

## ‘Good talks’ provide springboard for mercury deal

### ENDS Europe

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Global mercury talks in Stockholm ended on Friday with all 132 participating countries, including the US and China, taking "a positive stance" to the target of a binding global agreement on mercury by 2013, the Nordic Council of Ministers reports.

[Internal EU wrangling](#) over whether the European Commission should be able to represent all member states at the talks dominated conference preparations. But the power struggle "failed to have the negative effect on the meeting that many had feared", the council said in a statement.

NGO coalition the Zero Mercury Working Group said the discussions would provide "a strong basis for developing the text of the treaty", starting at the next meeting in Chiba, Japan, in January. The group "applauded" calls by the World Health Organization for a ban on skin-lightening cosmetics containing mercury and a "phase-down" of dental amalgam.

#### Follow Up:

[Nordic Council press release](#), [Zero Mercury press release](#) and [WHO submission](#).

## World Governments Address Global Mercury Problem at INC Meeting

Posted in | [Ferrous Alloys and Metals](#)



**World governments, under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, today completed the first step towards a legally binding treaty to control mercury pollution at the first Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meeting, in Stockholm, Sweden. These initial discussions will provide a strong basis for developing the text of the treaty, starting at the next INC meeting in Tokyo, Japan, January 2011.**

"The participation of 132 countries reaffirmed the importance and international commitment to address the global mercury problem," said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo of the European Environmental Bureau and the Zero Mercury Working Group. "We hope that this first round of discussions covering all issues will open the way to more substantive discussions on legally binding control measures in order to minimise and, where feasible, eliminate mercury from use, supply and emissions globally."

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"We applaud the World Health Organization's (W.H.O.'s) statement during the INC to stop the production of skin lightening cosmetics containing mercury, as they present a serious exposure risk worldwide(i)," said Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group. "We also welcome W.H.O. interest in 'phase downing'(ii) the use of dental amalgam.(iii) This may be of particular interest in the U.S. as the FDA decided yesterday to review dental amalgam and in particular risks to vulnerable populations."(iv)

During the meeting countries expressed their views on potential targeted control provisions on mercury issues such as supply; storage; use in products and processes; artisanal small scale gold mining; trade; atmospheric emissions; waste and contaminated sites; as well as on compliance, Countries and regions also expressed their opinions on how discussions should unfold during the upcoming INCs.

"We now look forward to engaging in focused discussions in areas such as supply, trade and storage of surplus mercury where substantial progress can be made," said Susan Keane of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Rico Euripidou, of the South African NGO groundwork, Friends of the Earth South Africa, noted: "We have made a good start towards establishing a treaty to control mercury pollution that will ultimately protect the fish we eat from this poison."

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that makes its way up the food chain into humans, and puts developing foetuses and young children most at risk. Five Intergovernmental negotiating committee meetings are foreseen to take place to complete the work on a mercury treaty before 2013.

## Countries Unite To Ban Mercury in Cosmetics

Updated Jun 15, 2010

As cosmetics safety continues to be a hot topic, efforts are now being made to curtail the use of mercury in cosmetics products. According to recently published reports the issue was given new attention recently during the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meeting which was held in Stockholm, Sweden.

As many as 132 countries participated in the first stage of creating a treaty to help control mercury pollution. One of the issues raised was the importance of halting the manufacture of skin lightening products which contain mercury. This is only one phase of the negotiation process. Stakeholders hope that a full agreement will be arrived at within three years.

Written by the CareFair.com Editorial Team.

[http://www.carefair.com/html/Countries\\_Unite\\_To\\_Ban\\_Mercury\\_in\\_Cosmetics\\_9685.html](http://www.carefair.com/html/Countries_Unite_To_Ban_Mercury_in_Cosmetics_9685.html)

### Mercury level in humans detected through hair test

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

Manilla Bulletin

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A hair monitoring organized by international green groups among 45 delegates of a United Nations-led Mercury Conference in Sweden last week affirmed that there is mercury contamination in humans.

Organized by the International POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) Elimination Network and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the hair test generated broader awareness among delegates about mercury levels in the body and drew media attention to the global mercury treaty.

At the UN meeting that aims to limit the use of mercury held in Stockholm, Sweden from June 7-11, hair samples were collected from 45 government delegates from 40 countries, including the Philippines, eight representatives of NGOs and indigenous peoples, four Swedish politicians, and one Swedish Olympic athlete.

The survey found mercury in all of the 58 hair test participants.

Local green group EcoWaste Coalition explained that the amount of mercury in hair provides an estimate of methylmercury in the body.

It added that fish consumption is the main way people are exposed to methylmercury, which is toxic to human health.

Mercury is released to the environment from many sources, including coal combustion, mining activities, mercury-containing products and devices, product manufacturing sites, metal refining and recycling, cement kilns, waste dumps and incinerators, contaminated sites, and crematoria, among others.

The survey found mercury levels between 93 ug/kg and 2956 ug/kg. More than one-third of the samples exceeded the US National Research Council mercury reference dose of 1000 ug/kg.

The reference dose is a level set for pregnant women to avoid adverse fetal brain development effects.

It also noted that average mercury levels in people from developing and transition countries were twice the levels measured in delegates from developed countries.

“The survey illustrates the need to tackle the mercury problem because mercury is present in all of us and it shouldn’t be a part of our bodies! To eliminate all sources of mercury, I and the Swedish government want an effective global legally binding instrument on mercury in place soon,” Andreas Carlgren, Swedish Environment Minister, one of the hair test participants, said.

“The test results only reinforce the need for collaborative efforts, locally and globally, to control mercury pollution from human activities and protect our environment, our food supply and our bodies from such a toxic threat. As a fish-eating nation, we have so much at stake in pursuing a treaty that will safeguard our marine staple foods,” said Juan Miguel Cuna, director of the Philippines’ Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), another hair test participant.

According to the UN, globally, fish is a major source of human exposure to mercury and a vital source of food.

EcoWaste said fish provides at least 40 percent of protein for two-thirds of the world’s population, including most of the world’s poor.

“Cooking or removing the skin does not remove mercury. Mercury is highly toxic, especially to the developing brain. The nervous system damage is irreversible,” EcoWaste said.

“Mercury is transformed into methyl mercury by micro-organisms in the environment. Methyl mercury then accumulates up the food chain as larger fish eat smaller ones. Due to long-range transport, high mercury levels are observed in the Arctic, far from the sources of any significant releases. This makes mercury contamination a global issue,” it added.

<http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/261920/mercury-level-humans-detected-through-hair-test>