

## **INTERVENTION ON PREAMBLE TO PROPOSED MERCURY CONVENTION**

Thank you Mr Chairman. I am Imogen Ingram from the Island Sustainability Alliance CIS Inc ("ISACI"), one of over 700 participating organizations of IPEN. I thank the Government of Kenya for the excellent meeting arrangements and the Swiss government for the warm hospitality shown towards all participants last evening. Of utmost importance to Pacific Small Island Developing States is the need for a preambular statement about the responsibility of member states to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Reducing emissions and releases is important for the 15 countries that make up the Pacific subregion of the Asia-Pacific regional because of the long-range transport of mercury and mercury compounds through air, water and migratory species across international boundaries to places far from the place of release, where they accumulate in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. We believe that it is most logical to put these control measures under a single article in the Convention.

A recent paper published by the USEPA describes how mercury, through the interaction of seawater and sunlight becomes methylmercury, both in the ocean and in coastal areas, where it is taken up by fish and shellfish and bioaccumulates in the food web. The WHO technical briefing yesterday indicated that in subsistence fishing populations, between 1.5/1000 and 17/1000 children showed cognitive impacts, and the Minamata people are an example of how long these impacts last. For this reason, Article 20bis on health impacts is of great interest because together with indigenous communities throughout the world, Pacific Island peoples are among the most vulnerable population through their reliance on fish and seafood which makes up approximately 60% of protein consumption. We have no other choice except for subsistence fishing and so we cannot avoid the adverse impacts.

Of prime importance to the Pacific subregion are Article 20 on Research , Development and Monitoring and Article 23 Effectiveness Evaluation so we can get a picture about the degree of exposure to mercury. There is limited data on mercury in Pacific foods from a WHO study carried out by the University of the South Pacific, which established that there are significant amounts of mercury in the fish that we consume and export.

Similar to our Seychelles colleagues, we import products containing mercury that later become hazardous waste , so the negative list option would be the most useful control measure, to ensure that we do not in future import such products without knowing it, and that the burden of proof falls on the producer rather than the national government.

Finally, National Implementation Plans under the Stockholm Convention served a very useful capacity- building function on how to manage strategically the life-cycle of products that become hazardous waste. Under the mercury convention, the NIP will have similarly great importance to Pacific SIDS for trade, management of mercury-containing waste and its temporary storage and environmentally sound disposal.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman we hope that this week all delegates will emphasise the protection of human health and the environment, both in their own countries and globally. That is after all the reason why this Convention was considered necessary. Taking the easiest path at the least cost invariably excludes the true cost of human health impacts that are borne by victims and their governments, rather than the producers. Thank you, Mr Chairman.