



[Monday 24 January, Chiba, Japan] – As delegates from more than 100 countries today begin the second round of negotiations for a legally binding treaty on mercury , environmental and health NGOs and indigenous nation representatives from around the world urged them to truly honor the Minamata tragedy by agreeing to adopt strong measures to reduce exposure to mercury, a dangerous neurotoxin.

“If the world’s governments really want to call this the “Minamata Treaty” when the treaty is signed there in 2013, then they should back up their words with meaningful actions,” said Takeshi Yasuma, of Citizens Against Chemicals Pollution, a Japanese NGO, noting that a Japanese official had proposed calling it the “Minamata Treaty” during the first negotiation session last year, echoing an earlier statement from the Prime Minister of Japan.ⁱ

Meaningful actions means strong treaty measures to:

- Phase out the use of mercury in the vast majority of products and industrial processes;
- Reduce the global supply of mercury by phasing out mercury mining, and strictly limiting mercury trade to the few allowable uses under the treaty;
- Require best available control technologies to minimize mercury emissions from new and

existing priority sources, such as coal-fired power plants and non-ferrous smelters;

- Require governments to implement action plans to reduce mercury use and releases from artisanal small scale gold mining .
- Improve global capabilities to safely manage mercury waste and respond to contaminated sites, including addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in harms way; and
- Provide sufficient funding as needed to assist countries within the developing world.

The starting draft is extremely weak in some of these crucial areas, such as the failure to control air emissions from existing facilities. Without strengthening provisions, mercury pollution from thousands of miles away will continue to affect indigenous peoples and contaminate their food sources.

“Today, mercury pollution threatens public health across the globe,” said Josh Karliner, International Coordinator for Health Care Without Harm. “The governments gathered here have an opportunity to protect people and the environment for generations to come. But to do so, they must significantly strengthen the draft text they’ve been given. “

“We look forward to working with governments at INC 2 to develop the kind of treaty text that will be required to meet these objectives,” said Rachel Kamande of the European Environmental Bureau / Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG).

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Note to the editor background documents

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23 January 2011, Chiba Japan,

[CACP/ZMWG NGO lunch event - Honoring Minamata](#) . Poster-invitation also in [Japanese](#)

ZMWG comments on the Elements paper

[ZMWG summary of changes to the elements paper](#)

[ZMWG comments on the UNEP INC 2 Draft elements paper](#)

(i) Environmental NGOs include :

Citizens Against Chemicals Pollution (CACP), a Tokyo based NGO was established in 1997 and since then it has been working on policies and issues related to chemicals pollution in humans and environment. For more information see:

<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/kagaku/pico/index.html>

The **Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG)** is an international coalition of more than 93 public interest environmental and health non-governmental organizations from 45 countries from around the world formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project. ZMWG strives for zero supply, demand, and emissions of mercury from all anthropogenic sources, with the goal of reducing mercury in the global environment to a minimum. Our mission is to advocate and support the adoption and implementation of a legally binding instrument which contains mandatory obligations to eliminate where feasible, and

otherwise minimize, the global supply and trade of mercury, the global demand for mercury, anthropogenic releases of mercury to the environment, and human and wildlife exposure to mercury. (www.zeromercury.org)

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The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), www.eeb.org , is a federation of over 150 environmental citizens' organisations based in most EU Member States, most candidate and potential candidate countries as well as in a few neighbouring countries. EEB is the environmental voice of European citizens, standing for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy. We want the EU to ensure all people a healthy environment and rich biodiversity.

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), www.noharm.org, Health Care Without Harm is a global coalition of thousands of health professionals, hospitals and health systems working in 52 countries to promote public health and environmental sustainability.

ⁱ See: <http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/hatoyama-apologizes-to-minamata-victims-2010.pdf>