



for a toxics-free future

IPEN Intervention on Waste Thresholds

Given by Lee Bell

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Thank you, Mr. President-

We welcome the report of the waste thresholds expert group. We support their recommendation to use a total concentration approach to define wastes contaminated with mercury and their proposal to reject leaching value tests for defining these wastes. Leaching values essentially support landfill disposal and we do not regard this as an environmentally sound management measure – rather it is a fast-track to creation of more contaminated sites.

IPEN is disappointed that the draft decision on mercury waste thresholds contains an option to select a threshold of 25 mg/kg to define mercury waste. This level was not endorsed or in any way supported by the expert group and should be rejected as too high to effectively capture most mercury waste impacting the environment. IPEN proposes that the precautionary principle should be applied and a stronger threshold concentration of 1 mg/kg be adopted. IPEN would like to see the mandate of the expert group extended intersessionally to deliberate on actual threshold values as suggested in option 2 of para 3 of the draft decision.

Finally, IPEN does not support the proposal by the expert group to establish a two-tier system for defining tailings from industrial mining as mercury waste. The COP should only permit a single tier test using total concentration threshold for this type of waste as suggested by the convention text in article 11.

Thank you, Mr. President -