

EDITORIAL

On 16 August 2017, the Minamata Convention on Mercury entered into force, having received its 50th ratification on 15 May. The Convention's first Conference of the Parties will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 to 29 September 2017. The Convention is the first to address the challenges arising out of the anthropogenic use of heavy metals, having focused on one that is so commonly used that its impacts are both well-known and widespread. It bears similarities to some of the most successful international environmental agreements, in its approach to curtailing new mercury mining, phasing out existing mercury mines, reducing the commercial uses of mercury, identifying controls on activities that result in mercury emissions and discharges, and considering measures relating to waste mercury storage and disposal.

The ratification process took little more than 3.5 years, as the Convention was adopted on 10 October 2013. Observation of this pace alleviates some expressed concerns that recent events in developed countries might lead to a decrease in global commitment to international environmental action. Additional ratifications have come in after the entry into force, so that the current list of Parties numbers 79.

Another highlight of recent days is the remarks of UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, at the UN General Assembly side event "The Sustainable Development Goals in Action: Country-Owned, Country-Led". Citing the "very promising momentum" that countries have built over the past two years regarding implementation of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, the Deputy SG noted that the level of countries' enthusiasm for implementation has engendered the UN Secretariat to begin an on-going process to determine "how the system needs to be retooled to be fit to deliver on the complex and transformative 2030 Agenda". In addition to presaging future systemic revision, she also noted both that "extreme poverty is down to 11 percent" and also that there is "a need to pick up the pace" in addressing climate change, inequalities and other challenges, in order to achieve the goals. In sum, "[t]he 2030 Agenda is the international community's best tool for a more prosperous and peaceful world. It is more than a dream. It is a dream with targets and deadlines [for which w]e are all accountable".

Finally, in the midst of the challenges and losses experienced by *EPL* early this year, we did not remember to formally congratulate Cristiana Paşca Palmer, formerly Romania's Minister for Environment, Waters and Forests, on her appointment to the position of Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). We do so now. *EPL* and its staff have long been firm supporters of the CBD and its works and protocols, and we are very pleased to see such an excellent and well experienced person taking over its reins. In this connection, we would also thank another such person, Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, for his five years of dedicated and conscientious service in that position.

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