



PRESS RELEASE

The European Parliament: what a strong EU mercury strategy should look like!

[Brussels 14/3/2006] - - Environment and health groupsⁱ have applauded the Plenary of the European Parliament today for its bold resolution on the Community Strategy concerning mercury.

"The European Parliament has sent a clear message to Europe – and the world – about further steps needed to reduce the use of mercury. The Parliament is clearly pushing the Commission to strengthen the strategy, asking the EU to come forward with an export ban by 2010, one year earlier than proposed, and to improve several key actions of the Strategy", said Elena Lymberidi, Zero Mercury Campaign Project Coordinator at the European Environmental Bureau. *"We are also pleased that the Parliament clarified that mercury compounds should be included in the export ban".*

The Parliament has also told the chlor-alkali industry in no uncertain terms that they need to phase out the use of mercury-cell process as soon as practicable – and at the latest by 2010. *"We praise the Parliament for its strong message – it is about time that existing agreements and directives are followed strictly!"* added Elena Lymberidi, EEB.

The NGOs also welcomed the request to restrict mercury in dental amalgams and in all measuring equipment used by consumers and professionals, such as at healthcare facilities. This request goes further than the Commission's recent proposal. *"For medical devices, there are plenty of good alternatives out there. This is an easy way to reduce the mercury from the healthcare sector that ends up contaminating the environment",* said Lisette van Vliet, Toxics Policy Advisor for Health Care Without Harm.

"We are delighted that the Parliament recognises just how urgent it is to eliminate mercury use in order to protect people's health today and in the future, particularly those that are most vulnerable to even very low levels of exposure", said Genon Jensen, Executive Director of European Public Health Alliance Environment Network. *"The issue is a Europe-wide public health concern, and the Parliament has taken this seriously by requesting more information on people's actual exposure and recommending greater financial support for best practice in risk communication aimed at vulnerable groups".*

The Parliament has reiterated the EU's role in supporting and promoting international action, in line with the mercury export ban. It has confirmed the importance of cooperating with mercury mining countries across the world with a view to reaching an agreement on a global legislative instrument on mercury. *"During negotiations at the UNEP Governing Council in February 2007 the possibility of a legally binding instrument and other global mercury strategies will be discussed,"* said Michael Bender of the Ban Mercury Working Group. *"So this is the right time to put forward key requests for the upcoming EU mercury meeting this October in Brussels, where other governments from around the globe will be invited into these discussions".*

As a further step, the environment and health NGOs now call upon the Commission to follow the European Parliament's opinion on the EU Strategy Concerning Mercury. We also appeal to the Parliament to stand firm by their opinion when related legislation is put on the table.

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The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, www.eeb.org, is a federation of over than 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in all EU Member States and most Accession Countries, as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. The aim of the EEB is to protect and improve the environment of Europe and to enable the citizens of Europe to play their part in achieving that goal.

The **Ban Mercury Working Group**, www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/, is an international coalition of 27 public interest non-governmental organisations from around the world formed initially in 2002 by 2 US based NGOs, the Basel Action Network (www.ban.org) and the Mercury Policy Project (www.Mercurypolicy.org). working to end pollution from the toxic metal -- Mercury.

European Public Health Alliance Environment Network (EEN), <http://www.env-health.org/> is an international non-governmental organisation advocating environmental protection as a means to improving health and well-being. Member groups and organisations represent health, environment, women, health professionals and others. The group has a diverse membership, 29 members with 5 international organisations, 10 European networks and 14 national/local organisations, including non-governmental organisations, professional bodies representative of doctors and nurses, academic institutions and other not-for-profit organisations.

Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH), www.noharm.org, is an international coalition of hospitals and health care systems, medical and nursing professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labour unions, and environmental and environmental health organisations. HCWH is dedicated to transforming the health care industry worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment.

And with the support of NGOs from the US (NRDC), India (Toxics Link), China (Global Village of Beijing), Brazil (Association for Combats against the POPS), South Africa (groundWork)

ⁱⁱPARCOM Decision 90/3 calls for the 2010 phase-out of the mercury cell process; the IPPC directive BREF (published in 2000) considers mercury cell process as NON best available technique.