



ICC Canada's position on mercury, 25th Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

The Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada (ICC Canada) appreciates the opportunity to present its position at the 25th Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. There are several important topics on the agenda for this meeting, however, at this juncture, ICC would like to specifically ask the Governing Council for support of a legally binding, comprehensive agreement on mercury.

As many indigenous peoples, Inuit experience difficult times especially with regards to food security. Due to the remote areas and harsh climate Inuit live in, imported, healthy food choices are extremely expensive, even when subsidized by the government. Traditional foods on the other hand are not only generally healthy food choices, but are culturally and socially very important to the well-being of Inuit. However, the traditional Inuit diet, often comprised to a large extent of marine mammals, has become contaminated with industrial chemicals in recent decades, which caused Inuit to be amongst the most contaminated peoples on the planet. The successful development of international agreements such as the Stockholm Convention in 2001 helped to reduce some contaminants in the traditional diet of Inuit. However, as recent research by international and national programs (such as the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Programme of the Arctic Council, and the Northern Contaminants Program of Canada) has shown, levels of mercury in the Arctic environment have not been declining, and even increased in some areas. Research has also shown that the contaminants in the Arctic, including mercury, originate from global sources far away. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the global community works together to reduce, and if possible eliminate, global emissions of mercury to the environment.

ICC urges the global community to work together to achieve the most effective international agreement possible, and supports the position of the other NGOs, as well as the majority of other countries, and the European Union.

In particular, ICC Canada would like to see a **legally binding agreement**, which is **comprehensive on all global mercury priorities** that have been identified by the UNEP OWEG. In addition, such an instrument should include the **option to be extended to include additional substances** in the future. ICC Canada also strongly recommends **immediate action**, which should include the **establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee** as a priority measurement.