

ZMWG Statement on Annex A and B

30 October 2023

Switzerland, Geneva

Thank you, Madam President,

I am speaking on behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group. Since it's the first time we are taking the floor, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Switzerland as well as UN Environment, the Bureau and the Secretariat for all your efforts to make this meeting happen.

We urge the Conference of the Parties to take decisive and ambitious actions at this meeting, to close the gaps in Convention coverage of mercury products and processes, so that these uses are phased out and thereby removed from global commerce. The mercury products to be discussed at this meeting have viable and safe non-mercury alternatives, as demonstrated by the transitions already undertaken or completed by policymakers and/or producers.

We welcome and support the proposals submitted by the Africa region on dental amalgam, lamps, and cosmetics. Recognizing other NGO speakers will be addressing dental amalgam and lamps, we join with them in urging that Annex A should be revised so that a timetable for phasing out the manufacturing and trade is established for these products. Annex B should also be revised so that production of polyurethane using mercury containing catalysts is prohibited.

We would like to highlight, however, the urge to address the issue of mercury added cosmetics. Despite the current ban under the Minamata Convention, the trade and manufacture of mercury added cosmetics continues relentlessly. The Zero Mercury Working Group, in its persistent efforts to monitor the markets, has once more demonstrated the need for stronger measures. In its last investigation, 90% (191) of the 213 cosmetics analyzed (purchased from 23 online platforms) were found to contain mercury levels that exceeded the 1 ppm threshold. The COP can stop this by adopting stricter and complementary measures that would address this global mercury crisis.

In addition, the recent Environmental Investigation Agency's undercover investigation showed clearly that mercury compounds are being deliberately added to cosmetics. The COP should therefore consider addressing the legal loopholes that enable mercury compound trade as it compromises the objective of the Convention. At a minimum, mercury compounds should not be produced or traded for uses not allowed under the Convention.

Mercury is still far too present in our environment, and continues to impact people's health on a daily basis. Let's act upon it.