

Statement of Solidarity with the Minamata Victims and Survivors

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"I thank IPEN, the International POPs Elimination Network, for the opportunity to be part of this meaningful gathering and to say a few words of thanks and solidarity.

I would like to honor and thank our friend, Shinobu Sakamoto, and the courageous struggle for compassion, survival and freedom from injustice that she embodies.

Shinobu was not able to fulfill her dream of becoming a kindergarten teacher, but she has become a teacher of Minamata's eternal story of suffering, resistance and hope.

Thank you for bringing a compelling plea for justice from Minamata to Chiba that pricks our collective conscience and which we hope all participants of the INC2, particularly government negotiators, will listen to and act upon with utmost responsibility.

Thank you for warning us against a shameful mockery of justice on the horizon if the envisaged mercury treaty is named after Minamata while the iconic case of corporate-instigated chemical malady, which has caused untold misery and pain to thousands upon thousands of people, has yet to be fully resolved.

We hope that the global consensus and commitment to protect human health and the ecosystems from mercury pollution and the desire of the Japanese government to host the diplomatic conference in 2013 and name the treaty as Minamata Convention will lead to a genuine and speedy action in Japan to put a just closure to the Minamata disease victims' quest for honorable compensation, for health and welfare support system, including a group home for the victims, for corporate accountability and for the cleanup of the Minamata and Shiranui water bodies.

As our friend Takeshi Yasuma said before the INC1 participants, "We cannot do less but to honor and respect the real Minamata."

Arigato gozaimasu and may the lessons of Minamata, of Bhopal and of the many chemical disasters, which have occurred and have continued to unfold in our countries and regions, resonate in every process of the treaty negotiations."