



Statement of Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) - International cooperation - Minamata COP 4.2 – 21-25 March 2022, Bali, Indonesia

I am talking on behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group, an international network of over 110 NGOs from more than 55 countries.

Zero Mercury and partner organizations have been supporting their respective governments in multiple countries towards ratification and implementation of the Convention's provisions, especially with regards to mercury added-products phase-out.

The Zero Mercury multiple investigation of skin lightening creams over the last five years demonstrated the continuing availability of illegal and unsafe products, notwithstanding national laws and Convention obligations. Just recently, we tested creams offered by over 40 online platforms and accessed in 17 countries by our partner NGOs, and confirmed yet again that high-mercury SLPs are widely available (almost 50% of the 271 samples of SLPs were found with mercury concentration above 1 ppm).

Our report and work in the field clearly shows that the current legal regulatory framework in most countries fails to adequately protect consumers from hazardous and illegal products sold online. Furthermore, the illegal production and trade of mercury-added SLPs continues unimpeded because of weak enforcement, insufficient international cooperation and inadequate resources devoted to this issue.

In this regard, the Minamata Convention can play an important role in assisting Parties if this becomes a higher priority for the COP. Possible areas of assistance would include creating an information exchange platform, developing materials and resources such as a training manual for customs and enforcement officers, and technical/financial support for the promotion of regional collaboration. Field detection equipment will be necessary to identify the illegal products, and the Convention should explore ways to assist in the financing and training necessary to make this happen. Lastly, existing rules governing online platforms are clearly insufficient to incentivize the platforms to adequately supervise their sites. Unfortunately, this problem applies to many unsafe products, and should command the attention of the Parties as they seek to improve their enforcement processes.

For more information, our reports are available online and at our exhibition booth.

Thank you.