



NGOS intervention on Mercury at the Committee of the Whole, 20/2/2008, Monaco

Thank you Mr. Chairman

Presented by: Elena Lymberidi – Settimo, Project Coordinator “Zero Mercury Campaign”, European Environmental Bureau/ Zero Mercury Working Group, a coalition of 56 NGOs worldwide, speaking on behalf of the Major Group of NGOs.

Since the Governing Council accepted the key findings of the global Mercury Assessment, and called upon countries and other organizations to take immediate action to address global mercury pollution, activities have not led to real change. Globally, mercury use, has not significantly changed, and releases of mercury, particularly into the air, are dramatically increasing.

The 24th Governing Council put a process in place in February 2007 and an open ended working group was established, and met last November to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments. The Open Ended Working Group took important first steps towards streamlining global solutions on mercury pollution, but there is still a long ways to go to stem the global mercury crisis.

The progress made so far should be acknowledged by this Special Session of the Governing Council, as the Open Ended Working Group needs to build on its initial progress and continue its discussions at its second meeting. We would respectfully request that Governments should support the continuing work of the working group.

As many of you are aware, the Working Group will meet again in October 2008. The outcome of this second meeting will help shape future global action and set the stage for important discussions at the next Governing Council meeting in 2009.

Clearly, while voluntary measures can be a good step in the right direction, support for stronger legally binding commitments are absolutely necessary to ensure meaningful steps towards solving this global mercury crisis. As discussed at the working group meeting, appropriate options for a legally-binding approach should support the full range of possible measures needed to control mercury releases from all anthropogenic sources.

The most promising options for comprehensive legally-binding approaches are: a new instrument; or adding a protocol to the Stockholm Convention. However, any legally-binding approach to mercury control must include a financial mechanism that ensures donor Parties to provide adequate, new and additional financial and technical resources sufficient to enable developing countries and countries with economies in transition to fulfil their obligations without undermining basic economic development and poverty reduction objectives. Legally-binding and voluntary approaches can and should both be pursued in a complementary way and at the same time. Voluntary approaches should be used to make early progress and gain experiences while a more systematic and precise legally-binding approach is being developed.

On a final note, NGOs have been involved in many mercury reduction and communication activities in their respective countries and regions. We bring considerable experience and expertise to these and subsequent mercury discussions. We look forward to participating and contributing with our experiences in the established processes, and achieve something that is meaningful, longlasting and effective overall.

Thank you.