



**SUPPORT THE COMPROMISE AMENDMENTS  
ELIMINATE MERCURY FROM CONSUMER MEASURING DEVICES  
SORNOSA Report – Measuring devices containing mercury**

Brussels, 13 November 2006

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

You will soon be voting on controls to mercury measuring devices. The health & environment NGOs<sup>i</sup> **call upon you to support the compromise deal between Parliament and Council**, as a minimum and pragmatic approach. Mercury is an extremely dangerous toxin that is already widespread in our environment, posing a serious danger to the health of current and future generations. The health hazard comes from the entire lifecycle of all mercury uses, so all measures that reduce mercury use and spillage into our environment are important to protect people's health and help move Europe to a safer healthcare system.

**We urge you to REJECT the proposed exemption for barometers because:**

- **It jeopardises the last chance to restrict mercury use in measuring devices for which alternatives exist, before REACH is adopted.**

After REACH is adopted, a ban on mercury in specific applications will need to pass through the REACH legal procedures. This would delay a ban on fever thermometers and consumer blood-pressure devices, and meanwhile, many hundreds of those devices will break and leak, and contaminate the environment. This contamination poses a serious danger to the health of current and future generations. The European Commission estimates that already between 3 to 15 million Europeans have mercury levels around or over a recognised safety level.<sup>ii</sup>

- **The net effect of the exemption for barometers is likely to be the same as the compromise currently on offer.**

Barometers will only be exempted for a year or two, after which the Commission will likely reintroduce its mercury restrictions proposal. To exempt barometers would then require an absolute majority in Parliament to block the proposal in comitology, which is extremely unlikely. The current compromise already offers a grace period for the implementation of the ban on barometers.

- **Manufacturing new barometers following traditional designs which contain mercury is irresponsible;** maintenance of existing ones would be understandable.

Barometers use large quantities of mercury (around 1000 g. compared to around 1 g. for a fever thermometer). Unfortunately, carefully controlled and licensed manufacturing of these kinds of instruments does not guarantee that these instruments pose no danger during the entire lifetime of the instrument. Particularly in private homes where the individuals may not be aware of the danger, breakage or leakage pose an enormous risk of contamination and severe health effects; clean up costs for the city can be significant. By contrast, a ban on the production of new barometers will increase the value of the existing ones.

The World Health Organisation long ago concluded that there is *no safe level of mercury exposure*. We need to address all sources of mercury spillage into the environment in order to safeguard people's health. **Please vote for the compromise amendments as a minimum step.**

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>i</sup> Health and Environmental NGOs include:

**Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)**, <http://www.env-health.org/> is an international non-governmental organisation advocating environmental protection as a means to improving health and well-being. Member groups and organisations represent health, environment, women, health professionals and others. The group has a diverse membership of 41 member groups (6 international organisations, 11 European networks and 24 national/local organizations) including non-governmental organisations, professional bodies representative of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, academic institutions and other not-for-profit organisations.

**Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH)**, [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org), is an international coalition of hospitals and health care systems, medical and nursing professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labour unions, environmental and religious organisations. HCWH is dedicated to transforming the health care industry worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment. The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org), is a federation of more than 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in all EU Member States and most Accession Countries, as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. The aim of the EEB is to protect and improve the environment of Europe and to enable the citizens of Europe to play their part in achieving that goal.

The **Zero Mercury Working Group**, [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org), is an international coalition of more than 40 public interest non-governmental organizations from around the world formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project/Ban Mercury Working Group. The aim of the group is to reach “‘Zero’ emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, towards eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally.”

<sup>ii</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Paper, Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Community Strategy on Mercury, Extended Impact Assessment, COM(2005) 20 final, p.12.