

**Initial NGOs' proposals to the global strategies' debate on mercury  
IFCS Swiss side-event on Heavy Metals, Budapest, 23 September 2006**

It is well known that mercury is highly toxic, causing damage to the nervous system at even relatively low levels of exposure. It is particularly harmful to the development of unborn children. It collects in human and animal bodies and can be concentrated through the food chain, especially in certain types of fish. Mercury has no respect for national or regional boundaries, travelling long distances through the atmosphere, and has contaminated the global food supplies at levels posing a significant risk to human health.

It is therefore clear that, since present measures are not adequate to sufficiently reduce the risk, further actions must be undertaken at global level, including the following 5 elements:

1. Work should start towards a global binding instrument on mercury, as soon as possible.
2. The findings of the trade report conducted for UNEP should be utilised and concrete actions should be taken including the following:
3. Global Mercury Demand Reduction
  - a. A global mercury use reduction goal of 50% by 2012 and 70% by 2017, as compared to 2005, should be established.
  - b. Mercury reduction goals should be achieved through the following means:
    - i. Enactment of legislation phasing out the use of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment in all countries with a significant electronic products manufacturing base;
    - ii. Ending the use of mercury in the production of button cell batteries;
    - iii. Phasing-out most production of mercury fever thermometers, and minimizing the production of other non-electronic measuring equipment; international institutions, governments, health care institutions and other large purchasers of medical equipment need to facilitate the transition in the developing world to non-mercury fever thermometers through their purchasing power.
    - iv. Ensuring that mercury-containing products and mercury-using processes, restricted in industrialized countries are not sent to developing countries;
    - v. Phasing out use of the mercury-cell chlor-alkali process as soon as possible depending upon the details of the financial assistance plan for developing nations to be prepared by UNEP for the 25<sup>th</sup> Governing Council meeting;
    - vi. Developing a roadmap for the increased use of mercury-free technologies in small-scale and artisanal gold mining.
4. Global Mercury Supply Reduction
  - a. A hierarchy of mercury supply sources should be established, favoring mercury from byproduct production and the recycling of wastes and products for use in commerce, where primary mining is the least preferred mercury supply source.
  - b. Excess mercury supply should be prevented from entering into global market consistent with this hierarchy through the following means:
    - i. Increasing restrictions of mercury exports from developed nations;
    - ii. Including mercury into the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure;
    - iii. Alternative development to replace primary mining where it is still conducted;
    - iv. Establishing a working group to develop recommendations for the coordinated management of mercury from closing mercury cell chlor-alkali facilities; and
    - v. Identifying options for increasing mercury by-product production from zinc smelting and industrial gold production and simultaneously obtaining mercury emission reduction co-benefits.
5. Financial Assistance

Developed countries should provide new and additional financial resources to support these activities in developing nations, and GEF should create a financial assistance mechanism to support global mercury activities consistent with the above proposals.

The NGOs would appreciate if the IFCS considered above comments and included them in its recommendations for future action on Heavy Metals, submitting them to the 24<sup>th</sup> UNEP Governing Council.