

Opening Statement of Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) Minamata COP 6 – 3 November 2025, Geneva, Switzerland

Thank you, Mr. 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, this year celebrating our 20th anniversary. 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 over the past two years.

We strive for zeroing out the global supply, demand and trade in mercury and mercury compounds and reducing mercury releases and exposure to a minimum. As we explain in our Views paper, COP4 and 5 decisions on mercury added products and processes helped strengthen the Convention and we hope that COP6 will continue this work. In particular, we are happy to see that since the last COP, awareness is growing in addressing the challenges of banning the manufacture and trade in mercury added skin lightening products as evidenced by the report from the Minamata Secretariat.

Our global work on addressing the proliferation of toxic skin lighteners have continued since COP5. For example, NGO partners have been supporting their respective governments on reducing online sales in the United States, Europe, Kenya, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. In Pakistan the main focus has been on supporting the ban on manufacturing. Under our global skin lightening cream campaign, two new sampling reports have been published in October 2025. The first [report](#) builds upon previous work of ZMWG, and focuses on the importance of regulating the manufacturing of these dangerous and highly toxic products. Building upon prior government testing finding high mercury levels, ZMWG and its partners from Pakistan, Kenya, the Philippines, and the US purchased and tested samples from six widely available brands of skin whitening creams made in Pakistan. 35 of the 37 creams contained mercury, sometimes at very high concentration.

Our second [report](#) examined the proliferation of at online sales globally of the largest E-commerce giant in the world. Despite a recent U.S. legal settlement requiring Amazon.com to enforce its prohibited product policies for toxic SLPs, ZMWG testing shows that Amazon operations across more than 23 countries, serving markets in over 100 countries, continue to promote poisoning for profit through illegal sales of toxic skin lighteners worldwide.

Testing results from both of these reports reflect dangerously high mercury levels that we know from the World Health Organization can cause acute and chronic effects. Our research findings also indicate widespread global exposure through sales estimates of over 60 million lighteners sold each year to unsuspecting consumers worldwide. Therefore, it is imperative that COP6 Decisions need to reflect the urgency of addressing this global mercury cosmetic crisis. We are calling on COP6 to keep the momentum and take immediate complementary measures to address challenges with manufacturing, trade and sales, while simultaneously taking steps to reduce demand. In addition, we would look to COP to further address and eventually ban mercury compounds, especially those for not allowed uses such as cosmetics.

Further, we continue our focus on phasing out all mercury added products in Article 4. Since January of this year, the EU has banned dental amalgam use, confirming once more that 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 at a global level is feasible.

In summary, our priorities for COP6 are: (1) Advancing the work on cosmetics and compounds, and ban mercury use in dentistry and VCM given safer alternatives are clearly available (2) ensure progress on Effectiveness Evaluation, and (3) make progress on mercury trade and ASGM.

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

Thank you.