

Health Care Without Harm Intervention at INC3 of the Mercury Treaty Negotiations in Nairobi, November, 2, 2011.

Thank you Mr Chair

My name is Fernando Bejarano and as this is the first time Health Care Without Harm has intervened at this meeting we would like to thank the Government of Kenya of hosting us, the Chair for keeping us moving ahead with “our eyes on the prize”, and the Secretariat for their hard work facilitating our discussions.

Health Care Without Harm is an NGO, an international coalition of more than 500 members in 53 countries that works to transform the health care sector so that it is no longer a source of harm to human health and the environment. We collaborate with doctors, nurses, hospitals, healthcare systems, professional associations, NGOs, government ministries and international organizations to promote the development and implementation of safe and environmentally healthy practices, processes and products in the health care sector. HCWH has regional offices in the United States, Latin America, Europe and South East Asia as well as strategic partners in South Asia and Africa.

We support the creation of this mandatory instrument to reduce the damage to health of children through environmental exposure to methyl mercury and health care providers through exposure to elemental mercury. Further, we agree with WHO that the technical accuracy and economic affordability of alternatives to mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers (blood pressure devices) is by now well established and allows immediate phase out of these products in health care.

As the update on the joint WHO-HCWH Global Mercury-Free Health Care Initiative (www.mercuryfreehealthcare.org) national policies have been issued and are being implemented in Argentina, the Philippines, Chile and Mongolia. The EU has banned mercury thermometers and prohibited sphygmomanometers for sale to the general public. Health systems in countries ranging from Indonesia, Brazil, China and India, to Nepal, Costa Rica and South Africa and well over 6,000 individual hospitals are at various stages of phasing out these devices. We appreciate WHO's clear technical guidance for this transition. The Global Initiative is moving closer to a tipping point that will shift the dynamics of supply and demand in the global thermometer and blood pressure device markets away from mercury and toward the alternatives. This Convention can institutionalize, expand and speed this important transition.

Regarding the draft text prepared by the Secretariat in the section on mercury added products art 6 and Annex C, Health Care Without Harm is strongly in favor of Option 2 requiring specific listing of those products requiring prolonged phase-outs. Options 1 and 3 are also acceptable but are certainly inferior in our estimation to promote the removal of mercury from human commerce. It is only option 4 which will not have an effect on the global burden of mercury and its effects on human health. Whichever option is chosen by the delegates, we strongly urge the listing of thermometers and blood pressure devices for immediate phase out as the alternatives exist for these products which provide equal accuracy at comparable cost in most settings.

Thank you for your consideration.