

**Global Opportunities for Long-term Development (GOLD) in the ASGM Sector
Kennedy Center, Washington, DC**

Remarks by

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning everyone. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this launch event for the GEF GOLD Program.

The use of mercury is an example of an economic activity that does irreversible damage to the global environment, and ultimately to humans.

From small-scale gold mining, from coal fired power plants, and from the production of cement, PVC and light bulbs around the world, mercury is used and emitted every day. As a result, hundreds of tons of this deadly chemical is emitted into the air, into the water and soil, and eventually accumulates in our bodies.

The artisanal gold mining sector is the largest source of mercury emissions globally, accounting for about one third of all emissions. So, tackling mercury use in the artisanal goldmining sector is vital if we are to eventually eliminate its use.

This is the purpose of GEF GOLD.

Tackling the artisanal goldmining sector is extremely complex, in large part because the sector is almost entirely informal, and in many cases illegal. The good news is that technically proven and economically viable alternatives to mercury exist today. The challenge is to ensure that these technologies are deployed across this highly dispersed sector consisting of millions of small-scale operators around the world.

To do this will require action from a broad, multi-stakeholder coalition including governments, private sector players in the gold supply chain, finance, and global expertise. This is what is being put together in the GEF GOLD project.

The project will be working with governments and local authorities in eight countries [Colombia, Guyana, Peru, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Philippines, Indonesia and Mongolia] to strengthen land tenure, mineral rights and other regulatory and policy issues that can help reduce informality in the sector. At the same time, the project will help to improve access to finance for miners and mining communities for the necessary investments in mercury-free technologies.

In addition, and critical for the success of GEF GOLD, the project will help connect miners to the private players in the global supply-chain which will help

secure off-take of production. In this regard, I would like to recognize key partners such as Argor, who will be working with us to ensure mercury free supply chains meet the demand from their downstream end users. I would also like to express my appreciation for our collaboration with partners like the Artisanal Gold Council, which has already been working with the GEF to help develop sustainable business models for the artisanal small-scale gold mining sector.

The establishment of the Minamata convention in 2013 was a milestone in the global fight against mercury pollution, and I am doubly pleased that the GEF was chosen to be the financial mechanism of this important Convention.

First, as the CEO of the GEF, I believe that the GEF has a unique role to play, and opportunity to help safeguard our global environmental commons like our oceans, air and soil that are the foundation for everybody's progress and prosperity. Tackling mercury pollution is a vital issue in that regard.

Second, as a Japanese citizen, I have seen first-hand the immense damage that mercury can do. We cannot allow such a tragedy to happen anywhere else in our world, and I am personally committed to do all I can to help rid the world of mercury.

Before I close, I want to tell you how pleased I am to share this stage with a strong champion of the global environment: Gina McCarthy, the Administrator of US-EPA has dedicated her career to working on some of the most urgent environmental issues of our time. Gina was instrumental in helping the Minamata Convention become a reality, and more recently, her leadership was key to the successful negotiations of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances. Thanks for being with us and thanks for all your support.

Three years ago, with the adoption of the Minamata Convention, the world committed to eliminate the use of mercury. Today, we are taking a bold step forward to deliver on that commitment. I look forward to working with all of you to make it a reality.

Thank you