



Invitation to the Conference

“EU mercury phase out in measuring and control equipment”

Thursday, 18 June, 2009, Brussels
Venue: Goethe Institute
58 Rue Belliar, B-1040, Brussels, Belgium

Dear colleague,

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG), in collaboration with Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWHE) are very pleased to invite you to their **Conference “EU mercury phase-out in measuring and control equipment”**, **Thursday 18 June 2009, Brussels**.

Mercury is highly toxic, causing damage to the nervous system, and is particularly harmful during the early development phases of children. Mercury can become more concentrated as it is ingested by tiny organisms and moves up the food chain, accumulating in the bodies of humans and wildlife. Mercury travels long distances through the atmosphere, and has contaminated global food supplies at levels that can pose a significant risk to human health.

One of the key objectives of the EU Mercury Strategy, adopted in January 2005, is to reduce the amount of mercury circulating in society by cutting both supply and demand. On the demand side the largest uses are for the chlor-alkali industry and dental amalgam. Another significant use is in measuring devices such as sphygmomanometers and porosimeters for professional use and health care. When these products break, they can present a risk to human health and result in costly clean up. Subsequently, when the mercury is released, it can contaminate both the local and global environment.

The aim of the conference is to contribute to the EU debate towards phasing out the use of mercury in sphygmomanometers for healthcare and in other measuring devices for professional uses. The EU, banned the use of mercury thermometers for consumer and professional uses, and other devices only for consumer uses, in October 2007 (directive 2007/51). The European Commission is in the process of reviewing the availability of reliable safer mercury-free alternatives that are technically and economically feasible to substitute for mercury-containing sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices in healthcare and in other professional and industrial uses. On the basis of this review the Commission shall, if appropriate, present a legislative proposal to extend the restrictions in the relevant identified uses, by October 2009.

Given these policy developments, the EEB, ZMWG, and HCWHE are organising this conference in order to engage more stakeholders in this important debate.

The programme of the conference includes presentations of:

- ***the new EEB commissioned study on the feasibility of transition from mercury to mercury-free sphygmomanometers in healthcare.***
- ***the European Commission’s policy developments related to measuring devices***
- ***Experiences from EU mercury-free hospitals***
- ***EU Member states’ positions***
- ***Perspectives of measuring device manufacturers and their association***
- ***Panel discussion on the issue of calibration, validation, special cases, and***
- ***Discussion on other measuring devices and export.***

Invited speakers include: the *European Commission, representatives of Member States, representatives from hospitals, professional bodies, measuring devices’ manufacturers, experts, and NGOs.*

The European Environmental Bureau is a federation of over 150 environmental citizens' organisations based in most EU Member States, most candidate and potential candidate countries as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. EEB is the environmental voice of European citizens, standing for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy. We want the EU to ensure all people a healthy environment and rich biodiversity.

The Zero Mercury Working Group is an international coalition of more than 80 public interest environmental and health non-governmental organizations from 42 countries from around the world formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project. The aim of the group is to strive for 'Zero' emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, eventually eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally.

Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH-Europe) is the European branch of an international coalition of hospitals, medical professionals and environmental organisations working to transform the health care sector, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment. The coalition has offices in Arlington, Brussels, Buenos Aires and Manila with over 470 members in 52 countries.

Among the expected participants of the conference will be representatives of different DGs of the European Commission, EU Ministries of the Environment and Health, scientists, industry, and NGOs.

To learn more about the draft agenda, registration form and other details please visit:

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/090618_Meas_Dev_conference.html

On the Friday 19 June 2009, the NGOs are invited to a Strategy meeting on Mercury. The objective is to inform NGO colleagues about the actual developments at EU (mainly) and global (UN) level and to discuss and agree upon a strategy to be followed on different issues.

If you are interested to attend the conference and NGO strategy meeting, please fill in and return the registration form as soon as possible and in any case, **before 3rd June 2009**

Funding is available, for EU NGOS mainly, for travel expenses and accommodation. In case funding has been requested, you will receive a confirmation by the 8th June 2009.

We look forward to welcoming you at the conference.

Yours sincerely,

Elena Lymberidi-Settimo

Project Coordinator "Zero Mercury Campaign"
European Environmental Bureau
Zero Mercury Working Group

Anja Leetz

Executive Director
Health Care Without Harm Europe