



PRESS RELEASE

EU Parliament votes for export ban and temporary storage of surplus mercury

(Brussels/Strasbourg, 20 June, 2007) – Environmental and health organisationsⁱⁱⁱ have welcomed the European Parliament's plenary vote on a proposed regulation to ban mercury exports from the EU and ensure surplus mercury is stored out of harm's way.

The Parliament endorsed holding excess mercury securely in constantly-monitored storage sites, until technical advances allow the safe and permanent disposal of the noxious substance. It also supports preventing the export of certain mercury compounds and goods containing the toxic metal which are already banned from sale in the EU. Parliament also voted to strengthen protection of EU citizens by banning imports of metallic mercury and certain mercury compounds.

"They've clearly signalled that until further notice, liquid mercury storage can only be a temporary arrangement: there's no 'out of sight, out of mind' option," said Elena Lymberidi, EEB's 'Zero Mercury' campaign project Coordinator. "Now the Commission and Council must do the right thing, too." Parliament also advocated the 'polluter pays' principle, and recommended creating a fund to ensure money from mercury-related industries is available to pay for this process.

Although encouraged at progress towards a mercury export ban, NGOs would have preferred an earlier implementation date than December 2010, which prolongs the risk of mercury contamination worldwide over the next three years.

"Following this decision, we've got an excellent opportunity to stop the export of mercury-containing products to developing countries," said Lisette van Vliet of Health Care Without Harm Europe. "At present, we're restricting the trade of these products inside Europe, but effectively saying it's OK for poorer nations to suffer the consequences of their use. Ending these double standards would be a powerful demonstration that we're serious about phasing out mercury use anywhere on the planet."

The NGOs backed Parliament's demand that all stakeholders must exchange information. EU countries must regularly provide information on movements of mercury, and the chlor-alkali and other concerned industries must also give details. "We must start collecting this information as soon as possible. That will tell us how much mercury we're dealing with and where it's going," said Elena Lymberidi of EEB.

The environmental and health groups are now calling on the European Commission, the Presidency and other EU leaders to follow Parliament's example before a potential agreement at the Environment Council on 28 June.

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Notes for editors:-

Mercury is a global pollutant which drifts far across the world. Its most toxic form, methylmercury, accumulates in large predatory fish which we eat, affecting the most vulnerable people, children and pregnant women.

See letters sent to the institutions:-

To the European Parliament [13 June 2007]:
http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070613NGOsLettertoEP-plenary-Hg-export-ban.pdf

To Environment Committee of the European Parliament[26 April 2007]:

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070426NGOS_1stReadingENVI_Hg_Export_ban.pdf

Letter to Commissioners:[8 June 2007]

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070608NGOsletterto%20Commissioners.pdf

[Letter to Environment Ministers](#) [6 June 2007]

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070606NGOs'%20Letter%20to%20Env%20Mins%20Export%20Ban.pdf

^{i[4]} Environmental NGOS include

The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, www.eeb.org, is a federation of more than 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in all EU Member States and most Accession Countries, as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. The aim of the EEB is to protect and improve the environment of Europe and to enable the citizens of Europe to play their part in achieving that goal.

The **Zero Mercury Working Group**, www.zeromercury.org, is an international coalition of over 48 public-interest non-governmental organisations worldwide formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project/Ban Mercury Working Group. The group's aim is to reach "Zero emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, towards eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally."

Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL), <http://www.env-health.org> is an international non-governmental organisation advocating environmental protection as a means to improve health and well-being. Member groups and organisations represent health, environment, women, health professionals and others. The group has a diverse membership of 41 member groups (6 international organisations, 11 European networks and 24 national/local organisations) including non-governmental organisations, professional bodies representing doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, academic institutions and other not-for-profit organisations.

Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH), www.noharm.org, is an international coalition of hospitals and health-care systems, medical and nursing professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labour unions, environmental and religious organisations. HCWH is dedicated to transforming the health-care industry worldwide, 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.

And with the support of NGOs from the USA (Natural Resources Defence Council), India (Toxics Link), People's Republic of China (Global Village of Beijing), Brazil (Association for Combats against the POPS).