



Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
Intervention at Global Mercury Negotiations INC-1
Stockholm, June 10th 2010

Thank you Mr. Chair.

As this is my first time taking the floor, I would like to support all of the previous statements given to the Chair, and to the host country, Sweden, for your very fine work and facilitation of this timely and important conference.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council collectively represents the interests of the Inuit from Russia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.

The mercury that has been introduced into the Arctic is not the doing of Inuit. But the Arctic environment and people are the recipients of a disproportionate amount of this toxic and persistent element. Recent research shows that mercury levels in several areas of the Arctic environment are rising at concerning rates.

This is primarily due to the global emissions and long-range transport of mercury through the air and water, and the additional effects of climate change such as shoreline erosion, which causes additional releases of mercury into the environment.

Inuit see themselves as a part of the ecosystem and anything that affects this ecosystem, affects Inuit. For example, Inuit in Greenland – like other Inuit – are part of the environment, and they now have one of the highest levels globally of mercury in their bodies, which are resulting from atmospheric emissions and subsequent accumulation in the traditional diet of Inuit. Specifically, in a recent study, over 90% of Inuit mothers and women in childbearing age in Greenland exceeded guidelines for mercury levels in human blood.

Tragically, indigenous women in Chukotka, Russia are advised not to breastfeed their children due to the high level of pollutants in their breast milk. This situation, Mr. Chair, is highly unacceptable.

Therefore, the Inuit Circumpolar Council strongly supports the initiatives being put forward at this conference to achieve an agreement that will have legally binding provisions also including on atmospheric emissions, which will regulate and manage mercury as well as address its negative effects on our environment and ecosystems.

Thank you.