

CHINA

Developing mercury control in China

China accounts for more than 30 per cent of global atmospheric emissions of mercury*. Consequently, the country is an important actor in global efforts on mercury control. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the Swedish Chemicals Agency are cooperating with the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection to reduce China's use and emissions of mercury.

“Mercury is among the most dangerous environmental toxins and has a considerable impact on people's health and the environment. International cooperation is needed if we are to reduce mercury levels globally,” says Stina Andersson, Project Manager at the Swedish Chemicals Agency.

Since 2002, Sweden has an environmental cooperation agreement with China, in which the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency plays a key role.

“We have been cooperating with China for nearly ten years and have carried out different types of environmental projects. Mercury control is one of them,” says Ping Höjding, who is responsible for the programme at the

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

The global mercury convention recently signed by both Sweden and China is a central driving force in the Swedish-Chinese cooperation. One area of this cooperation involves decreasing the use of mercury in medical equipment and improving the handling of waste containing mercury.

“Sweden has worked with mercury control since the 1960s and is a world leader in the area,” says Ping Höjding. “We have good knowledge and experience and China has sought Swedish expertise in this area,” she says.

“Sweden has rich experiences in mercury control. We are expecting from Sweden advanced mercury management ideas and new



Petra Hagström of Swedish Environmental Protection Agency with Sun Yangzhao from the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection.

techniques on mercury removal and harmless disposal,” says Sun Yangzhao, Director of the Mercury Convention Implementation Division of the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, who is responsible for the Swedish-Chinese cooperation.

The cooperation has initially focused on the exchange of knowledge and experience through a pilot project with a hospital in Tianjin. Efforts have included study visits to Sweden demonstrating how mercury is no longer used in medical equipment at hospitals but has been replaced by electronic devices.

“The study visit to Sweden benefited me a lot. We visited hospitals, clinics and a waste disposal centre and obtained knowledge of how the Swedes manage mercury disposal,” says Cao Shujun, Vice President of the hospital in Tianjin.

The cooperation was well-timed with China now preparing for implementation of the new mercury convention. According to Stina Andersson at the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the results of the Chinese efforts are evident.

“We already see that hospitals in China have begun to phase out products containing mercury and these efforts can then spread to additional hospitals in other regions,” she says.

Both the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the Swedish Chemicals Agency are focusing on continued cooperation with China on various environmental issues. Sun Yangzhao at the Chinese Ministry of Environmental



Workshop in Beijing
on medical devices.

PHOTO: FECCO

“I believe that the Sino-Swedish cooperation program will produce win-win effects”

/ SUN YANGZHAO

Protection also takes a positive view on other future environmental partnerships with Sweden.

“In the future, we hope to conduct partnerships in the fields of air pollution prevention, water pollution control, soil remediation and heavy metal pollution abatement. Through our joint efforts, I believe that the Sino-Swedish cooperation program will produce win-win effects,” he says.

Ping Højding agrees. “Both sides learn from the cooperation. By contributing Swedish experience and knowledge, we have gained a far better insight into the situation and challenges in China in the environmental area. This provides important input in our own work within the EU and in international environmental negotiations,” she says.

THE FACTS

PARTNERS

The Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection and its Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Chemical Agency.

SIDA CONTRIBUTION

3,800,000 SEK

TIMEFRAME

2012–2013

RESULTS

■ Enhanced capacity within the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection and its supporting organizations to monitor and control mercury emissions from non-ferrous industries and to achieve a phase-out of medical devices containing mercury.

■ Policy recommendations to the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection for the improvement of mercury emission inventories and control of non-ferrous industries.

■ Policy recommendations to the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection on promoting a phase-out of medical devices containing mercury.

* Source: Global Mercury Assessment 2013, UNEP