

IPEN INTERVENTION ON ARTICLES 18 & 19

Thank you Mr President. I am Imogen Ingram from Island Sustainability Alliance CIS INC in the Cook Islands, one of the 700 participating organizations of IPEN

With regard to Articles 18 and 19, IPEN believes that the Secretariat of the proposed Mercury Convention should facilitate exchange of information received from Parties. We also remind delegates and the Secretariat that public interest NGOs and Indigenous Peoples are sources of useful information. The designated national focal point should be required to communicate information to different government ministries and civil society, in order to maximize awareness-raising and to ensure it is accessible. Our final point on these Articles is that, consistent with the "Right to Know" principle, information on human health and safety should not under any circumstances be regarded as confidential.

Any clearing house for information should provide up to date and accurate information – this is especially important for those who rely on fish or other mercury-contaminated seafoods for their nutrition. We believe that, similar to the Stockholm Convention, essential public information should be provided through awareness and education programs on mercury, its health and environmental effects, precautionary and preventive measures and the availability of non-mercury alternatives. This is particularly important for populations at risk such as women, children, workers, small-scale gold miners, impoverished communities, marginalized peoples and the least educated. It should also provide this for Indigenous Peoples, islander dwellers, coastal people, fisherfolk and others who are exposed through their traditional and daily foods or cultural practices.

When considering Article 20 on *Research, development and monitoring*, we believe such activities should advance the overarching objective of this instrument/treaty [YOU REFER IN LAST PARAGRAPH TO STOCKHOLM CONVENTION, SAYING HERE SIMPLY "CONVENTION" MAY BE CONFUSING TO THE LISTENER], to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury emissions and releases from all sources. It would be important in this respect to develop and improve inventories of releases together with Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR). Monitoring data from public interest NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and others should form part of the disseminated information. Public accessibility of data is an important aspect of this Article, with special emphasis placed on monitoring food and making that data available publicly. Health, social and cultural impacts should be assessed and publicly released in a sensitive manner.

To conclude, we support Article 20bis on *Health Aspects* which proposes health studies, access to health care, dissemination of information, prevention activities for workers, and biomonitoring. Further, we would support the global monitoring program proposed by the WHO, after it has been carefully reviewed to ensure it addresses all the factors affecting Indigenous Peoples and populations at risk, including *inter alia*, diet, occupational exposure, and contaminated sites. In this regard, it would be essential to engage national Ministries of Health, which could use the reviewed WHO guidance as a tool to implement the Convention. Periodic review of the program for effectiveness and sharing of results and experiences could form part of the reporting on effectiveness in implementation of the instrument/treaty. Thank you Mr President.