

WHO verlangt Amalgamausstieg

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News

Breakthrough reached on 'phasing down' dental Mercury use

GENEVA, Switzerland/PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Hailed as "a breakthrough" by Green Groups, an agreement in concept was reached yesterday by a World Health Organization (W.H.O.)-convened international expert group, supporting the "phase down" of dental mercury use worldwide. [1] However, the groups note that there is still much work to be done in deciding how and when a global dental amalgam phase down will occur.

"As a first step, I'm pleased to positively support a global 'phase down' on dental mercury use to reduce environmental releases," said Michael Bender, a meeting participant representing the Zero Mercury Working Group and director of the U.S.-based Mercury Policy Project. "We also recognized that fostering the increased use of mercury-free alternatives must tie in with W.H.O.'s commendable goal of bringing affordable dental healthcare to the global population."

W.H.O. recognizes that world governments reached a consensus on the need for a legally binding treaty to reduce global mercury exposure [2]. They said that the "Meeting on the Future Use of Materials for Dental Restoration WHO/HQ" in Geneva was intended "to provide global guidelines and strategies for future biomaterials use," and address the different challenges for richer and poorer countries [3].

"It was evident from the presentations at the meeting that mercury-free dental fillings are already widely used in some developing countries, so reality may be overtaking policy decisions," said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, observer at the meeting and coordinator of the European Environmental Bureau's Zero Mercury Campaign. "Medical insurances covering alternative materials could be crucial for a swifter transition allowing tooth-coloured fillings to become the rule and not the exception to dental treatment"

Last week, a letter signed by over 70 non-governmental organisations from around the world called on the W.H.O. to establish a schedule to phase out the use of dental mercury fillings as soon as possible [4].

A 2005 W.H.O. Policy Paper on "Mercury in Health Care" states that: "Mercury is highly toxic, especially when metabolized into methyl mercury ... Recent studies suggest that mercury may have no threshold below which some adverse effects do not occur."

References

[1] The W.H.O. provisional meeting agenda:

http://www.zeromercury.org/UNEP_developments/Agenda-22oct09.pdf

[2] U.N. Environment Council Decision 25 on mercury (starting on p.20):

http://www.chem.unep.ch/MERCURY/GC25/GC25Report_English_25_5.pdf

[3] The W.H.O.'s 22nd October 2009 correspondence recognized that world governments reached a consensus in February 2009 on the need for a global legally binding treaty to significantly reduce global mercury exposure:

Link: http://www.zeromercury.org/UNEP_developments/1-bender-let.pdf

[4] NGO 13 November letter to W.H.O.:

http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/091113_ngos_sign_on_letter_to_who_dental.pdf

[5] 2005 W.H.O. paper:

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/medicalwaste/mercurypolpaper.pdf

Previous relevant PR: Time to pull mercury out of fillings, say Health and Green groups to W.H.O. (also in FR, DE, ES), 16 November 2009, see: www.zeromercury.org

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