



**ENVIRONMENTAL and HEALTH NGOs' REBUTTAL ON BAROMETERS
& KEY POINTS on MERCURY CONTAINING EQUIPMENT
2nd PLENARY VOTE (9-10 JULY) – SORNOSA REPORT**

5th July 2007

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Mercury is often termed 'one of the most toxic substances known to man'. In women's bodies, we are finding that even lower levels than previously suspected are harmful to the development of the next generation. Over time, the levels of mercury in our bodies are slowly rising. Already, one in six women in the USA have levels that are undesirable for babies in the womb. What the levels are in Europe are still unknown. So each and every reduction of mercury use, and the risk of its contamination into the environment, is an important step to building a healthier society, and cleaner environment.

We therefore call kindly on you to support the Council Common Position (CCP) and REJECT the proposed amendments. Manufacturing new mercury barometers is irresponsible.

- **Barometers are *not* an exemplary green product, unlike what some industry says.** Anything that contains such large amounts of one of the most toxic substances known to humankind, and which can spill into the environment, causing contamination and severe health risks, cannot, by definition, be green. Not all mercury-free barometers require energy or cause e-waste, for example the aneroid barometer.
- **Repair and information.** The repair and maintenance of and information about EXISTING barometers can still carry on; these will gain even more value given their scarcity. The manufacturers should be able to command higher service fees - unless they finally decide that the occupational health risks and risk management measures are not worth the higher fees.
- Although very few manufacturers exist in Europe, **the manufacture, repair and restoration of mercury barometers is NOT their only business.** These companies usually also manufacture different types of aneroid (mercury-free) barometers, different clocks, barographs, marine instruments, thermometers, hygrometers, etc.¹ Therefore their business is NOT likely to collapse when mercury use is banned.
- **Breakage and contamination.** Breakage of mercury barometers does not only happen in the manufacturers' workshop, where it is claimed that "the spilled mercury can be collected easily and without harm and can be used again to be filled in the same instrument." Breakages can and do occur in schools, homes, and other buildings¹. These breakages can involve significant clean up costs (evacuation & closure of schools, hazardous waste clean up & disposal measures)², risk of contamination into the environment through improper disposal, and risk of health effects (e.g. through direct inhalation).
- **Heritage craft.** The 350 year old heritage of barometer craftsmanship will not be wiped out, as the repair, service and maintenance will still be in demand.

¹ See for instance [UK Report from the Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division, Health Protection Agency, September 2005.](#)

² An example from Connecticut is a \$200,000 clean up cost from the breaking of one mercury barometer. <http://www.newmoa.org/prevention/topic/subsection.cfm?hub=101&subsec=17&nav=17&CFID=10427495&CFTOKEN=93912494>, see also <http://www.mercuryschools.uwex.edu/schools/why.htm> and http://www.zeromercury.org/library/Press_spills.htm

The World Health Organisation has concluded that there is **no safe level of mercury exposure**. We need to address all uses and sources of spills in order to safeguard people's health. Please take this important step to eliminate the unnecessary use in these measuring devices.

Thank you in advance for your support,

Yours sincerely,

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Mercury barometer
Open face mahogany stick barometer
(910mm (36") x 120mm (5"))ⁱⁱ



Mercury-free barometer
200mm (8") diameter dial barometer
(300mm (12") overall diameter)



Mercury-free Barometer
200mm (8") dial banjo barometer
with aneroid movement and inlays (960mm
(38") x 250mm (10"))

ⁱ <http://www.barometerworld.co.uk/default.htm> (UK), <http://www.comitti.com/> (UK), <http://www.russell-scientific.co.uk/> (UK), <http://www.barometers.com/index.htm> (Belgium), <http://www.rosebarometers.nl>

ⁱⁱ All pictures are from <http://www.russell-scientific.co.uk/>.