute to greener, paperless Conference of the Parties meetings.



Online reporting tool

The tool for national reporting will be maintained and further developed to support parties in meeting their obligations under article 21 of the Convention. Activities include **creating forms for all upcoming short and full reporting cycles** and incorporating changes related to the reporting format and any other changes agreed by the Conference of the Parties into the tool, in all six United Nations languages. The inclusion of an automatic translation capability will be considered with a view to making the reports received by the secretariat more accessible. Furthermore, there is a need to enhance the integration of the existing dashboard on quantitative data, providing more options for downloading data, improving the user experience through new visuals, enabling cross-referencing of data for more in-depth analysis and allowing filtering of data by cycle and party. Future work on extracting data from parties' reports to feed an information exchange platform would facilitate the cooperation called for in article 17 of the Convention.

Dashboards and visualization

Data visualizations and dynamic dashboards will be incorporated into the Convention publications and communication products to underpin a better data approach to communicating progress under the Convention and generate more impact within outreach campaigns. Data analysis will be increasingly generated under the Convention and integrated into the secretariat's outputs and will be sharable through application programming interfaces, with attention paid to the user experience and interoperability processes that ensure data accuracy and avoid duplication of effort. The secretariat will continue its current endeavours to visualize results from national reporting, as well as from **Global Environment Facility and Specific International Programme projects**, at the national and global level.

Infrastructure

A robust, reliable infrastructure is required to support the website and its digital ecosystem. In terms of website hosting, a good solution is already in place: an entity that is part of the United Nations system provides a scalable solution that accommodates increasing traffic and content growth, and implements regular automated backups to protect against data loss. A solid infrastructure can support the development of digital communication capability; information analysis and exchange; data capture and exchange and knowledge management; and enhancement of planning, monitoring, reporting and review processes.

Digital repository

To facilitate the exchange of information called for in article 17 of the Convention, the secretariat will develop a digital repository of scientific and technical information on mercury that improves the collection of and facilitates access to relevant information and knowledge resources produced by reliable sources on mercury and related topics. The main purpose of the repository is to **support parties in finding the information they need** to develop and implement effective national mercury reduction strategies and action plans.

Information exchange platform

In line with article 17, the secretariat will develop a digital platform that facilitates cooperation in the exchange of information between the parties and relevant organizations, including the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements. The platform is envisioned as a **virtual space for sharing information, providing document analysis and holding online discussions on thematic areas**. As mentioned above, at an initial stage the platform could harvest the data on the implementation of article 17 provided by parties in their first full national reports.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

E-learning initiatives and digital products to support capacity-building

E-learning initiatives and digital products to support capacity-building: These activities will have a specific focus on developing country parties and parties with economies in transition, and will be conducted in English, as well as in French and Spanish when feasible. The support to be provided includes **three levels of comprehensive training for national focal points**: e-learning courses for foundational knowledge; webinars, such as the Minamata Online series, for deeper understanding of specific topics and question and answer sessions; and in-person workshops, incorporating case studies and best practices, to accelerate learning on national focal point obligations. Additionally, the secretariat will offer advisory services to assist national focal points in assessing and supporting their countries' digital readiness to adopt digital tools to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and meet commitments under the Convention, such as national reporting.

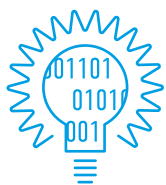
Digital skills

It is essential to enhance digital capacities throughout the organization, in order to facilitate seamless data sharing that supports decision-making and knowledge management throughout the organization. The secretariat will prioritize strengthening its digital culture and will encourage staff training so that the available infrastructure and tools are fully utilized to **foster innovation and a culture of change**.

Collaboration with relevant stakeholders

The secretariat will promote connection and interoperability with other initiatives under development and will leverage existing tools, networks and expertise to support parties in addressing gaps, enhancing capacity and systems and scaling up collaboration on data, information and knowledge management. This includes, as appropriate, collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the **United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA)** and **secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements, the Global Environment Facility and the Global Mercury Partnership**. Such approaches will be scaled up to the national level, strengthening interoperability and data flow among national, regional and global information systems and platforms. The secretariat will actively participate in communities of practice on digital cooperation within the framework of the United Nations system, such as InforMEA and the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability.





GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION



Data management

The secretariat will provide support for information technology and data management workflows related to outcomes of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, such as typology of publications and effectiveness evaluation indicators. This includes ensuring data accuracy, transparency and security as well as visualization of data and data products.



Accessibility

For publicly available information, the Minamata Convention secretariat is committed to using, promoting and advocating for open digital standards that facilitate seamless data scalability, reusability and interoperability, as outlined in the Secretary-General's data strategy. The secretariat will promote access to digital public goods, such as open-source software and resources that are freely available to all. Open data will contribute to enhanced transparency and accessibility.



Data privacy and confidentiality

The secretariat recognizes the importance of respecting data privacy and confidentiality and will therefore prioritize implementing robust safeguards to protect sensitive information and uphold individual rights, ensuring that data-sharing practices comply with **relevant privacy regulations and United Nations standards**.



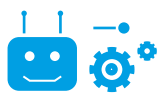
Semantic relationships

The secretariat will strengthen and promote the cooperative establishment of harmonized taxonomies and ontologies, which are standardized systems for organizing information to make it easier to navigate and comprehend. Such frameworks will facilitate the organization of knowledge and rapid access to accurate information, as well as analysis, comparison and retrieval of mercury-related data, for more efficient information exchange.



Data standards

The secretariat will collaborate on and contribute to the standardization of metadata for classification and content-type schemas within the United Nations, InforMEA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), where it adds value to the Minamata Convention secretariat. To date, the secretariat has benefited from interoperation with the InforMEA portal enabled by such standards, for information exchange on things like parties, decisions, national focal points and national reports. This collaborative effort is aimed at establishing consistent, interoperable standards that enhance data-sharing, information exchange and compatibility across UNEP and its associated platforms.



Artificial intelligence and machine learning

The secretariat will keep abreast of new developments in artificial intelligence and will explore the potential uses of artificial intelligence and machine learning, especially for data collection and analysis and data model creation, to support effective knowledge-sharing and collaboration. The secretariat is also aware that global cooperation in artificial intelligence entails understanding the individual and social dimensions and promoting equity, gender and cultural diversity approaches with safe, trustworthy and open algorithms, and will closely adhere to [the principles for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the United Nations system \(CEB/2022/2/Add.1\)](#).



Robust metrics and feedback mechanisms

play a pivotal role in facilitating continuous improvement and agility of digital services. By implementing comprehensive measurement systems and feedback loops, the Minamata Convention secretariat can gain valuable insights into the performance and effectiveness of its digital services. The metrics help identify areas for improvement, track progress towards goals and measure the impact of changes or updates. Additionally, feedback mechanisms provide an avenue for users and stakeholders to express their opinions, report issues and suggest enhancements. The secretariat will collect the views of parties regarding their needs and priorities in terms of development of digital technologies and use of available data and information exchange tools that support them in implementing the Convention. Such input is valuable not only for informing product development but also for fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration between the organization and its users.

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Inclusiveness

The Minamata Convention secretariat recognizes the importance of promoting a digital transformation that is inclusive and has a gender perspective, with particular emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable populations. To achieve digital inclusion, the secretariat will prioritize equitable access, promote the development of digital skill and emphasize user-friendly design in technological solutions. The secretariat is committed to leaving no one behind and will make a concerted effort to support developing-country parties in its digital inclusion initiatives.



Cross-cutting approach

The secretariat will continue its efforts to integrate a digital approach that is cross-cutting across the entire programme of the Convention into its activities, projects and programmes. By incorporating a digital strategy into the core areas of the programme of work, the secretariat aims to optimize the applicability and relevance of its initiatives while leveraging the potential of digital technologies to advance the objective of the Convention.





Digital Strategy

For the Minamata Convention on Mercury

www.minamataconvention.org