

## **Lack of Participation at the UNEP Working Group on Mercury**

**Statement of Linda E. Greer, on behalf of the International Coalition of Mercury NGOs.  
Delivered at the Plenary Session of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the GC UNEP  
February 24, 2005**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I will be brief. I am Linda Greer, and I am representing the coalition of NGOs from around the world who came to Nairobi to promote reductions in use and emissions of mercury. We NGOs were moved to speak at the plenary today because of our very unhappy experience at the Chemical Group meeting, which we would like to discuss with you briefly.

Largely as the result of the vehement objection of the United States delegation, the NGO community was allowed *only to observe* at this meeting. Our chair, Viveka Bohn from Sweden, was very generous to allow three comments from us during the entire day of the meeting, which ran from 10 am to 11 pm.

I would like the plenary to take stock of the loss that UNEP experienced in excluding the NGO coalition from participation. We are a group of ten individuals from both the developed and developing world. We are comprised of two scientists with PhDs in chemistry who specialize in toxic metals, a lawyer with 20 years of experience in chemical regulation in the United States who is also a former key official on mercury from the state of Maine, and two mercury experts who attended the previous GC meeting two years ago and who have worked tirelessly on this issue from more than five years. Our members include NGOs from India and Brazil, both crucial countries for global mercury demand, and NGOs from the EU and elsewhere.

The Mercury NGO group has worked actively together to prepare for this meeting. We attended every regional workshop held by UNEP over the past year to discuss mercury. We submitted comments together for this meeting in Nairobi. We commissioned an analysis of mercury trade data to share with key countries at the meeting, in an effort to focus their attention on their own stake in this issue. Finally and perhaps most importantly, we worked together intensely so that our contribution to the meeting would reflect broad perspective from both developed and developing countries across the globe. Of course, we went to great expense and trouble for the ten groups to travel to Nairobi for this meeting, which is very expensive.

Two years ago the NGOs were full participants in the Mercury Drafting Group. Similarly SAICM has allowed for full participation of the NGO community. We were thus completely shocked to be excluded from active participation in the meeting this week.

We strongly urge the appropriate authorities in UNEP to review this situation. SAICM procedures should serve as a precedent for our participation at UNEP meetings of all kinds.

As a result of our exclusion, the mercury discussion was deprived of important expertise as well as perspective. In our humble opinion, the results of the mercury deliberation would have been substantially, substantially improved with the benefit of our participation.

Thank you.

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