

CONTAMINATED SITES

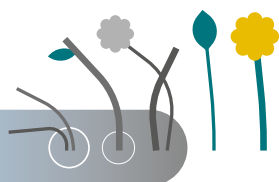
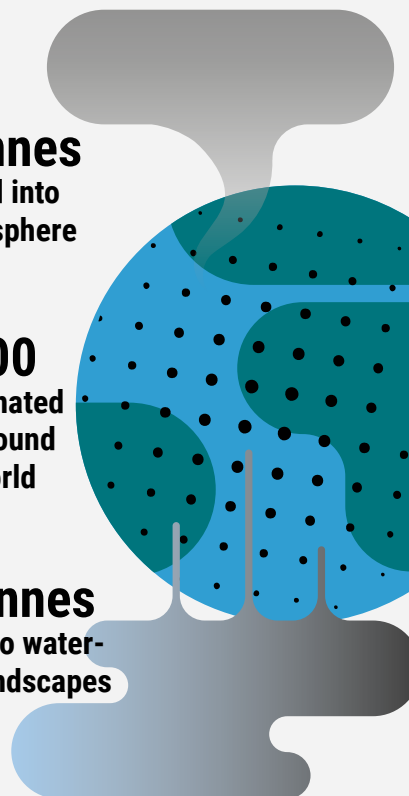


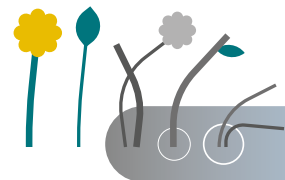
- ▶ Sites contaminated with mercury present persistent sources of pollution that continue to leach into ecosystems, where it **bioaccumulates in plants and animals**, exposing local populations to long-term risks.
- ▶ Site contamination may come from different sources, such as mercury storage, manufacturing mercury-added products, using mercury in manufacturing processes, mercury mining and ASGM, or other sources.
- ▶ Estimates suggest that there are **3,000 contaminated sites** around the world, releasing around **82 tonnes of mercury into the atmosphere** and **116 tonnes into waterways and nearby landscapes**.
- ▶ Without intervention, mercury-contaminated sites can threaten **food safety, water quality, and livelihoods**. These conditions restrict land use, limit economic development, and endanger human health and the environment.
- ▶ Long-term exposure to mercury from contaminated sites may lead to severe **neurological and developmental disorders**, particularly in children and pregnant women.
- ▶ Many of these sites are located near **Indigenous Peoples, marginalized populations, and environmentally sensitive areas**, exacerbating social and ecological vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Identifying and remediating these sites is a significant challenge, requiring risk assessments, containment strategies, and cleanup efforts tailored to local conditions.

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WHAT THE CONVENTION SAYS

The Minamata Convention **Article 12**, requires Parties to develop strategies for identifying and assessing sites contaminated by mercury or mercury compounds. It encourages both preventive and corrective actions tailored to national circumstances.

- Parties should develop appropriate **strategies for identifying and assessing sites contaminated** by mercury or mercury compounds.
- Parties must ensure that actions taken to **reduce risks at contaminated sites** are conducted in an environmentally sound manner, incorporating risk assessment where appropriate.
- The Conference of the Parties **adopted guidance** on methods for site identification, public engagement, risk assessment, management actions and outcome validation.
- Further guidance on the management of contaminated sites, adopted by the Conference of the Parties, provides technical support and methods for Parties in implementing obligations.

WHAT WE DO

- ▶ Parties are responsible for developing and implementing **national strategies to identify and assess mercury-contaminated sites**.
- ▶ Parties are to effectively manage sites by evaluating past industrial activities, monitoring mercury levels in soil and water, and prioritizing high-risk locations for remediation.
- ▶ National frameworks should ensure that contaminated sites are properly secured to prevent further exposure, particularly in areas where agricultural activities, fisheries, and water sources are affected.
- ▶ The Convention promotes **risk communication strategies**, ensuring that affected communities are informed about contamination risks and provided with access to health monitoring and support services.

REFERENCES

- [Minamata Convention text and annexes](#)
- [Guidance on the management of contaminated sites](#)
- [Minamata Online](#)
- [ICCL meeting](#), presentations available [here](#)
- [IPEN publication](#)
- [Focus Area on contaminated sites](#)

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty that helps countries to control, reduce and eliminate mercury across all its life-stages with the objective to protect human health and the environment.

It is named after the bay in Japan where, in the mid-20th century, mercury-tainted industrial wastewater poisoned thousands of people, leading to severe health damage that became known as the “Minamata disease”.

Since it entered into force on 16 August 2017, Parties have been working together to control the mercury supply and trade, reduce the use, emissions and releases of mercury, raise public awareness, and build the necessary institutional capacity.

Minamata Convention website
<https://minamataconvention.org>

