

The urgent need for new, science-based biomonitoring data.

Mercury biomonitoring of fish and humans should be a priority, funded activity of the Minamata Convention to allow Parties to establish global baselines of current mercury contamination levels around the world. The sooner baselines are established, the more accurately it can be determined if the actions of the Treaty are effectively lowering global mercury levels. If they are not lowering global mercury pollution, then more urgent action will be required than the Treaty is currently able to deliver.

There are large data gaps of human exposure to mercury around the world with many regions under-represented in existing data sets of human and environmental exposure. Establishing baselines for the effectiveness evaluation process requires a global effort to generate data to fill these gaps and allow Parties to measure the exposure of their citizens to mercury. For this reason, the Parties should not limit themselves to consideration only of data that was available at the time the Treaty came into force. New data, generated by an agreed set of criteria for measurement, should be utilised to fill the data gaps and ensure that all regions have an adequate set of baseline information.

If mercury exposure data is limited only to that information available before the Treaty entered into force, then data available from one country that is not your own may not allow you to determine if mercury levels are rising or falling among your citizens, fisheries and local environment. Regional differences are a critical issue in determining local exposures and drawing links between local or distant pollution sources, and impacts may help accelerate pollution reduction through targeted national and global reduction schemes.

The effectiveness evaluation process of the Treaty should be open to science-based mercury biomonitoring data from a broad range of sources using credible methodologies, and should not seek to limit who may supply such data. Timing to establish baseline data is critical. Implementation of the Treaty has begun and subsequent changes to mercury pollution levels may occur over the next months and years. If the process to establish the baseline takes too long it will become distorted and not accurately reflect global pollution reality.

There is a growing body of information demonstrating that widespread ocean pollution by mercury is rising, contaminating fisheries and increasing human dietary exposure to methyl mercury. Evidence is emerging that mercury contamination of seafood is affecting not only those small country populations dependent on fish for sustenance, but that fish from across the oceans are now contributing to a large percentage of methylmercury exposure in developed nations who fish these oceans and import their fish products¹. It is estimated that fish imports from the Pacific Ocean alone is contributing to over 50% of the total US population exposure to methylmercury.

Delegates are therefore urged to act cooperatively to support the generation and use of new, credible scientific data on biomonitoring and to use it in the effectiveness evaluation process of the Treaty. Funding for data generation should be a key capacity-building focus for the Treaty.

¹ Sunderland et al (2018) Decadal Changes in the Edible Supply of Seafood and Methylmercury Exposure in the United States. *Environ Health Perspect.* 2018 Jan; 126(1):