

Response to the Joint Statement (No. 2)

22 June 2012

To: Mr. Takeshi YASUMA (Citizens Against Chemicals Pollution (CACP))

From: Teruyoshi HAYAMIZU, Director, Environmental Health and Safety Division, Environmental Health Department, Ministry of the Environment, JAPAN

I would like to send you my responses to “Civil Society Organizations Joint Statement 2012; Japanese Government Needs to Enact Mercury Export Ban Act” submitted from your organizations to the Japanese Environment Minister dated February 29, 2012.

Regarding this statement, a similar request was already submitted in October 2009. This time, I understand that your requests can be summarized as follow:

- i) Enact Mercury Export Ban Act
- ii) Safely place surplus mercury in long-term storage
- iii) Show good leadership to realize a strong and effective international Mercury Treaty that honors Minamata, and increased effort to create mercury storage capability in the Asian region.

As already responded to your previous request, we have the following views, unchanged since 2009:

- We recognize that it is necessary to consider policies including environmentally sound storage and the reduction of international trade to reduce risks for human health and the environment by mercury.
- In Japan, we do not have primary mercury mining and we have reduced mercury use by technological development. Mercury exported from Japan is provided from recovery and recycle of mercury contained in metal ores and disposed products.
- For these reasons:
 - i) If the trade of mercury has been reduced due to the introduction of export management, it will become necessary to store mercury appropriately for a long-term in Japan because more surplus mercury will be accumulated.
 - ii) In this case, economic incentive of mercury recovery will disappear and the current recovery system will not function properly. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider cost burden in the future in order to continue to recover mercury.
- Therefore, we would like to give a thorough consideration in the government on the mechanism of mercury recovery and long-term storage system (technology, places, cost burden, etc.) together with mercury export issues as soon as we could, hearing different views.

As mentioned above, we would like to consider domestic policy on this matter, taking into account the progress of intergovernmental negotiations on the mercury instrument.

Toward the realization of an effective international mercury treaty, Japan has been leading the discussion in the Asia-Pacific Region as the Regional Coordinator and actively participating in the discussion at various meetings in order to promote the negotiation. On the mercury storage subject in the Asia-Pacific region, we would like to consider this as a future task based on the outcome of the research by UNEP.