



international pediatric association
association internationale de pédiatrie
asociación internacional de pediatria

Statement of the International Pediatric Association on United Nation Environmental Programme's Treaty on Mercury

Presented on June 27, 2012, Punta de Este, Uruguay

Given by Prof. Adenike Grange:

Distinguished guests my name is Professor Adenike Grange and I am here on behalf of the International Pediatric Association of which I am a past president and a current co-Chair with Dr. Ciro de Quadros of our Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

The International Pediatric Association (IPA) is a non-governmental organization with a membership of 144 National Pediatric Societies from 139 countries, 10 Regional Pediatric Societies representing all areas of the world, and 13 International Pediatric Specialty Societies. The IPA works collaboratively with member societies to mobilize networks of pediatricians for advocacy and programs in child health, working whenever possible with UN agencies. We are a lead organization that is committed to the protection of the health of all children world-wide.

I am also here as a former director of a pediatric hospital and former Minister of Health of Nigeria, a mother and grandmother. In all these capacities I have seen the power of vaccines reduce child deaths significantly and dramatically.

Members of the IPA are fully aware that contact with mercury products in many forms can cause some health problems. Therefore, we commend the United Nations Environment Programme for taking the initiative to prepare a legally binding instrument on mercury.

Many of us have forgotten what it was like before we had life-saving vaccines. Only a couple of decades ago, I witnessed thousands of babies being admitted into our hospitals with whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus – cases which have now become markedly reduced almost to extinction as a result of effective coverage with the relevant vaccines. These vaccines however contain the preservative thiomersal.

In making our plea at this forum for the exemption of thiomersal from its regulation, we would like to support our argument with the Statement of WHO on the finding that there is no scientifically-sound evidence to demonstrate that the amount of thiomersal currently used in human vaccines presents a health hazard. We also recognize that no ideal alternative preservatives will be practically and cost-effectively available for the near- or mid-term and, therefore, regulation of thiomersal could seriously disrupt our immunization programs. Recognizing therefore the crucial role that immunization plays in protecting the health of our children, we call on all governments to support an allowable-use exemption for vaccines containing thiomersal in the mercury treaty.

However, in order to meet the broad objectives of the mercury treaty, we encourage WHO to continue to support and monitor research and development of alternative presentations and to re-visit its position if non-thiomersal based alternatives are developed that are globally viable and cost-effective.

As we strive to expand access to protect children from the harmful effects of mercury whilst simultaneously expanding access to safe and effective vaccines, it is critical that any policies that may limit access, accurately reflect the relevant science. This treaty should recognize this issue as an area where some flexibility should be applied in order to allow countries to respond appropriately taking cognizance of their varying capacities and priorities with the highest sense of accountability.

**Finally, I urge my colleagues to ensure that this treaty includes vaccines containing thiomersal under annex C, Option 1 under "Allowable-use exemption for mercury-added products."
The lives of our children depend on it!**

President's & Administrative Office

1-3 Rue de Chantepoulet, P. O. Box 1726, CH-1211 Geneva 1201 – Switzerland
Tel. +4122 906 91 52; Fax: +4122 732 28 52; e-mail: adminoffice@ipa-world.org

Executive Director

141 Northwest Point Blvd, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007, USA
Tel. +1 847 434 4293; Fax: +1 847 228 5027, e-mail: adminoffice@ipa-world.org