

Press release

NGOs¹ Urge World Governments to Negotiate a Strong Mercury Treaty

Nairobi, 31 October 2011—Today, delegates from more than 100 countries begin the third round of negotiations for a legally binding treaty on mercury. Environmental and health NGOs from around the world call on governments to begin hammering out specific measures to curb the rising tide of mercury pollution worldwide.

Delegates have proposed draft treaty text and are expected to begin using it as the starting point for negotiations.

“Too many options are on the table,” said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, ZMWG co-coordinator at EEB. “It’s time to weed out the weak options on the way to building a strong mercury treaty.”

“Governments are almost halfway through the negotiation process, so they need to start agreeing on meaningful actions,” said Michael Bender, ZMWG co-coordinator at MPP. “Without coordinated action by the international community, mercury pollution will continue to threaten vulnerable populations worldwide,”

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 nonferrous 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 risks to vulnerable populations; and
- Provide sufficient funding as needed to assist countries within the developing world.

The case on taking bold and decisive action is clear,” said Richard Gutierrez, Ban Toxics!, “We need to build off from well established values such as the precautionary principle, polluter pays, and environmental justice, among others.”

NGOs look forward to working with governments at INC 3 to achieve these objectives, so that by INC 4 the basic outlines of the treaty are clear.

###

For more information:

Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, ZMWG co-coordinator, elena.lymberidi@eeb.org, Mobile: +32 496 532818, www.zeromercury.org

Michael Bender, ZMWG co-coordinator, mercurypolicy@aol.com, Mobile +1 8029174579

Note to the editor

[ZMWG Preliminary Views on the INC 3 Draft Treaty text - English version](#)

UNEP INC 3 Negotiations:

<http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Mercury/tabid/434/Default.aspx>

ⁱ The Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) is an international coalition of more than 94 public interest environmental and health nongovernmental organizations from 52 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)

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