It has been four years since the Plenipotentiary Conference on Minamata Convention was held in Minamata and the convention came into effect this August. The sufferers’ constant appeals have changed the world. People who were damaged by mercury suffered for a long time in their lives. However, I want them to see the Minamata Convention and realize that their sufferings were not wasted. We promise that we will continue to tell about the facts and the truth of Minamata disease in order to have the Minamata Convention ratified all the countries of the world.

There are Minamata disease patients whose conditions have worsened. However, there are people who use mercury to make money. I want all the people in the world to think about the people who have suffered because of mercury.

There are many more bedridden Minamata disease patients in Minamata. I cannot walk any more. I am so afraid of going outside with my wheelchair because of staircases. Minamata disease is not over yet. I don’t want mercury or other dangerous chemicals to be put into the environment any more.

Minamata disease destroyed our environment and deprived us of our human rights. It is pleasing that the entire world won’t use mercury anymore. I am praying that diseases caused by pollution like this will never happen again.

I want mercury in the environment to be eliminated. With more research, the entire world should be able to get rid of the threat of mercury.

If there is no need of using mercury, then we should try not to use it. Safe treatment is necessary. It is too late to deal with pollution after it occurred. It is really too late when some people were damaged. There have been no Minamata disease patients who had recovered. The most important is not to cause any pollution. Pollution causes the damage which threatens more than some ten thousands of people. The government should take quick actions before they hear the claim from the patients or people who were damaged. The governments are the ones to take measures seriously.

There are more than 60 years since Minamata disease occurred and many patients passed away from their sufferings. The older those people have become, the worse their conditions get. Some are not able to walk anymore by themselves and some have become unable to speak clearly.

I don’t know how long I will be able to meet people and talk with them. That is why I want to do what I can do now. By going to Geneva, I want everyone to understand the damage caused by mercury. By agreeing to the Mercury convention and restricting the use of mercury all over the world, a tragedy like Minamata disease should never be repeated.
Technology transfer is a challenge.

We, Japanese, experienced Minamata disease twice and many people died of this and many people are still suffering. Thanks to new techniques of mercury analysis, it has become clear that fish all over the world contain mercury. Now many people are paying attention to the mercury issue.

The significance of Mercury pollution is incalculable. I have researched mercury pollution in Amazon river basin with other scientists since 1993. It is said that about one million people are involved in gold mining. These workers have been exposed to Mercury through inhalation of mercury vapor into lungs and mercury is also being released into the atmosphere. About 40 to 45 % of the used mercury has been poured into the river and about half of dissolved mercury has been transformed to methylmercury. The fishermen were polluted with mercury and some had quite high concentrations of around 150 ppm. We also found that umbilical blood of fetus had higher mercury concentration than blood of the mother.

In Article 19 of the Minamata Convention, it is stated that ‘monitoring is inevitable’. Measuring mercury is not so easy and technical know-how is necessary. However, technology transfer takes at least 10 years. So it could be an obstacle for enforcing these regulations. In addition, Article 12, which deals with identifying polluted sites and conducting assessment, depends on an evaluation process that requires effectiveness of measures and analysis techniques, in order to understand the degree of pollution. Starting this all at once is so difficult. I think it is a challenge for Japan to support this transfer of technology.

Minamata Disease! This is the polluting caused by the Chisso company, which released methylmercury contained in wastewater into Minamata Bay and was officially recognized as a disease in 1956. The current number of patients certified by the Japanese government is 2282. About 70,000 people are acknowledged to have been damaged by mercury. Health check of residents in the polluted areas has not been done. Because of this, the entire picture of the damage is not clear yet. Therefore, many people still apply for certification and many are claiming compensation through lawsuits.

Investigate the health effects.

Methylmercury damages occur mainly in the parietal lobe or occipital lobe in the brain. Those who are damaged often show the symptoms such as numbness of limbs, sensory disorder, cramp, staggering, dizziness, impairment in judgement and memory, and nervousness.

Those who are damaged often shows the symptoms such as numbness of limbs, sensory disorder, cramp, staggering, dizziness, impairment in judgement and memory, and nervousness.

Minamata Disease! This is the pol...