



Geneva, Switzerland, [23 January 2014]—Today, NGOs welcomed the adoption of a new resolution by the World Health Organization’s executive board (EB), agreeing to both endorse and lend support for countries to address the health-related aspects of the new Minamata Convention on Mercury. They also applauded WHO for encouraging governments to “promptly sign, ratify and implement” the Convention.

“Prompt ratification will result in less pollution and human exposure to mercury, a poison that can affect the brain and the nervous system ,” said **Michael Bender, international coordinator for Zero Mercury Working Group**

, who presented a statement on behalf of Consumers International during the WHO EB meeting. “

To protect people’s brains, we are urging more testing of commonly consumed fish, consumption advisories, biomonitoring, and public health campaigns.”

The Convention’s objective is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic mercury emissions through a range of provisions – including, for the first time in a global multilateral environment agreement – a dedicated health article.

“This type of WHO endorsed resolution will give us more leverage in developing countries (that place a lot of emphasis and trust in the WHO) to undertake mercury activities as per the treaty,” said

Rico Euripidou of groundWork

in South Africa.

The Convention's provision on health encourages Parties to develop programmes to protect populations at risk from exposure to mercury through the development and implementation of health-based guidelines. In addition, the Convention requires parties to phase out certain mercury-containing products, including thermometers, sphygmomanometers, cosmetics, and topical antiseptics; phase down dental amalgam, and develop public health strategies to reduce use of mercury in artisanal and small scale gold mining.

“Governments and all stakeholders involved need to build upon this momentum by undertaking mercury reduction activities in parallel, and ratifying the treaty as fast as possible ,” said **Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, ZMWG International Coordinator**

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We urge 50 countries to step up and ratify by 2015

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The Convention holds critical obligations that affect primary mining of mercury use, trade, emissions and disposal, among others, that taken together will eventually lead to global mercury reductions.

The WHO EB resolution must next be approved at the World Health Assembly at their annual meeting in May before it is finalized.

Published EB resolution (direct weblink: http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB134/B134_R5-en.pdf).

see also <http://consumersinternational.blogspot.co.uk/>

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