

Joint Statement IPEN, Human Right Watch and Global Indigenous People Caucus On ASGM and large-scale mining

Thank you Mr. Chair, I am speaking on behalf of IPEN, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Millions of artisanal miners around the world, including children, are suffering the negative health effects of mercury exposure. We believe that mandatory obligations are needed in this treaty to protect the right to health for all people, but particularly children and vulnerable groups, working in this sector.

These obligations on ASGM should be spelt out in mandatory national action plans, and should include the following elements:

- A statement of national objectives, reduction targets, and information and technical support measures that will be used to reduce mercury use;
- Measures to limit mercury supply while introducing viable mercury-free methods. Measures to prohibit, restrict, or discourage the worst practices of mercury use in ASGM, and introduction of mercury-free mining methods;
- Measures to remediate mercury-contaminated land and water in ASGM areas and surrounding communities.
- Measures to prevent the use of mercury by children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, including a commitment to enforce existing laws that prohibit child labor.
- A public health plan to address the long-term effects of chronic mercury exposure in artisanal mining communities, with a particular focus on child health. This plan should include the gathering of health data, training for health care workers, testing and treatment, as well as long-term social and medical services as needed.
- Strategies to develop alternative forms of livelihood that are not dependent on mercury use.

To fully protect the health of artisanal miners, this treaty must also include obligations to address mercury releases from large-scale mining, including legacy mine sites.

It should be mandatory for Parties to:

- fully address contaminated sites, including mining legacy sites;
- include a full characterization and evaluation of each site including health impacts on Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities;
- have measures for assessing and prioritizing remediation for most-at-risk communities; and identify the responsible party for the purpose of compensation and site remediation.

Thank you for your consideration.