

Statement for Mercury Waste Threshold

Thank You. Mr. Co-chair.

This is the view from ESDO as well as Zero Mercury Working Group. Following the COP 4 decision, the expert group on waste thresholds continued the discussions to consider appropriate thresholds for Convention coverage of Category C wastes, or wastes contaminated with mercury. Wastes below the threshold would be excluded from Convention coverage, and thus not subject to Article 11 environmentally sound management requirements.

In the meeting of Technical Experts on Mercury Waste Thresholds, the group did not agree on a specific threshold value although there was agreement that threshold value should be established.

ESDO & ZMWG supports a decision for setting a threshold on mercury, which should be as low as possible with a maximum of 10 ppm.

ESDO & ZMWG opposed to a 25 mg/kg threshold, which would allow vast quantities of mercury-contaminated waste to escape treatment and be used in ways that can lead to further contamination (ie agricultural application as soil improvement and reuse in the construction industry,) It would further allow waste incinerator bottom ash and sewage sludge to avoid regulation as mercury wastes under the treaty. In many developing and undeveloped countries, waste management is uncontrolled, leading to open dumping and unlicensed disposal. Communities may be located adjacent to or, or even on, dumpsites.

We agree with the experts supporting a threshold between 1 and 10 mg/kg total mercury content. Korea, Switzerland, Canada, and Uganda have used a threshold of around 1-2 ppm for a long period. Indonesia already has set the threshold to be 0.3-10 ppm for different wastes and a dumping limit of 0.05 ppm. We also agree that a review process should be kept open, to consider the revision of these thresholds latest at COP7.

Siddika Sultana
Executive Director
Environment and Social Development Organization- ESDO