



For Immediate Release

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Elements for a UN global framework on mercury agreed to

Nairobi, Kenya--Public interest advocates¹ welcomed the results of a global meeting convened to take decisions on the threats posed by mercury to human health and environment. On 6-10 October 2008, the 2nd UNEP² Open Ended Working Group (OEWG2) on Mercury agreed on the elements that would form part of a global framework on mercury, in preparation for the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in February 2009, where it will be decided whether a global legally binding instrument on mercury will be developed.

“World countries’ representatives made important progress; the framework agreed is comprehensive, covering all significant aspects of the global mercury pollution problem, said Elena Lymberidi – Settimo, from the Zero Mercury Working Group, “

“We now call upon the GC to finish the work that it started and establish a negotiating committee to develop a global treaty on mercury,” said Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group and director of the Mercury Policy Project, a US NGO. “Only through a treaty will we see sufficient reductions in global mercury emissions, supply and demand.”

The UNEP GC had given the mandate to the OEWG to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments. The OEWG2 completed its work, and will send a report to the GC including:

- A comprehensive set of elements to be part of a global framework
- Two options for global frameworks on mercury – a legal and a voluntary one.
- If a legal framework is agreed, it will be a free-standing instrument rather than being part of an existing framework.

The large majority of the 90 governments attending the meeting supported a legally binding instrument – India, China and the USA along with a few other countries expressed preference for a voluntary framework.

“The outcome of the OEWG has helped shape future global action,” said Richard Gutierrez, of the Philippine NGO, Ban Toxics. “We are optimistic that the global community is well on its way towards establishing a treaty to control mercury pollution and effectively safeguard global fish stocks from this lethal poison.

For further information:

Elena Lymberidi, Project Coordinator, Zero Mercury Campaign, European Environmental

¹ Environmental NGOS include

The **European Environmental Bureau, (EEB)**, www.eeb.org, is a federation of over 140 environmental citizens’ organisations based in all EU Member States as well as in neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. The aim of the EEB is to protect and improve the environment of Europe and to enable the citizens of Europe to play their part in achieving that goal.

The **Zero Mercury Working Group**, www.zeromercury.org, is an international coalition of over 60 public-interest non-governmental organisations worldwide formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project/Ban Mercury Working Group. The group’s aim is to reach “Zero emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, towards eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally.”

International POPs Eliminations Network (IPEN), www.ipen.org, is a global network of health and environmental organizations in more than 80 countries working together for a Toxics-Free Future.

² United Nations Environment Programme

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