

**Zero Mercury Working Group closing statement at Diplomatic Conference,
by Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, ZMWG International coordinator**

Friday 11th October 2013

Your Excellencies Ministers, Ambassadors, Executive Director of UNEP, Chair of the INC, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

With the Minamata tragedy in our minds and hearts, on behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group, I would like to first congratulate and express my sincere thanks to the Chair of the INC, Mr. Fernando Lugris, for all the cooperation through the years. Your openness and interest on the issue, and your facilitation of NGO involvement, has really helped shape and advance the work to where we are now – having developed a global mercury treaty. This is deeply appreciated.

We would further like to congratulate all countries who have now signed the treaty, thank the Bureau members and the UNEP secretariat for all the work in guiding us smoothly through this 4 year process, the government of Japan and the citizens of Minamata and Kumamoto for their warm hospitality and welcome, as well as all delegates and colleagues who cooperated towards this outcome.

After more than a decade of discussions and negotiations, the Minamata Convention on Mercury has just been adopted. Countries should not lose the momentum from attaining this world agreement now, and ratify as fast as possible; our message is 50 countries to ratify by 2015, to allow the treaty to enter into force then. *50 by 2015: – Make it Happen!*

A new phase now begins – preparation for treaty ratification and implementation.

We need to get started! During the interim period, until the convention enters into force, we call for short term mercury reduction activities to occur. The Zero Mercury Working Group has developed a set of recommended actions for some countries– what we call our Action Challenge – which we believe would result in significant mercury reductions. We urge these governments and others to identify short-term priorities and move forward. Activities could be targeting mercury trade and supply, phasing out products and processes where effective/efficient alternatives have been there for years, emissions' reduction, and the development and implementation of Artisanal and Small Scale Gold-Mining (ASGM) Action Plans.

Mercury pollution will not wait for the treaty to enter into force. It is happening now.

While we welcome this treaty, we are fully aware of the challenges ahead to make it work, particularly in the areas of ASGM and emissions. We also anticipate treaty revisions to encourage the further phase-out of products and processes in the coming years. We

believe, the forward motion created by this Convention's implementation will facilitate its further strengthening in the years ahead.

The world's governments have determined that mercury is a global problem warranting immediate and long term international action. No one country can solve the mercury crisis – coordinated action is needed. The new mercury treaty, in spite of its flaws, presents a real opportunity for governments, industry, civil society and all stakeholders to work towards the significant reduction of mercury globally, eventually leading towards a world where the fish are safe for everyone to eat.

We look forward to the same spirit of cooperation, as we begin the real work of implementation.

Thank you very much for your attention – Arigato gozaimasu.