



# Mercury Policy Project

## PRESS RELEASE

### EU Proposes Mercury Export Ban as US Considers Surplus Issues; UN Mercury Trade Report Out Shortly

**(Washington, DC)** – As the US considers surplus mercury issues, NGOs welcomed an EU regulation to ban mercury exports and ensure safe storage of surplus mercury so that this dangerous neurotoxin will not re-enter the global market.

The proposed EU export ban sends a clear message to world governments and the upcoming UNEP Governing Council meeting in February 2007 that mercury exports should be curtailed globally, say NGOs. Mercury trade to over 50 developing countries exposes miners to severe health impacts when used in gold mining and also pollutes the global environment.

“We’ve got to stop the cycle of toxic trade and contamination which ends up polluting our lunch sandwiches and dinners in the US,” said Michael Bender of the Mercury Policy Project and Zero Mercury Working Group. “The Commission recognized that it is very important that mercury supply and demand are addressed simultaneously.”

The US EPA has stated that it will initiate discussions on the surplus mercury issue in its *Roadmap on Mercury* in 2006. “Ultimately, it will be important to look at ways to permanently “retire” non-federally owned or managed commodity-grade mercury that will eventually have little or even negative economic value,” states the Roadmap. The Department of Defence has decided to permanently store, rather than sell, over 4,000 tons of surplus mercury.

“US interest in this area is timely because the UN Environmental Program is close to finalizing a report summarizing supply, trade and demand information on mercury, including in small-scale gold mining, that will likely be discussed at the UNEP Governing Council meeting in February,” said Bender.

Mercury is a global pollutant traveling long distances around the globe. Its most toxic form - methylmercury accumulates in large predatory fish and is therefore transferred to our bodies through the fish diet, affecting the most vulnerable – pregnant women and children.

The Zero Mercury Working Group is an international coalition of more than 40 public interest non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world formed in 2005. 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.”

#### For further information:

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