



New treaty effectiveness will depend on adequacy of data to be collected, say NGOs

Geneva, Switzerland, 22 September 2017 —Prior to the start of the first Conference of Parties (COP1), the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) welcomed the entry into force of the Minamata Convention.

“While there are alternatives to mercury, there are no alternatives to global cooperation,” said Michael Bender, international ZMWG coordinator. “We applaud the world’s governments for committing to curtail this dangerous neurotoxin.”

The First Conference of the Parties will take place from 24 to 29 September 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. Over 1,000 delegates and around 50 ministers are expected to assemble in Geneva to celebrate and lay the groundwork for the treaty’s overall effectiveness.

During the prior negotiations, the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (INC) approved many of the forms and guidance that the Convention specifies must be adopted at COP 1, which are needed for the swift and smooth launch and running of the Convention. These include guidance documents on identifying stocks, determining best available technologies and reducing mercury use in small scale gold mining; as well as forms for trade procedures and for exemptions from certain deadlines.

“These INC approvals were achieved by consensus after considerable deliberations, and are ready for approval without further debate,” said Satish Sinha, Toxics Link India.

Among the most critical open issues to be discussed at COP1 are the reporting requirements, which will provide critical information on both the global mercury situation and the effectiveness of the Convention in achieving mercury reductions. Particularly critical to collect will be data on mercury production and trade, which can change significantly in a short period of time.

“Countries will not have readily available information about production and trade in bordering countries or within their region, unless there is frequent reporting under the Convention,” said David Lennett, Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council “Many borders between countries are “porous,” and where a significant portion of mercury trade is informal/illegal. Good data on legal trade flows will enable actions to address illegal trade, all of which has a huge impact on artisanal and small scale gold mining, the largest source of mercury pollution globally.

Mercury is a global pollutant that travels long distances. Its most toxic form – methylmercury - accumulates in large predatory fish and is taken up in our bodies through eating fish, with the worst impacts on babies *in utero*.

For more information, see:

<http://www.mercuryconvention.org>
www.zeromercury.org

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*The **Zero Mercury Working Group** (ZMWG) is an international coalition of over 95 public interest environmental and health non-governmental organizations from more than 50 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.*