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## Manila Declaration on Mercury Free Healthcare

Ever since the industrial mercury poisoning in Minamata, the world has recognized that mercury pollution can have severely negative consequences for human health and the environment.

Nevertheless, mercury is still pervasive in our societies today. It is commonly found in products such as batteries, fluorescent lights, thermostats, thermometers and other measuring devices.

Mercury is recognized as a bioaccumulative global toxicant. UNEP is working with governments on many fronts to promote mercury-use reduction. WHO has issued a policy promoting the elimination of mercury in the health care sector. In the US and Europe thousands of hospitals and pharmacies have phased out mercury-based medical devices, while the European Union is also developing a mercury export ban.

As doctors, nurses, dentists, government officials and health care advocates, we believe we carry a responsibility with regard to addressing this serious problem. Our duty is two-fold.

Healthcare contributes to the global mercury problem. Broken and discarded mercury containing medical devices pose an acute threat to health care workers, patients, and ultimately a long-term persistent threat to the global environment. Given that affordable, effective and accurate alternatives are available, we commit to reduce and eliminate mercury use with the goal of mercury-free health care.

Furthermore, we believe that it is our responsibility to help educate our co-workers, patients and communities about the potential hazards of mercury. We can carry out this educational work through leading by example-- demonstrating positive alternatives to current polluting practices.

Therefore, we, the undersigned participants in the first South East Asian Conference on Alternatives to Mercury in Health Care commit to the following plan of action:

1. In Medical, Dental and other Health Care Institutions: We shall encourage health care institutions throughout the region to sign the Mercury Free Health Care Pledge.

We shall generate awareness of mercury's health and environmental hazards, along with the

accuracy and dependability of alternatives by educating health care workers, management, students, teachers and the public.

We will collect and share existing studies so as to be able to clearly demonstrate the strong scientific evidence of mercury's hazards and the viability of alternatives.

With this awareness we will assess mercury management practices, conduct mercury inventories, develop checklists, policies, guidelines and protocols. We will add mercury education to staff orientation programs, and develop baseline data of hospital staff exposure.

We call on all hospitals in the region to phase-out mercury from health care, by procuring and phasing-in mercury-free medical devices.

2. Throughout South East Asia: We shall establish national networks of stakeholders, composed of government, non-government organizations and health care institutions. These networks will initiate awareness campaigns and implement programs to replace mercury containing health care devices with mercury-free alternatives. The Health Care Without Harm office in Manila shall be our regional Secretariat to help us share and disseminate information and to assist us in our national programs.

3. Globally: We will advocate through our health care institutions, national governments and professional associations for national legislation and a binding international instrument to substantially reduce global supply and demand of mercury.

We believe that it is everyone's right to a clean and healthy environment. To be able to achieve this fundamental right, we, gathered here in Manila on January 26, 2006, hereby declare our commitment to provide health care to the populations we serve throughout the region free of mercury and without harm.