

# NEW EIA REPORT EXPOSES A GLOBAL FAILURE TO PREVENT THE DELIBERATE ADDITION OF TOXIC MERCURY TO SKIN LIGHTENING PRODUCTS

*A new investigation by the EIA US exposes key companies adding toxic mercury to skin lightening products and mercury compound supply sources serving them.*

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Our undercover investigations reveal that insidious producers and traders of skin-whitening products operate with impunity across borders, profiting from deliberate addition of toxic mercury.”

*Avipsa Mahapatra, Climate Campaign Director, EIA US*

Washington, DC: For the first time ever, [an undercover investigation](#) by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) has exposed key companies deliberately adding toxic mercury to skin lightening products (SLPs) and the mercury compound supply sources serving these producers. The illicit production, trade, and sale of mercury-added SLPs have continued despite legal prohibitions, including a global ban under the Minamata Convention.

“Our undercover investigations reveal that insidious producers and traders of skin-whitening products operate with impunity across borders, profiting from deliberate addition of toxic mercury,” said EIA Campaign Director,

Avipsa Mahapatra. “In the absence of robust enforcement mechanisms, the Minamata Convention and Parties to it have so far failed in controlling this toxic trade, passing the burden to people of color, suffering the ramifications. Instead, countries must restrict the supply and trade of mercury compounds and establish strict requirements for vendors online and in stores. The entire skin whitening industry, rooted in colorism, is complicit in this mass poisoning and needs to reckon with its legacy by working to eradicate these creams.”

The findings reveal that the compound of choice for mercury-added SLPs is ammoniated mercury. Currently, this compound does not fall into the lists restricted by the Minamata Convention, EU, or U.S. trade regulations.

“We identified centers of production in Thailand, Jamaica, and Pakistan. However, several other

Parties including Spain, UAE, and the United States have all been used as intermediary transit ports, facilitating the transportation of mercury-added SLPs and/or mercury compounds to their final destinations abroad,” added Mahapatra. “While the EU and the U.S. should use their regulatory authority to close these gaps in compound trade, it's crucial all parties to the convention come into compliance.”

Mercury-added SLPs are a serious public health threat that has reached epidemic levels in many nations, such as in Nigeria, where the [use was declared a national health emergency](#) in February of this year. Concentrations of 1 ppm or greater are prohibited under the Minamata Convention on Mercury and countries must enact and enforce corresponding national laws. However, this investigation found evidence that it is standard practice for SLP producers across the globe to create creams consisting of 3-4% of a mercury compound. These findings underline the urgent need for the Minamata Convention to prioritize this product category as a matter of Convention implementation.

The report demonstrates key centers of activity have yet to enact national laws in compliance with the Minamata Convention. As a result, production of mercury-added SLPs occurs in a legal gray area or countries lack the enforcement resources to stop it. Countries and regions with existing regulations also must close loopholes that enable mercury compound trade.

The Minamata Convention Conference of Parties (COP-5) kicked off with virtual side events last week, where parties and advocates will gather from October 30th to November 3rd.

Join EIA live at 2pm CEST on Thursday, October 19th for a panel presentation on these findings and potential solutions with the Zero Mercury Working Group and experts on mercury trade. [Register here.](#)

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Mercury Skin Lightening Products Report Cover

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