

Mr. Chairman, respective delegates

I am speaking on behalf of IPEN and its global network of more than 700 NGOs from 116 countries.

Please let me share some brief thoughts on addressing contaminated sites under the mercury convention.

When we looked at the text on contaminated sites at the last meeting in Nairobi we were very sad. Looking at the text now we feel that the language on contaminated sites is considered as a kind of house decoration in the treaty. That is because it is full of words like “shall endeavour”, “where appropriate”, “may develop” or “where feasible”. What do these words say to the parties to convention in future in order to address contaminated sites? Do nothing!

The current voluntary approach in Article 14 ignores the lessons from the tragic history of Minamata, and ignores the issue of compensation for victims of mercury contamination.

Despite my previous words IPEN still believes that all parties here this week may develop language which clearly mandates future readers of the convention: Do something! In order to do so, we encourage respective countries to incorporate into Article 14 following principles missing in proposed language so far:

1. polluter pays principle - primary responsibility for compensation and site remediation should rest with the responsible party
2. obligation to make an inventory of contaminated sites, characterize and prioritize them, and finally include them in the National Implementation plans, and
3. the treaty should also address compensations for victims payed by polluters

A voluntary approach to contaminated sites places Party efforts to address contaminated sites outside the Convention compliance regime and thus likely makes them ineligible for financial support

We disagree with claims that contaminated sites are local problems. Children in school learn that global environmental problems start at local level. We all agree that mercury is a global pollutant. Why do these truths not also apply to contaminated sites? If we forget to address contaminated sites where thousands tons of mercury are buried we simply allow continued global releases of mercury polluting the Earth.

If the treaty is to bear the name Minamata, the victims and their legitimate demands must be honored and the lessons of the Minamata tragedy must be applied to the treaty.

Thank you Mr. chair