



INTERNATIONAL POPs
ELIMINATION NETWORK

IPEN INTERVENTION ON STORAGE

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Thankyou Chair,

Environmental storage of mercury waste is essential to the success of the mercury treaty. IPEN acknowledges we will need safe, environmentally sound storage for mercury wastes, both in the interim and for permanent long term storage. For many of us who have worked in the storage of hazardous waste for many years, we are well aware of the complex range of related technical, financial and social issues.

Each region of the world will need to find the most suitable option that will protect both their population and their environment. Countries & regions will need to assess the different sources and quantities of mercury wastes and be able to access comprehensive information on the full range of technological options. Regions will need to choose the storage option most appropriate to their needs and their specific environmental and geographic conditions. In some cases this may include export to storage in more developed countries. While underground permanent storage may be available in some regions, in others it may not and those countries may need to consider a permanent secure above ground repository.

Importantly, the private sectors will need to take action to fully internalize the cost of appropriately managing their mercury containing wastes.

There are successful experiences to guide us in these tasks but for some issues regarding the collection, transport and cost, these will need to be addressed on a national basis.

However, gaining public acceptance for whatever option is chosen will be a challenge. Yet, again we have good models to guide us. From experience, some of the critical elements to achieve public acceptance of hazardous waste storage facilities are the active participation of NGOs, workers and affected communities at the earliest stage possible, the provision of adequate and comprehensive information and capacity building to enable them to participate fully. All this will facilitate the active participation of civil society and stakeholders in the considerations surrounding the siting and design of storage facilities, as well as any actions to import and export mercury wastes for storage.

Effective involvement of civil society will also need commitment from all parties, including governments, it will require clear principles to guide the process, a protocol on which to measure both the commitment and the effectiveness of the process and of course, a comprehensive plan of action.

To conclude, in this challenging and multi-sectorial task, it is important to remember that the environmentally sound management of waste requires the participation of all stakeholders and interested parties.