

For Immediate Release

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As Mercury Treaty Talks Start, W.H.O. Lauded for Highlighting “Phase Down” of Amalgam & Stopping Mercury Use in Skin Cosmetics

[Stockholm, Brussels – 11 June 2010] –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.”

“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 worldwideⁱ,” 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 fetuses 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.

For more information, see:

www.zeromercury.org

www.mercurypolicy.org

The **Zero-Hg Working Group (ZMWG)**, www.zeromercury.org, is an international coalition of more than 80 public interest environmental and health non-governmental organizations from over 45 countries from around the world that strives for zero supply, demand, and emissions of mercury from all anthropogenic sources, with the goal of reducing mercury in the global environment to a minimum.

ⁱ http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/skincreamhgfactsheet_may31_final.pdf

ⁱⁱ http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/who_draft_presentation_final1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/who_update_inc1.pdf

^{iv} <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm215061.htm>