

**Quadrennial Report of activities supporting the work of UNEP (2005-2008)  
European Environmental Bureau / Mercury Policy Project (Zero Mercury Working Group)**

**August 2008**

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the Mercury Policy Project/Tides Center (MPP) are accredited organisations to United Nations Environment Program UNEP since 2004. Our work at UNEP level has mainly been on the issue of mercury.

Mercury has been on the UNEP Governing Council's (GC's) agenda since 2001. In addition to national activities, governments are considering both voluntary and global binding actions to solve this persistent problem. The UNEP Global Mercury Assessment of December 2002 accepted that mercury is present throughout the world environment, is persistent and is constantly being circulated throughout the environment. It showed that exposure to mercury causes major harm to human health, wildlife and the environment and is highly toxic especially to developing nervous and cardiovascular systems in humans. In the form of methylmercury it readily crosses the placental and blood-brain barrier making foetuses, children and women of child-bearing age more susceptible to mercury exposure. The assessment underlined the need for global solutions since with long-distance transport, even countries which release little or no mercury and other areas far away from industrial activity may be contaminated. For example, the Arctic has high mercury levels, although it is far from major mercury release sites.

The UNEP Governing Council considered the Global Mercury Assessment report at its 22nd session from 3 to 7 February 2003. The Governing Council accepted the key findings of the report and agreed that "*there is sufficient evidence of significant global adverse impacts from mercury and its compounds to warrant further international action to reduce the risks to human health and the environment.*" It also agreed to assist all countries, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to cut their emissions and releases of mercury. In response to the Governing Council's decision 22/4 V, UNEP established a mercury programme within its Chemicals Unit.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> UNEP GC decision in 2005 took additional steps in the right direction by, inter alia, asking governments immediately to reduce the risks relating to mercury exposure from products and processes, to consider curbing primary mining, and the introduction of excess mercury onto world markets. It also called for partnerships between Governments and other stakeholders as one approach to reducing risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds to the environment.

At the 24<sup>th</sup> UNEP GC's in 2007, governments agreed to establish a process to explore enhanced voluntary options within a specific timeframe as well as legally-binding regulations for long-term international action to reduce mercury's threat to health and the environment. Two major areas of work set out in the decision comprise the strengthening of the UNEP mercury programme. These include the UNEP mercury partnerships and the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group (AHOEWG) of governments, regional economic integration organizations and stakeholder representatives to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments. The AHOEWG met once prior to the tenth special session of the GC, to which it provided a progress report, and will meet once more in October 2008 prior to the twenty-fifth session of the GC.

## **Introduction**

The European Environmental Bureau, [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org) is the largest federation of environmental citizens organisations in Europe, with more than 140 members, mainly based in the European Union, increasingly in the countries working towards Accession, and with some members in other parts in and around Europe.

*EEB's aim is to protect and improve the environment by influencing EU policy, promoting sustainable development objectives and ensuring that Europe's citizens can play a part in achieving these goals. EEB stands for environmental justice and participatory democracy.*

The EEB is a membership organisation. The members determine the annual work programme, and via the Board and working groups they contribute to and control the positioning and activities of the EEB. In this way the EEB can connect the "Brussels' agenda" with the priorities and views of environmental organisations across Europe.

The main elements of EEB's working methods are:

- A structure of working groups on particular issues composed of representatives of EEB organisations; for preparation of studies, positions, and dialogue with the Commission. Currently fourteen working groups exist (on agriculture, air quality, biodiversity, chemicals, ecolabel, ecological product policy, environmental fiscal reform,

industry policy, legal issues, noise, resource efficiency & waste management, soil, water pollution, mercury), together involving directly some 450 people across the EU.

- Concentrated activities and co-ordination in some other fields as well, including: environmental policy integration, Mediterranean issues, soil protection, transparency and public participation.
- Intensive contacts with the European institutions, formal and informal.
- Intensive information provision to EEB members; with a constant flow of information via e-mail and mailings of new materials, furthermore via the monthly internal newsletter "In Brief", as well as by means of working sessions with the members on the national level.
- Seminars to support the work of the working groups, and some larger conferences.
- Publications: Memoranda for the Presidencies; quarterly external magazine "Metamorphosis"; the EEB-homepage on the Internet ([www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org)); special publications

The Mercury Policy Project/Tides Center (MPP), [www.mercurypolicy.org](http://www.mercurypolicy.org), is a non-profit U.S. organization formed in 1998 to promote policies to eliminate mercury uses, reduce the export and trafficking of mercury, and significantly reduce mercury exposures at the local, national, and international levels. MPP works harmoniously with other groups and individuals who have similar goals and interests.

#### *In relation to the work with UNEP*

The "Ban Mercury Working Group" was started in 2002 by MPP and the Basel Action Network and evolved into the '**Zero Mercury Campaign**' which started in November 2004, run by the EEB and in close collaboration with MPP, with the aim of *'Zero' emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, in view of reducing to a minimum, mercury in the environment at EU level and globally*. The project is currently in its fourth phase.

Under the campaign, the international Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) was co-created in 2005 by EEB and MPP and now has 95 members from 35 countries (12 EU, 13 developing, 4 ECCA<sup>1</sup>, USA, Japan, and Canada) representing over 69 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on mercury. A special website was created for the campaign where more details can be found - [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org). The work of the group includes:

- following all EU policy developments and respective proposals from European Commission (e.g. EU restrictions in the use of certain measuring and control devices containing mercury, EU mercury export ban, mercury in fluorescent lamps, dental amalgam, etc.)
- focusing on phase out of mercury cell chlor-alkali plants in Europe by running 5 national campaigns in Italy, Spain, Germany, France and the Czech Republic
- following US policy development at both the state and national levels and respective proposals (e.g. restrictions in the use of certain measuring and control devices containing mercury, mercury export ban, mercury in fluorescent lamps, dental amalgam, etc.)
- following actively all UNEP policy developments towards a global legal instrument on mercury, and
- assisting (financially and technically) NGOs in 4 developing countries – India, South Africa, Brazil and China, for active involvement at national and global levels.

EEB and MPP acknowledged the importance of mercury as an environmental health problem both at the EU and US level and globally and by running the Zero mercury campaign and expanding its work on environmental health through this important issue – so protecting more "fields".

More specifically the work with UNEP helped broaden the network of EEB and MPP at global level, feeding at the same time into its European and US network respectively. The membership of the Zero Mercury Working Group has substantially increased and is continuously growing as it can be seen above. Active participation at UNEP meetings helps greatly to making the group's work known, meet NGOs from other countries and broaden the geographical distribution of the membership.

Through the work with UNEP, EEB/MPP/ZMWG started cooperating actively with UNIDO, UNITAR, and WHO on issues and projects related to mercury, e.g. Global mercury project, project on Kyrgyzstan, mercury in healthcare, respectively. It also participated at the UNECE Task Force on Heavy Metals under the Convention for a Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution in 2005 and 2006, in Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety meeting in 2006 and is following closely the developments through the SAICM process – relevant to mercury.

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<sup>1</sup> Eastern Europe Caucasus and Central Asia

The work of the group has been acknowledged by governments and through its active participation at the UNEP GCs. It has become known for its background work and preparations and contributions to the debate, and its opinion has been sought for by institutions and governments.

### **Contribution of the EEB/MPP/ZMWG to the work of UNEP**

While MPP began actively following the mercury work of the UNEP Governing Council in 2002, the EEB started following actively the UNEP Governing Council meetings in February 2005, since mercury was again on the agenda.

Representing the Ban Mercury Working Group, MPP attended a week-long meeting of the UNEP Global Mercury Assessment working group in September 2002. During the meeting, we released several briefing papers (see: [http://www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/Briefing%20Papers/briefing\\_papers.html](http://www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/Briefing%20Papers/briefing_papers.html)). Our report of the meeting is available at: <http://www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/banmercreport.pdf>. On June 14, 2002, we submitted comment on the draft Global Mercury Assessment report.

Again on behalf of the Ban Mercury Working Group, MPP attended the February 2003 meeting of the UNEP Governing Council. Prior to the meeting, we released a report (see: <http://www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/Mercury.ToxicTimeBomb.Final.PDF>) and after the meeting, we released a press release (see: <http://www.mercurypolicy.org/new/documents/BanMercuryWGUNEP020803.pdf>.)

On May 25, 2004, MPP and NRDC entered into an agreement with UNEP to coordinate NGO participation in several UNEP sponsored workshops on mercury in 2005 and 2006.

In December 2004, EEB and MPP met with Klaus Toepfer – UNEP Executive Director and Sylvie Motard – Head of the UNEP Liaison office in Brussels to gather additional information and in preparation for the UNEP GC meeting in February 2005.

In February 2005, MPP, EEB, NRDC and Greenpeace, submitted to UNEP the [Proposed Governing Council Decision Submitted by NGOs \(also in FR\)](#), based upon a more extensive [position paper](#) which had been submitted to UNEP in July 2004. A [press release](#) was sent to the European, US and African press on the 18 February 2005, in view of the start of the UNEP Global Civil Society Forum and the UNEP Governing Council.

EEB/MPP coordinated the participation of the NGOS to the 23<sup>rd</sup> UNEP Governing Council, 20-25 February 2005, Nairobi, Kenya. EEB, NRDC, MPP, Greenpeace, [Toxics Link -India](#), [Associação de Combate aos POPs - ACPO](#), [groundWork](#), South Africa, [Global Village of Beijing](#), China, and [International Indian Treaty Council](#) finally attended the [6th Global Civil Society Forum](#) and the [23rd UNEP Governing Council in Nairobi](#), 18-25 February 2005.

The detailed [report](#) from the meetings and related interventions are available at [http://zeromercury/UNEP\\_developments/UNEP\\_report.html](http://zeromercury/UNEP_developments/UNEP_report.html). A [press release](#) was also sent on the final decision of the UNEP Governing council on the 25 February 2005.

The EEB also participated actively to the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF), prior to the GC. The EEB, presented briefly the group and the [NGOs resolution](#) which had been submitted to UNEP in advance. At the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> GCSF, a statement on mercury which incorporated the NGOs resolution on Mercury, was proposed for adoption and adopted by the 6<sup>th</sup> GCSF. It was included in the report of the 6<sup>th</sup> GCSF and distributed to all Governments participating to the UNEP Governing Council 21-25/2/2005.

As a follow up to the 23<sup>rd</sup> UNEP Governing Council Decision, four meetings took place in relation to the Mercury partnerships and were attended by the Environmental NGOs.

In a [letter to the world's governments that was also sent to the NGOs \(MPP\)](#), on the 24 March 2006, UNEP requested information related to the supply, trade and demand for mercury for a report being developed for the UNEP Governing Council meeting in Nairobi, February 2007. The request for the report came out of a [decision that the UNEP Governing Council made at their prior meeting](#), which was put forth by Canada at the request of the NGOs.

Responding to the above call, on the 16 May 2006, [NRDC submitted comments to UNEP \(and accompanying document\)](#), after collaboration with the Chemical Registration Center (CRC) of China's State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) to develop improved estimates of China's mercury supply and consumption. On the 8<sup>th</sup> October the [Zero Mercury Working Group submitted comments](#) to UNEP on the draft Trade report.

Because of our strong presence and involvement in all international meetings, ZMWG were invited to present at a Swedish side event during the Basel convention Committee of the Parties meeting in Nairobi, in November 2006.

Also in 2006 and into 2007, MPP assisted UNEP in the development of a Mercury Awareness Raising Toolkit. The aim of the toolkit is to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in educating their policymakers and populations about the nature and the depth of the mercury problem. More specifically, the toolkit is expected to assist these countries to raise awareness of the sources and effects of mercury exposure on human health, wildlife and the environment, and to build capacity in these countries to reduce and eliminate anthropogenic mercury uses and releases, as well as exposure to mercury.

In preparation for the [24<sup>th</sup> UNEP Governing Council](#), February 2007 the NGOs drafted a one page working document with the [NGOs'Proposals for a Global Mercury Strategy](#), November 8, 2006. The NGO proposals are also available in [PT, RU, ES, FR, D, CHI, JP](#). The NGOs submitted their proposal on a Mercury Decision to UNEP GC on the 29 January 2007, [NGOs submission to the 24th UNEP GC for a Global Mercury Strategy](#). The summary of the document is also available in [SP, FR, CHI, PT, SWA, D](#). A special background report was also prepared for the UNEP meeting - [NGOs background report "Addressing Global Mercury Crisis at the 2007 UNEP GC"](#) [January, 2007]. A [press release](#) was sent out on the 31 January, in view of the forthcoming UNEP GC meeting. Similar press releases were posted in [different countries](#). EEB/MPP coordinated the participation of the NGOs to this event. EEB, NRDC, MPP, Sierra Club, IPEN/HCWH, groundWork, ACPO, Toxics Link and GVB, represented the Zero Mercury Working Group at the 24th UNEP Governing Council, 5-9 February, 2007, Nairobi, Kenya. The NGOs reacted to the final decision with a [press release on February 9, 2007](#). The press release was also sent to the German press in D. A report on the activities of the NGOs in Nairobi as well as the discussions that took place during the meeting is available at [http://zeromercury/UNEP\\_developments/UNEPGC24\\_report.html](http://zeromercury/UNEP_developments/UNEPGC24_report.html).

[NGOs received a letter from UNEP](#) asking for comments on the mercury partnerships on 4 June 2007. On the 25-26 June 2007, EEB, MPP and HCWH participated at the UNEP Exploratory meeting on mercury partnerships in Geneva. [Summary slides](#) were produced by UNEP but NO formal report is foreseen to be produced. On 9 July 2007, [Zero Mercury Working Group comments on the planned content of the atmospheric emissions report](#) required under the UNEP Governing Council 24th meeting Decision 24/3, paragraph 24., were sent to UNEP. On 17 July 2007, an [NGOs letter to UNEP was sent, in response to UNEP's request for comments on strengthening mercury partnerships](#), per the UNEP Governing Council Decision 24/3.

The EEB/MPP/Zero Mercury Working Group organised and coordinated the NGO participation to the First Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Mercury, 12-16 November, Bangkok, Thailand. Twenty five NGOs participated to the OEWG and related meetings.

In preparation and before the OEWG, we organized an NGO meeting on global mercury strategies, 11 November 2007, Bangkok, Thailand. The report from the NGO meeting and the NGO presence at the First OEWG on mercury can be found at [http://zeromercury/UNEP\\_developments/UNEP-OEWG1\\_report.html](http://zeromercury/UNEP_developments/UNEP-OEWG1_report.html).

Three NGO side events were organised during the OEWG in Bangkok as follows:

- 1. Mercury Uses in Developing World, on Monday 12/11 (organized by EEB/MPP/ZMWG)**
- 2. Mercury Effects on human health, on Tuesday 13/11 (organized by IPEN)**
- 3. The Global Movement for Mercury-Free Health Care, on Wednesday 14/11 (organized by HCWH)**

The agenda and presentations can be found in the link/report as mentioned above. NGO representatives were also invited to give presentations to a US EPA and a Swiss side events. All events were well attended and useful discussions/presentations took place which triggered the interest from government representatives.

Furthermore many interventions from different NGOs attending were made from the floor during the plenary and many of our suggestions were supported by governments and eventually adopted by the plenary. The NGO community with their interventions, side events and informal discussions made their presence very evident at the meeting and their input was appreciated by many governments and other inter-governmental organisations.

Under the work on the Global mercury partnership and the development of the overarching framework, in [January 2008, a second informal meeting took place](#) – MPP and EEB /ZMWG represented the NGOs. Further issues on the role of the NGOs in the framework and the governing body of the partnerships were clarified and our concerns were taken on board.

The 10th Special Session of UNEP GC, took place in Monaco, 20-22 February 2008. The item related to mercury in this session was the follow up on the progress report after the First UNEP Open ended Working Group on Mercury (OEWG1), November 2007- Bangkok. EEB represented the Zero Mercury Working Group with general support of the Global Civil Society Forum and the NGOs who were there. The NGO intervention at the Committee of the Whole can be found at [http://zeromercury/UNEP\\_developments/080219NGOsInterventionCoW\\_UNEP2008\\_finalclean.pdf](http://zeromercury/UNEP_developments/080219NGOsInterventionCoW_UNEP2008_finalclean.pdf) .

Under the partnerships work, several conference calls took place and the ZMWG participated mainly to the one on products and artisanal small scale goldmining and also submitted comments on the partnership on chlor-alkali.

Following the second informal partnership meeting, the official Global Mercury Partnership meeting, took place in Geneva, Switzerland, 1-3 April 2008. The NGOs were represented by the ZMWG, MPP, Ban Asia, WWF Guianas and HCWH. The NGOs played a catalytic role together with UNEP into developing a commonly agreed paper which was adopted by the governments.

With input along the way from the ZMWG, UNEP received SAICM Quick Start funding to jump start an ASM 18-month regional effort in Southeast Asia starting in September 2008. The project initially focuses on activities in the Philippines and Cambodia while including a broader regional element towards the end of the project. Cambodia and the Philippines will have the main coordination at a national level (i.e. planning, organization of work and workshops, national plan), and an inception workshop is planned for November 2008. Other stakeholders from environment, health, and mining ministries, local authorities, NGOs, etc. will be taking part in the project and its relevant activities. Similar projects in South America and Africa are planned.

In July 2008, ZMWG, groundWork and NRDC participated to the SAICM African Regional meeting in Tanzania, assisted and gave input and presentations at the African Mercury consultation meeting that also took place.

In August, 2008, the ZMWG submitted comments on the UNEP Report on Atmospheric Emissions of Mercury: Inventory, Sources, and Transport, as well as the two supporting technical documents, the AMAP/UNEP Report on Sources of Mercury to the Atmosphere: Technical Background Document, and Mercury Fate and Transport in the Global Atmosphere: Measurements, Models and Policy Implications produced by the Fate and Transport Partnership.

Other activities are taking place in parallel, contributing to the objectives and priorities in view of eliminating mercury, as set at global level and shared by the NGOs. Some of them are mentioned below:

Mercury Policy Project/Zero Mercury Working Group - Project on Global Mercury Product Phase -outs tied to Incinerator emissions: The project focuses on updating and improving the accuracy of global emission estimates from mercury in the waste stream in order to provide a better basis for understanding the life-cycle and fate of mercury products in the environment, and to push for the phase-out of mercury-containing products.

Mercury Policy Project/Zero Mercury Working Group- Feasibility Study on the Storage of Surplus Mercury in Asia. The first phase of the project focuses on two parts 1) study to determine quantities of surplus mercury that will come available in Asia over the next 40 years, and 2) development of an Asian Advisory Committee to discuss the feasibility of storing of surplus mercury in Asia

The EEB/ZMWG is funding for the past 4 years mini – projects in four NGOs in developing countries - GVB-China, Toxics Link- India, ACPO- Brazil, groundwork-S.Africa. Work is on-going, the project proposals and reports/deliverables from past phases are available at <http://www.zeromercury.org/projects/index.html>.

## **Conclusion – overview of impacts of the work on mercury at UNEP level**

The work of the EEB/MPP/ZMWG and the NGOs on mercury at UNEP level since 2002, both before and after the Zero Mercury Campaign started has lead to:

- a strong, active and continuously growing NGO international network following and contributing to the issue,
- an information source on technical and policy issues on mercury for NGOs, individuals but also governments and institutions,
- establishment of very good contacts/links at EU (EU institutions, agencies, Member states etc), US and UNEP level (UN bodies, world governments),

- EU, US and UN institutions seeking our input and acknowledging our contributions, e.g. proposal for a global trade report in the UNEP GC decision 23, came from the NGOs, proposed by Canada, adopted by GC.
- acknowledgment of the work of NGOs in developing countries and opening up in the governance of these countries – inviting the NGOs to provide input to national consultation, as well as giving input to conferences,
- new scientific and policy input in debates at EU, US and UNEP level and while at UNEP GC meetings,
- catalytic role of the NGOs into bringing together parties/governments for stronger coalition making and better support of our views, and to bring about realisation of projects, conferences and awareness raising activities among governments and participants of the UNEP GC.

We are looking forward to continuing this effort, and are open to input and support from other NGOs around the world who are interested to joining the campaign.