



Mercury Policy Project



Governments at UN mercury negotiations urged to reduce exposure, end toxic trade

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 27 June 2012 — As delegates from over 150 countries converge for the fourth session to negotiate a mercury treaty, NGOs from around the world are calling on them to address the global mercury crisis. Alarmed that mercury is still transported great distances through the air and by trade, they are urging world leaders to adopt strong treaty provisions on supply and trade that will, among other things, prohibit mining of mercury.

“While mercury exports are banned in the EU and will soon be in the U.S., traders can still ship this dangerous neurotoxin everywhere else, poisoning people around the globe,” said Michael Bender, Zero Mercury Working Group¹ co-coordinator.¹¹ “With the price of mercury almost doubling in the past year, a treaty is the only way to end the profiteering in toxic trade.”

While the draft treaty text has proposed some trade restrictions on mercury, ZMWG is urging that these be strengthened. Along with that, ZMWG recommends:

- Phasing out the use of mercury in products and industrial processes;
- Requiring best available control technologies to minimize mercury emissions from priority sources, such as coal-fired power plants and nonferrous smelters;
- Requiring action plans to reduce mercury use and releases from artisanal small scale gold mining;
- Safely managing mercury waste and responding to contaminated sites, including addressing the risks to vulnerable populations; and
- Providing sufficient funding to assist developing countries.

“It’s time to take bold and corrective action. Unless these measures are taken the impact of mercury pollution, especially on developing countries will be costly,” explains Richard Gutierrez, Ban Toxics!, Philippines “The new Mercury Convention needs to include well established precedents such as the precautionary principle, polluter pays, and environmental justice, principles aimed to protect the poor and marginalized.”

NGOs look forward to working with delegates to achieve these objectives, including eliminating weak treaty provisions and replacing them with stronger measures are.

In addition to adopting strong treaty provisions, ZMWG is also calling for interim funds to aid implementation planning after the treaty is signed, but before it enters into force.

Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, Co-coordinator of the Zero Mercury Working Group said “Securing interim financial support to enable the development of national implementation plans prior to treaty ratification is critical, especially to developing countries.”

Mercury, a potent neurotoxin, contaminates fish supplies around the world, and poses particular risks to women and young children. The anticipated Mercury Convention, projected to be finalized in January 2013 at the fifth negotiation in Geneva, is expected to address mercury pollution globally.

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Notes to the editors

[ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP PRELIMINARY VIEWS ON INC 4 DRAFT TREATY TEXT MAY 2012 - English version](#)

[PRELIMINARY DRAFT ZERO MERCURY WORKING GROUP RESPONSE TO CO-CHAIRS PROPOSED APPROACH TO EMISSIONS AND RELEASES May 2012](#)

Other language versions available at www.zeromercury.org

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ⁱ The Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) is an international coalition of more than 94 public interest nongovernmental organizations from 52 countries from around the world formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project. ZMWG 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. Our mission is to advocate and support the adoption and implementation of a legally binding instrument which contains mandatory obligations to eliminate where feasible, and otherwise minimize, the global supply and trade of mercury, the global demand for mercury, anthropogenic releases of mercury to the environment, and human and wildlife exposure to mercury.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-05-24/gold-boom-spreading-mercury-as-15-million-miners-exposed>