

IPEN OPENING STATEMENT AT INC4, in **Punta del Este, Uruguay**
June 27 2012

Thank you very much Mr. President:

We thank the Government and people of Uruguay, the Secretariat of UNEP and the Bureau for their hospitality and organization of this fourth negotiating session.

I speak on behalf of IPEN, a global network of 700 non-governmental public interest groups in over 100 countries, working for a toxics-free future.

Today we begin this meeting listening to the songs of the people in the voice of children and feel their positive energy, they remind us of the ethical commitment that we all have to make an agreement that adequately protects the younger generations and the planet.

Also, we feel encouraged by the opening words of representatives of governments recognizing that mercury is a neurotoxic pollutant of global concern and the importance of applying principles such as the precautionary principle, polluter pays, extended producer responsibility, public participation and sustainable development.

However, we need for these good initial statements to be transformed into actions and ambitious commitments, with effective mechanisms for technical and financial assistance to achieve:

- A treaty that includes the control of mercury releases to all media, not just the atmosphere, to ensure that a reduction of air emissions does not mean a transfer to water and soil, which would increase the total environmental release of mercury.
- Mandatory National Implementation Plans to include inventories of all sources of mercury, including waste and industrial sources, and all present, future and supporting actions that replace mercury-added products.
- Mandatory plans to identify and characterize contaminated sites for the cleaning of those that are a source of global pollution, and support for the care of victims.
- Commitments to end the use of mercury in artisanal gold mining on a small scale and to promote viable and effective alternatives, which could improve the social conditions of workers, who live under a form of economic slavery in some countries.

IPEN has examined the results of the three general and regional meetings and the current draft text for negotiation and we note with deep concern that, without progress on substantive commitments during this meeting, both for being too flexible and pragmatic on the one hand and by not providing adequate means of implementation on the other hand, the Convention may end up legitimizing (paradoxically) an increase in mercury releases globally, failing to adequately protect human health and the environment.

Finally, we urge you to take a moment to think about the tragedy that awakened

the conscience of the world about the disastrous effects that mercury can have on the lives of individuals and communities. I refer to the case of Minamata and the postcard that was delivered to you at the beginning of the session, where Miss Shinobu Sakamoto, a victim of Minamata, sends a clear message to every one of you:

Please make a strong mercury agreement to never repeat the tragedy of Minamata and the suffering of the victims, in other parts of the world.

We hope that the spirit of cooperation, commitment to the common good, love of the earth and the future generations, guide the discussions and your political will at this meeting.

Thanks for your consideration

Fernando Bejarano
IPEN Co-chair en el INC4.

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