



[Bangkok, Brussels - 23 October 2009] – Today, world governments took the first significant steps towards a legally binding Treaty to control mercury pollution at a United Nations Environmental Program meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. Their recommendations now provide countries with a basis to head into the International Negotiating Committee (INC) meetings starting in Stockholm, June 2010.

“We are happy that governments agreed on rules of procedures which allow NGO participation, and a time table to adopt a treaty by 2013,” said Elena Lymberidi–Settimo of the European Environmental Bureau and the Zero Mercury Working Group.

During the meeting, information on supply and trade, products and artisanal scale gold mining where provided. Countries and regions expressed their opinion on how discussions should unfold during the meeting and governments updated participants on activities controlling mercury in their own countries.

“We look forward to engage in focused discussions in areas such as supply, trade and storage of surplus mercury where substantial progress can be made,” said Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group and director of the US-based Mercury Policy Project, “discussion on arrangements for technical and financial assistance, and mechanisms addressing compliance should also be addressed early on.”

Richard Gutierrez of the Philippine NGO Ban Toxics noted: “We are optimistic that the global community is now well on its way towards establishing a treaty to control mercury pollution and effectively safeguard the fish we eat from this poison.”

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that makes its way up the food chain into humans, and puts

developing fetuses and young children at risk.

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Editor's notes

Mercury is a global pollutant that travels long distances. Its most toxic form – methylmercury - accumulates in large predatory fish and is taken up in our bodies through eating fish, with the worst impacts on babies *in utero* and small children.

In February 2009, world environmental ministers agreed to begin negotiating a treaty to control global mercury pollution. The decision represented the consensus of the more than 140 countries gathered for the 25th UNEP¹ Governing Council meeting

For more information, see the Zero Mercury Campaign's website, www.zeromercury.org , and

See also at www.zeromercury.org

PR: Mercury in Fish is a Global Health Concern [10 February 2009]

ZMWG Report: Mercury in Fish, a global Health Hazard [10 February 2009]

Executive summary in EN, FR, ES, PT, CHI

PR: New Study Raises Concern over Mercury Pollution from Burning Products [4 February 2009]

ZMWG Report: MERCURY RISING, Reducing global emissions from burning mercury-products [4 February 2009]

<http://www.zeromercury.org/press/081205NGOS-PR-CouncilConclMercury-UNEP-GC25final.pdf>

EEB letter to Environment Council [18/11/2008] <http://www.eeb.org/activities/General/Eversion-Environment-Council-5December2008-181108.pdf>

ZMWG comments to the UNEP draft decision on mercury [27/11/2008] http://www.zeromercury.org/UNEP_developments/081127_ZMWG_comments_on_UNEP_draft_decision_GC25_Mercury-final.pdf

European Environmental Bureau, (EEB), www.eeb.org , is a federation of over 140

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 75 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."

¹ United Nations Environment Programme