

Brief Statement of IPEN Views of a Global Mercury Treaty

Mercury is a substance of global concern

- Fish in all regions are contaminated with mercury at levels that threaten human health and the environment; rice may also be an important pathway for mercury exposure
- Mercury-contaminated fish and other foods are particularly harmful to mothers and children
- Two-thirds of the mercury in the environment comes from human activities
- Mercury in the environment travels long distances
- Mercury is released to the environment from many sources including: mercury-containing products and devices, product manufacturing sites, certain industrial processes, mining activities, metal refining and recycling, coal combustion, cement kilns, waste dumps and incinerators, contaminated sites, crematoria and many others

Objective, scope, and implementation

- The goal of the global mercury treaty should be to protect human health, wildlife and ecosystems by eliminating anthropogenic sources of mercury
- The treaty should have a broad scope and address the entire mercury life-cycle
- It should recognize particularly vulnerable populations such as children, women of child bearing age, indigenous peoples, Arctic communities, island and coastal dwellers, fisherfolk, small-scale gold miners, the poor, workers, and others
- The treaty should include provisions that will enable it to be expanded at a future date to also control other pollutants of similar global concern, without compromising the robustness of the mercury treaty
- It should require each Party to establish and implement a National or Regional Treaty Implementation Plan; include in the plans inventories of mercury supplies, sources, releases to all media, wastes and contaminated sites
- Civil society should have an active role in the development and implementation of the treaty including the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of National or Regional Implementation Plans
- The treaty should establish mechanisms for evaluating its effectiveness including global monitoring of mercury in the environment and in fish and humans

Supply

- Ban primary mercury mining; mandate permanent, secure, monitored storage for existing mercury stockpiles and all mercury that is recovered from chlor-alkali plants; restrict trade in mercury generated from remaining sources
- In some cases, there may be need for transition assistance and/or other aid to specific groups of workers or communities who currently depend for their livelihood on activities that release mercury to the environment

Demand

- Use elimination-based control measures subject to possible limited, time-bound exemptions to phase-out all products and processes that contain or use mercury
- Promote research and development on sustainable, non-toxic, alternatives to products and processes that contain or use mercury with special emphasis on

addressing the needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition

Trade

- Establish effective controls on international trade in mercury and mercury-containing products
- While the treaty may recognize that mercury control and international trade law are mutually supportive, it must not contain language suggesting that its provisions are subservient to international trade law

Atmospheric emissions

- Establish Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practices (BEP) for coal-fired power plants, cement kilns, and other combustion processes that release mercury to the environment with an agreed schedule for its phased-in application; aim to phase-out any of these sources when good alternatives are feasible, available and affordable

Waste and contaminated sites

- A mechanism should be established to identify, manage and remediate mercury contaminated sites. This may include appropriate compensation for affected workers and communities
- Responsibility for mercury-related phase-outs and clean-ups should be consistent with the Polluter Pays Principle where costs are shared by responsible parties with special attention to the private sector

Awareness-raising

- The treaty should provide for public information, awareness and education, especially for women, children, workers, small-scale gold miners, the poor, marginal people and the least educated. It should also provide this for indigenous peoples, Arctic communities, islanders, coastal people, fisherfolk and others who rely on fish or other mercury-contaminated foods for their nutrition
- The public should receive timely access to relevant governmental and private sector data on mercury hazards, mercury sources, and alternatives to mercury-containing products

Capacity building and technical and financial assistance

- Establish an adequately funded and predictable financial mechanism with new and additional resources sufficient to enable developing countries and countries with economies in transition to fulfill their treaty obligations without compromising their poverty reduction goals
- Establish mechanisms for capacity-building and technology transfer

Compliance

- Establish effective monitoring, reporting, and review mechanisms to promote transparency and ensure compliance with treaty obligations