

**Mercury
Policy Project**



For immediate Release

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Mercury in Fish is a Global Health Concern

Citizens' groups say problem warrants immediate United Nations action

Washington, DC— As the world's governments convene next week to discuss developing a legally binding treaty on mercury, citizens' groups from around the world have released a new report calling attention to the significant global human health hazards caused by mercury in fish and fish-eating marine mammals. Over twenty groups from around the world (1), including the international *Zero Mercury Working Group* (2) released the study, which maintains that the problem demands an effective response from governments and the United Nations.

"Mercury contamination of fish and mammals is a global public health concern," said Michael Bender, co-coordinator of the *Zero Mercury Working Group*. "Our study of fish tested in different locations around the world shows that internationally accepted exposure levels for methylmercury are exceeded, often by wide margins, in each country and area covered."

According to the report, "*Mercury in Fish: An Urgent Global Health Concern*", the risk is greatest for populations whose per capita fish consumption is high, and in areas where pollution has elevated the average mercury content of fish. In cultures where fish-eating marine mammals are part of the traditional diet, mercury in these animals can add substantially to total dietary exposure. In addition, the study shows that methylmercury hazards still exist where these dietary and local pollutant levels are less prevalent.

The report indicates that mercury is a persistent, bioaccumulative transboundary pollutant that contaminates our air, soil, water and fish. Because of this potential for global contamination, mercury pollution requires a coordinated international response.

"The report outlines that all governments face similar threats from mercury since it is global pollutant that contaminates fish around the world," said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, Project Coordinator Zero Mercury Campaign, European Environmental Bureau. "In response, governments should agree to start work immediately on a global mercury treaty at the United Nations meeting in Nairobi next week."

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that can make its way up the food chain into humans, and poses an increased exposure risk to developing fetuses and young children and to adults exposed to mercury.

More Information:

The full report is available at: www.mercurypolicy.org

Co-releasers include: European Environmental Bureau, Ban Toxics!, Mercury Policy Project, Indonesia Toxics-Free Network, World Wildlife Federation - Guinea, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, Pollution Probe, Pesticide Action Network – Mauritius, Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement, Health & Environment Alliance, CEPHED, ACPO, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU), Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control (UNETMAC), East African Sustainability Watch Network, Ecologistas en Accion, Legambiente, Arnika, France Nature Environment, German League for Nature and Environment, DISHA, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council and groundWork

(2) **Zero Mercury Working Group** is an international coalition of more than 75 public interest non-governmental organizations from around the world. For more information, see: www.zeromercury.org