

Opening Statement from IPEN for INC6
By Manny C. Calonzo, Co-Chair, IPEN

Thank you Mr. Chair. Distinguished delegates and friends, I bring warm greetings of solidarity and unity from IPEN, a global network of public interest groups promoting safe chemicals policies and practices to protect the human health and the environment.

We join you in congratulating the 128 countries that have signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury and commend the 7 countries that have so far ratified to date. We also appeal to others to speedily proceed with their respective ratification procedures, and not delay with implementation activities.

Having named the Convention after Minamata creates an ethical and moral responsibility for all governments to swiftly move towards the treaty's ratification to pave the way for its immediate entry into force. IPEN will continue to Honor Minamata, to advocate for the strongest and most meaningful treaty possible. We call on governments to Honor Minamata by acting to ratify and implement the treaty.

Here in Bangkok, we echo the call made by the Minamata victims' groups, in their impassioned plea that we all "learn from the bitter lessons" (of the Minamata Disease) and "undertake measures to assure that damage to human health from mercury will never again take place." Such measures would require effective guidance and support for the identification and management of contaminated sites. Contaminated sites remain a critical issue. Contaminated sites harm the health of the public and the environment, as we continue to learn from the Minamata tragedy.

This treaty is not only an environmental treaty. It's a public health treaty. We urge governments and other stakeholders to pay close attention to Article 16 on Health Aspects, which outlines measures and activities that can be implemented to assess and protect human health from mercury.

Such recognition of the need to protect human health is reinforced by Article 17 on Information Exchange, which says that "information on the health and safety of humans and the environment shall not be regarded as confidential," thus emphasizing the public's Right to Know about mercury impacts on human and ecological health.

IPEN is committed to raise awareness about the Treaty, as we released the IPEN

Mercury Treaty Guide prior to INC6, and will continue to contribute towards the rapid ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention in all regions. Now that the Treaty has been adopted, IPEN has shifted gears with the recent launch of our International Mercury (Treaty) Enabling Activities Program, with assistance from several donors, to support the efforts of public interest groups in developing countries to localize this global policy.

To conclude, IPEN congratulates all delegates for coming together in Bangkok to continue with our still unfinished task of protecting human health and the environment from mercury emissions and releases. We honor Minamata by completing this unfinished work this week and beyond.

Thank you.