



26 September, 2017

Contaminated Sites Intervention for Mercury Treaty COP1

Given by Lee Bell

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Mercury contaminated sites represent a major source of air, soil and water pollution contributing significantly the global mercury pollution load and human exposure.

Guidance on the identification, management and remediation of contaminated sites is urgently required by developing and transition countries to allow them to begin the task of identifying and developing an inventory of these sites. Without guidance from the COP to undertake this activity many parties will not be able to prioritize management and remediation action that reduce ecosystem damage and human exposure. Non-parties may be hesitant to accede to the Convention, given the information gap created by the lack of such guidance.

Opportunities to begin guidance development were blocked at INC 6 and INC 7 by a regional economic union, despite the strong support for immediate guidance development by 79 countries including the entire Africa region supported in plenary by the Asia-Pacific and Central and East European region. This situation cannot be allowed to continue with a single party blocking consensus for progress on this critical issue.

The COP now has an opportunity to immediately adopt a process for contaminated sites guidance development based on the establishment of an expert group to consider a compilation of relevant materials presented by the secretariat. A part of that compilation is the IPEN publication of guidance on the identification management and remediation of mercury contaminated sites. The IPEN guidance has been submitted to the secretariat as a basis for COP guidance development by Norway, Chad, Congo, Mali, Sierra Leone and Senegal and has been used as guidance by a number of countries in the absence of COP guidance on this matter.

We strongly urge that consensus be reached at this COP for the progress on contaminated sites guidance with face to face meetings of an expert group to ensure adoption of guidance at COP 2 and that those formerly preventing consensus reconsider their position. The longer we wait the more exposure and the more harm.

We also would like to have your attention regarding the emerging issues relevant to contaminated sites from new mercury primary mining and the processing plants or areas in Indonesia and Mexico. The Philippines have implemented measures to clean and remediate the old mercury primary mining that had been closed in 1980s. As the processing of cinnabar are mainly taking place in poor villages, it is important for countries to develop the

proper intervention and a sustainable remediation plans to protect the impacted communities.

Finally, we must ensure that the expert group for guidance development is open to direct participation by civil society organizations and NGOs to ensure that guidance is balanced and effective. Thank you.