



**For immediate Release**

## **Mercury in Fish is a Global Health Concern**

### ***Citizens' groups<sup>1</sup> say problem warrants immediate United Nations action***

[10 February 2009, Brussels] As the world's governments convene next week to discuss developing a legally binding treaty on mercury, citizens' groups from around the world have released a new report calling attention to the significant global human health hazards caused by mercury in fish and fish-eating marine mammals. The international *Zero Mercury Working Group* (1) released the study, which maintains that the problem demands an effective response from governments and the United Nations.

"Mercury contamination of fish and mammals is a global public health concern," said Michael Bender, report co-author and member of the *Zero Mercury Working Group*. "Our study of fish tested in different locations around the world shows that internationally accepted exposure levels for methylmercury are exceeded, often by wide margins, in each country and area covered."

According to the report, "*Mercury in Fish: An Urgent Global Health Concern*", the risk is greatest for populations whose per capita fish consumption is high, and in areas where pollution has elevated the average mercury content of fish. In cultures where fish-eating marine mammals are part of the traditional diet, mercury in these animals can add substantially to total dietary exposure. In addition, the study shows that methylmercury hazards still exist where these dietary and local pollutant levels are less prevalent.

"The proposals outlined in the report, including labelling certain fish products and stronger controls on mercury pollution, should be instituted without delay," said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, Zero Mercury Campaign Coordinator. "All governments should consider these results and agree launching an International Negotiating Committee (INC) to start work immediately on a global mercury treaty, in Nairobi next week."

### **For more information please contact**

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### **Notes and More Information:**

The press release is available at: <http://www.zeromercury.org/press/090210-MercuryFishRelease.pdf>

The full report is available at:

[http://www.zeromercury.org/International\\_developments/FULL\\_FISH\\_REPORT\\_FINAL+.pdf](http://www.zeromercury.org/International_developments/FULL_FISH_REPORT_FINAL+.pdf)

The executive summary is available,

In FR at: [http://www.zeromercury.org/International\\_developments/EXECSUMM\\_FRENA4.pdf](http://www.zeromercury.org/International_developments/EXECSUMM_FRENA4.pdf)

In ES at: [http://www.zeromercury.org/International\\_developments/EXECSUMM\\_SPANA4.pdf](http://www.zeromercury.org/International_developments/EXECSUMM_SPANA4.pdf)

In PT at: [http://www.zeromercury.org/International\\_developments/EXECSUMM\\_PORTA4.pdf](http://www.zeromercury.org/International_developments/EXECSUMM_PORTA4.pdf)

In CHI at: [http://www.zeromercury.org/International\\_developments/EXECSUMM\\_CHINA4.pdf](http://www.zeromercury.org/International_developments/EXECSUMM_CHINA4.pdf)

The report indicates that mercury is a persistent, bioaccumulative transboundary pollutant that contaminates our air, soil, water and fish. Because of this potential for global contamination, mercury pollution requires a coordinated international response.

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that can make its way up the food chain into humans, and poses an increased exposure risk to developing fetuses and young children and to adults exposed to mercury.

The report is simultaneously co-released by more than 20 NGOs around the world, namely - Zero Mercury Working Group, European Environmental Bureau, Ban Toxics!, Mercury Policy Project, Indonesia Toxics-Free Network, World Wildlife Federation - Guinea, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, Pollution Probe, Pesticide Action Network – Mauritius, Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement, Health & Environment Alliance, CEPHED, ACPO, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Pro-biodiversity Conservation in Uganda (PROBICO), Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control (UNETMAC), East African Sustainability Watch Network, Ecologistas en Accion, Legambiente, Arnika, France Nature Environnement, German League for Nature and Environment, DISHA, Sierra Club - US and Canada, NRDC, groundWork

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(1)The **Zero Mercury Working group**, [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org), is an international coalition of more than 75 public interest non-governmental organizations from around the world formed in 2005 by the EEB and the Mercury Policy Project/Ban Mercury Working Group. The aim of the group is to reach “Zero’ emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, towards eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally.”

The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org), is a federation of more than 140 environmental citizens’ organisations based in EU Member States and most Accession Countries, as well as in a few neighboring countries. 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.

**Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)**, <http://www.env-health.org> is an international non-governmental organisation advocating environmental protection as a means to improving health and well-being. It represents a diverse network of 60 groups representing citizens, patients, women’s groups, health professionals, and environmental advocates across Europe. Working at the European level, HEAL focuses on air quality, chemicals, mercury, pesticides, climate change, children’s vulnerabilities and many other aspects of EU policy that are relevant to people’s health and the environment.