



NGOS intervention on Mercury at the UNEP GC Plenary, 9/2/2007

Thank you Chair and good afternoon. My name is Michael Bender and I am the director of the Mercury Policy Project, a U.S.-based NGO. Today I am speaking on behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group, a coalition of 48 NGOs worldwide working to reduce mercury pollution, trade in mercury and exposure to mercury.

.As noted in our initial intervention, in the 4 years since the Governing Council accepted the key findings of the global Mercury Assessment, and called upon countries to take immediate action to address global mercury pollution our collective actions have not matched our words. Globally, mercury use has remained the same or growing, and global mercury pollution is increasing.

Our message is clear today. In order to protect human health and the environment from this dangerous neurotoxin, we need concrete, immediate and long term commitments and binding agreements to match our words. We also heard in the committee of the whole that most of world's governments recognized the need for a legally binding instrument for mercury.

However a few governments once more blocked the will of the majority to make a political commitment to take legally binding action.

These few countries failed to recognize the best interest of the many; however we acknowledge the valiant efforts of many other countries and the compromise reached does move us forward.

We welcome the formation of the Ad hoc open ended working group which will consider options for enhanced voluntary measures and an international legal instrument and report their findings for action at the 25th GC.

We hope that the formation of this working group will lead to immediate action and progress towards a legally-binding agreement, with the necessary financial assistance and explicit reduction goals to reduce exposure risks from mercury.

We must finally move beyond promising words into real action.