

Thank-you Mr. Chair -- SafeMinds is an organization dedicated to ending the negative impacts from exposures to mercury and other neurotoxins, particularly those early life exposures that result in lifelong impacts and costs to society.

We note the occasion we are presented with here allows us to promote opportunities to better innovate reduced-mercury options, seek superior non-mercury alternatives, share knowledge, provide finances and shift economies to embrace approaches that result in a healthier world. SafeMinds asks that this be kept in mind as the basis for the language delegates strive for in the final draft instrument.

All mercury exposures add to a personal body burden and all personal thresholds for toxicity vary. The addition that puts any one person over their personal threshold and causes damage to them, or their unborn child, could come from any source. As a result, SafeMinds recommends to delegates that they give recognition in the treaty to all sources of mercury that we can control to prevent any over-exposure from low-hanging fruit as well as those fruits not so accessible.

To that end, the open, democratic, holistic, and comprehensive process of a treaty review allows for a full-cost accounting and analysis when looking at the environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of any single or cumulative aspect of the instrument to help ensure appropriate outcomes. SafeMinds notes this includes the tough decisions related to mercury in any and all widely-adopted uses, incidental release, product or process judged to be allowed for the good of society. Therefore, all mercury-based preservatives and disinfectants, including those used in vaccines, should be reviewed on a regular basis by efforts similar to other MEAs where expert technical and scientific committees engage in reviews.

We indicate review should occur under the treaty because treaty parties may be unable to participate in the WHO process, but have a vested interest in the outcome of this issue. UNEP offers a more open, inclusive and democratic process over the closed process used by WHO that fails to include all interested parties, allow experts with opposing views to participate or screen to eliminate reviewers with conflicts of interest.

In order to create a forward-looking document, the review process internal to the mercury instrument must be viewed by delegates as the most favorable means to help nations implement appropriate solutions for all aspects of mercury exposures related to products and processes.

Yesterday, many of us heard from exposure expert Dr. Philippe Grandjean that we may not be doing enough to protect sensitive populations - that exposure levels are too high and increasing. No product or process, including vaccines, that causes mercury exposures and is widely-used in the public's name or commercially sold to consumers, should be left outside the mercury instrument's internal review beginning from the instruments effective date. We need to consider the big picture here.

It is time to act, we cannot delay, SafeMinds encourages the delegations here in this room to act swiftly and decisively to address the mercury problem with firm conviction to providing nations with the tools to create outcomes that will protect the health of ourselves, our families and the planet.

I thank you for the opportunity to intervene.