Since the earliest time of gold mining, mercury was used to extract gold. This practice is still ongoing in more than 70 countries, where 10 to 15 million artisanal and small-scale gold miners use mercury to recover gold. It is the world's largest source of mercury pollution, emits toxic vapours and releases large quantities of mercury, harming the miners, their communities, and the environment.

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining produces about 12 to 15% of the world's gold. It is a complex global development issue, however exposure of miners and their communities to the terrible effects of mercury can be reduced in simple and cost effective ways.

The session will explore how each actor of the gold supply chain - many of which are represented in Switzerland – has a responsibility and a role to play towards mercury-free gold production and the sustainable development of the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector.