



**Zero Mercury Working Group statement at the
Special High-Level Event “*The Minamata Convention on Mercury...*”
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 24 September 2015
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Your Excellencies Ministers, Ambassadors, Executive Director of UNEP,
distinguished delegates and colleagues.

On behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group, an international coalition of more than 95 public interest NGOs from over 50 countries, we congratulate the countries here today for their ongoing interest, commitment and work towards early ratification and implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

It's very important to move quickly toward reducing mercury pollution. New studies show mercury pollution continues to build up in the global pool and exposure risks are far greater than thought even a decade ago.¹ Mercury levels are projected to double by 2050, with a correlating build up in certain seafood, if pollution levels continue unabated.

Our members stand ready, at the local level, to assist their governments to prepare for ratification and early implementation, and are involved in numerous interim mercury reduction initiatives around the globe.

For example, through the UN Food and Agricultural Organization project funded by the European Commission, we are supporting our local NGO partners as they engage in demonstration projects in four African countries. In Nigeria and Mauritius, they are working closely with governments in developing strategies to phase out/down mercury in those products listed under Article 4 of the Convention. In Tanzania and Ghana, local NGOs are involved in laying the groundwork to assist in the development of National Action Plans to reduce mercury use in Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining. At the completion of this project, we plan on hosting 2 regional meetings to present lessons learned from mercury reduction projects in those African countries, share information on successful strategies and facilitate an exchange of practical information to participants.

Through other grant-funded projects, local NGOs have been supported in several other countries to work on mercury reduction activities. For example, in Armenia, Lebanon, India and Nigeria NGOs are working towards mercury product phase out. In Brazil the local NGO is working on phasing out mercury use in the chlorine industry. And in Mauritius, Pakistan, and Tanzania NGOs are measuring mercury in hotspots, using a Lumex monitoring instrument, at dental clinics, gold-mining sites, waste dumps, while raising awareness towards rapid ratification of the treaty.

Zero Mercury urges all countries to press forward on ratification and early implementation activities. We stand ready to assist as appropriate.

Thank you very much for your attention

¹ <http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/health/methylmercury.cfm>