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Contaminated Sites Intervention by IPEN for INC7

Given by Lee Bell, IPEN Mercury Policy Advisor

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on the behalf of IPEN.

At INC 6 in Bangkok the committee determined to defer any further consideration of the issue of guidance on contaminated sites until INC 7. We have lost nearly 18 months of valuable time since this decision was taken while many countries continue to struggle with the proliferation of mercury contaminated sites generated by industrial and ASGM activity. These sites increasingly contribute to the global mercury pollution budget and none of us are immune to the impacts irrespective of the location of these sites. In the battle to combat mercury pollution from contaminated sites the frontline is everywhere and countering the threat demands global action.

Development of Guidance on managing contaminated sites is viewed by IPEN and many countries to be a crucial element of work that has be overlooked for too long. IPEN has received strong feedback that the lack of available, consistent guidance on the identification and remediation of mercury contaminated sites is acting as a **barrier to ratification for developing countries**.

Countries are faced with the challenge of identifying sites and estimating the scale of resources needed to address the impacts of these sites. Until they are able to develop a framework to help inventory these sites, ratifying the Convention presents a commitment of unknown dimensions. They need clarity on this issue which can only be provided by detailed, cost effective and scientifically sound guidance.

Therefore we emphasize the importance of provisional adoption of guidance on managing contaminated sites at INC 7 sites to allow immediate action to be taken and to permit countries to report back on guidance effectiveness at COP 1. To facilitate action on this item IPEN has prepared guidance on contaminated sites (available on the intranet at 'Other documents') that addresses the matters raised in Article 12 while providing additional technical material on best practice sustainable remediation

which the committee may wish to consider as a contribution toward the development of guidance at this meeting.

This guidance provides greater depth on technical and associated issues than the few pages of text in the Basel Convention's Technical guidelines on mercury waste that has previously been suggested as guidance on contaminated sites. The guidance available on the intranet gives direction on threshold levels, drawn from examples of contemporary national guidance, which define a site as being contaminated by mercury. It also provides a rationale for progress toward sustainable remediation which incorporates elements such as the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity and the 'polluter pays' principle. The guidance also provides examples of cost effective methods to reliably identify mercury contamination using a combination of screening technology and public engagement processes that would be of great benefit to developing and transition countries.

Finally, IPEN also seeks inclusion of mercury emissions AND releases from contaminated sites in the Mercury toolkit as they are not well addressed at this point. This is highly relevant to the current development of MIAs and inventories as noted by Kocman et al. (2013) who state that mercury inventories ***“neglect the contribution of areas contaminated with mercury from historical accumulation, which surround mines or production plants associated with mercury production or use.”***

MIA's are currently being developed despite this major data gap. We should close this gap, and we can close this gap with the adoption of provisional guidance for contaminated sites at INC7.

Literature

Horvat.M., Kocman,D., Nicola Pirrone.N., and Cinnirella. S. (2011) Contribution of contaminated sites to the global mercury budget. Presentation to 3rd session of the INC on a Hg instrument. Nairobi, 2nd November, 2011

Kocman.D., Horvat.M., Pirrone.N., and Cinnirella. S. (2013) Contribution of contaminated sites to the global mercury budget. [Environ Res.](#) 2013 Aug;125:160-70. doi: 10.1016/j.envres.2012.12.011. Epub 2013 Mar 13.