

**Opening Statement of Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG)
Minamata COP 5 – 30 October 2023, Geneva, Switzerland**

Thank you, Madam President,

I am speaking on behalf of the Zero Mercury Working Group, an international coalition of over 110 public interest NGOs from more than 55 countries.

We would like to thank you, the Government of Switzerland as well as UN Environment, the Bureau and the Secretariat for all their work in preparation for this meeting; and congratulate all governments that have ratified the Convention this last year. We would also like to thank the Secretariat for the Brownbag meetings following our discussions in Bali.

We are very happy to see that work towards phasing out Mercury added product (MAP) work has been getting more traction this year. Our NGO partners have been supporting their respective governments with their ratification and the implementation of certain Treaty provisions, and MAP phase out work has been ongoing in Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Bangladesh, India, the Philippines and most recently in Pakistan. Under the third phase of the EU/UNEP African Caribbean Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements (ACP MEA III) Programme, assistance is also being provided to the governments of Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda. ZMWG was also a resource for the Global Workshop on MAPs organized in June, here in Geneva. We do appreciate this acknowledgement of our work.

Under our global skin lightening cream campaign, our fourth testing round has been completed. 213 samples were collected and analysed from 12 countries, from over 23 e-commerce platforms; 191 of those, 90%, were found to be with mercury over 1 ppm. A report from the Environmental Investigation Agency revealed that mercury and mercury compounds, are intentionally added as a common practice by manufacturers; ammoniated mercury is traded around the world without control and for use in skin lightening products (SLPs).

These consistent findings of high mercury creams, causing acute and chronic effects, indicate that the Convention needs to take immediate complementary measures to address, online sales, as proposed by the African Region's amendment. The proposed measures can strengthen the Convention, by curtailing the merchandising of SLPs, spur collaboration and contribute to raising awareness. The Convention provides the right forum to address such challenges.

In addition, COP5 should address and eventually ban mercury compounds, especially those for not allowed uses such as cosmetics.

Given the market developments, availability and overall superiority of LEDs, the phase out of the manufacture and trade of all fluorescent lamps should take place as early as 2025.

Non-mercury dental fillings are cost effective, perform as well or better, and are available and used worldwide; we believe that the discontinuation of dental amalgam by 2030 is feasible.

Our priorities of this meeting are: (1) Completing the work on setting the Effectiveness Evaluation framework so that this process is on track to meet the deadline for the first report, (2) Banning remaining products and processes given safer alternatives are clearly available, and (3) agreeing on a mercury threshold for waste contaminated with mercury ensuring high level of protection.

As always, we look forward to working collaboratively and where appropriate assisting Parties towards our common goal – Making mercury history.

Thank you.