

10 March, 2016

Opening Statement from IPEN for INC7

Given by Lee Bell, IPEN Mercury Policy Officer

Thank you Mr. Chair. I am Lee Bell from IPEN, a global network of 700 public interest groups from 100 countries.

IPEN would like to join with the voices of countries and regions who have already spoken in expressing appreciation for the excellent hospitality shown by the Kingdom of Jordan. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the interim secretariat of the Convention for their efforts in the preparations for this meeting.

To assist the process of ratification, IPEN has been conducting activities in more than 30 developing and transition countries, through capacity building, awareness raising, and research projects on key Convention provisions such as ASGM, contaminated sites and biomonitoring of vulnerable populations.

Effective, affordable and scientifically sound guidance for the identification and management of mercury contaminated sites is urgently required. There is also a requirement for adequate financial resources for those countries most in need, to manage contaminated sites in a sustainable manner to protect future generations. The provisional adoption of contaminated sites guidance at this meeting will help to dismantle the barriers to ratification for many countries.

ASGM is a related issue that requires strong guidance. Draft national action plan guidance, currently before the committee, concentrates on a national approach. To be truly effective guidance should also incorporate Local Action Plans that coordinate miners, local authorities, health care workers and NGOs to ensure that national policy intent is converted to action on the ground for the protection of public health and the environment.

IPEN is committed to raise awareness about the Treaty, having released the IPEN Mercury Treaty Guide prior to INC6, contaminated sites guidance for INC 7 and, in the interim, implementation of awareness raising activities in many countries to contribute toward Minamata Initial Assessments. IPEN will continue to contribute towards the rapid ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention in all regions.

IPEN is also pleased to share with you that, in partnership with UNEP we are undertaking global biomonitoring of women of childbearing age in order to assess mercury body burden among vulnerable populations and reduce gaps in global monitoring data – particularly in the global south. We are looking forward to talking

about this program to countries at this meeting who may wish to explore possibilities for gathering data for their inventories.

To conclude, IPEN welcomes the commitment of all delegates who have gathered in Jordan to continue our work to protect human health and the environment from mercury emissions and releases. Let us truly honor Minamata by completing this unfinished work and adopting strong guidance that will lead to rapid and effective action.

Having named the Convention after Minamata creates a moral responsibility for all governments to move swiftly to treaty ratification to pave the way for its immediate entry into force. IPEN will continue to Honor Minamata, by advocating the strongest and most effective measures to reduce mercury pollution and its impact on human health. We call on governments to Honor Minamata by acting to ratify and implement the treaty.

Thank you, Chair.