



PRESS RELEASE

Overwhelming majority of countries support a new free-standing global legally binding instrument on mercury.

[Nairobi, 10 October 2008] Public interest advocates¹ welcomed the results of a global meeting convened to take decisions on the threats posed by mercury to human health and the environment. On 6-10 October 2008, the 2nd UNEP² Open Ended Working Group (OEWG2) on Mercury, completed its work, in preparation for the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in February 2009, where it will be decided whether a global legally binding instrument on mercury will be developed.

“An overwhelming majority of the more than 90 governments attending the meeting supported a free standing legally binding instrument , said Elena Lymberidi – Settimo, from the Zero Mercury Working Group.” “Now it is time for the GC to finish the work that it started and begin actions to establish a global treaty on mercury. Only through a treaty will we see sufficient reductions in global mercury emissions, supply and demand.”

The UNEP GC had given the mandate to the OEWG to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments. The OEWG2 completed its work, and will send a report to the GC including:

- A comprehensive set of elements, agreed to by a broad consensus, to be part of a global framework
- Two options for global frameworks on mercury – a legal and a voluntary one.
- The legal option endorses a new free-standing instrument.

“The outcome of the OEWG has helped shape future global action,” said Richard Gutierrez, of the Philippine NGO, Ban Toxics. “We are optimistic that the global community is well on its way towards establishing a treaty to control mercury pollution and effectively safeguard the fish we eat from this poison.”

For further information:

Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, Project Coordinator, Zero Mercury Campaign, European Environmental Bureau: www.zeromercury.org, www.eeb.org; elena.lymberidi@eeb.org; Tel: +32 2 2891301; Mobile: +32 496 532 818

¹ Environmental NGOs include

The **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 60 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."

International POPs Eliminations Network (IPEN), www.ipen.org, is a global network of health and environmental organizations in more than 80 countries working together for a Toxics-Free Future.

² United Nations Environment Programme