

Mercury INC-1, Stockholm, Sweden – June 7, 2010
By the California Indian Environmental Alliance, United States
Hg-containing waste and remediation of contaminated sites (Para 27f)

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

My comments this afternoon are related to the topic of mercury waste resulting from processing after gold and silver extraction from either large or small mining operations.

I will briefly use the example of the Gold Rush in California in the United States to show the legacy of mercury that is present in many areas following the use of mercury for gold extraction

In 1849 prior to the start of the Gold Rush there were over 150,000 Native Americans lived in California within 20 years disease exacerbated by relocations, starvation, and massacres reduced the population to approximately 31,000 persons.

150 years later there are approximately 39,000 historic and inactive gold and mercury mine sites in the state, with an 11-13 million pounds estimated total amount of mercury lost to the environment an working its way through our river systems and into the ocean.

It is now estimated that 74% of California's lakes and reservoirs are likely to contain fish for which fish consumption advisories are likely to be mandated and 26% are estimated to contain fish unfit for human consumption due to remaining mercury.

In California Indigenous Peoples cannot practice the traditional practice of subsistence fish consumption – we cannot eat our traditional foods, we often cannot be in our traditional lands and we cannot practice ceremonies safely without first addressing the mercury working its way through our streams, rivers, lakes and streams.

This is a legacy that no one should endure.

We recognize that this example is only one of thousands of those that could be gathered

Therefore, we urge that each nation-state include in their inventories legacy mining waste, we urge the sharing of technologies and that we continue to explore remediation methods as we move forward.

Thank you.