



First steps towards streamlining global solutions on mercury

(Bangkok, - 16 November 2007) Anti-mercury NGO advocatesⁱ believe that the first meeting of the UNEPⁱⁱ Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Mercury took important first steps, but there is still a way to go. On 12-16 November 2007, representatives of the world's governments met in Bangkok to develop a global plan to control mercury pollution. "World countries' representatives made first steps towards streamlining global solutions on mercury pollution, following the mandate of the UNEP Governing Council (GC) from February this year." said Elena Lymberidi, from the Zero Mercury Working Group, "support for stronger legally binding commitments are however still necessary to ensure solution to this global crisis".

The UNEP GC had given the mandate to the OEWG to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments. The OEWG requested the UNEP secretariat to prepare for a second meeting with:

- An analysis on the way that different financial mechanisms would apply to a protocol to the Stockholm Convention, a new free-standing treaty and of voluntary arrangements, and a further analysis on how countries could pursue the development of such instruments to control mercury pollution, and
- An indication of which mercury control measures could be implemented at a national level (considering the national capacities), and which would benefit from a coordinated international framework, whether through legally binding instruments or voluntary arrangements.
- Other studies were commissioned.

"The outcome of the second meeting of this group will shape future global action," said Ravi Agarwal of the Indian NGO Toxics Link. "That will be the difficult meeting, but we feel there is now good momentum towards establishing a global treaty to control mercury pollution.

For further information:

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ⁱ Environmental NGOS include

The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, www.eeb.org, is a federation of over 150 environmental citizens' organisations based in all EU Member States as well as in 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 55 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 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.

International POPs Eliminations Network (IPEN), www.ipen.org, is a global network of health and environmental organizations in more than 70 countries working together for a Toxics-Free Future.

ⁱⁱ United Nations Environment Programme