



World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry
Всемирный альянс за стоматологию без ртути
Alliance Mondiale pour une Dentisterie sans Mercure
Alianza Mundial por una Odontología Sin Mercurio
التحالف العالمي لطب أسنان خال من الزئبق
世界无汞牙科联盟

Press Release

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Phase-out of mercury-containing dental fillings gains momentum

The World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry, of which the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is a member, welcomes the growing momentum to phase out the use of dental amalgam. The first part of the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP4) which was held online from November 1st ended yesterday.

The Minamata Convention requires Parties to phase down the use of dental amalgam, a filling material that is 50% mercury. The next step is to prepare for the global phase-out, and there is movement to phase out this toxic and polluting product at the second in-person part of COP4 in Bali on March 21-25, 2022.

Many countries have already phased out amalgam use, at least for children and other vulnerable populations. However, amalgam is still used in Malaysia, even among children. The Malaysian Dental Council has expressed support for the gradual phase down of dental amalgam as stated in the Position Statement on the Use of Dental Amalgam 2020. However, the Malaysian government has not set a time target in its plans to support the reduction of the use of amalgam fillings as contained in Annex A of the Minamata Convention.

Now at COP4, the Africa region¹ is proposing an amendment to the Minamata Convention that would generally phase out the use of amalgam in four steps, while the European Union² is proposing an amendment to end the use of amalgam in children, pregnant women and nursing mothers (aligning with current EU regulation). In preparation for the discussion on dental amalgam at the second part of COP4, both the Minamata Convention Secretariat and the WHO have published documents on the issue.

Based on input from Parties and other stakeholders, the Minamata Secretariat has prepared a note with up-to-date information on mercury-free alternatives to dental amalgam. It states that mercury-free dental fillings "have satisfactory mechanical properties and require less cavity preparation than composites," "are already widely used," and "the price difference in restoring teeth with alternatives is relatively small."³

The WHO, for its part, presented its *Report of the Informal Global WHO Consultation with Policymakers in Dental Public Health* (2021), which concludes that "The results of the consultation with policymakers in dental public health highlight that phase-down and even phase-out of use of dental amalgam is achievable, especially as effective, cost-effective and simple-to-use mercury-free alternatives are increasingly available."⁴ In the survey by the WHO, 14% of countries reported that they had completely phased out the use of dental amalgam, and in the Europe and Americas regions, as many as two-thirds of countries had either already phased out the use of dental amalgam or were expected to do so by 2025. Preparing for a general amalgam phase-out, the WHO added glass ionomer cements, a mercury-free alternative to amalgam, to the Essential Medicines List in October.

"We urge all parties to consider this new information confirming that mercury-free alternatives to amalgam are effective, available and affordable," advised Dr. Graeme Munro-Hall, Chief Dental Officer of the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry, a coalition of more than 50 organizations from all regions working to end the use of amalgam. Dr. Munro-Hall added, "We need to follow the science and phase out amalgam."

President of the African Center for Environmental Health Mr. Dominique Bally said "Phasing out the use of amalgam is especially important for developing countries where we do not have the infrastructure to collect, transport and store mercury waste from amalgam. Our resources will be used most cost-effectively if we transition to mercury-free alternatives."

Ms. Siddika Sultana, Director, Asian Center for Environmental Health said, "The use of mercury-free dental fillings is critical to the health of women and children who are particularly vulnerable to the neurotoxic effects of mercury from amalgam, whether it is implanted in their teeth or polluting their environment." Ms. Siddika who is also the executive director of Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO, Bangladesh added, "Parties should come forward to decide to eliminate mercury from dental amalgam and other mercury-added products."

Mr. Charles G. Brown, president of the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry, announced, "The World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry looks forward to engaging face-to-face with Parties and other stakeholders at the upcoming COP 4.2 in Indonesia."

"In its phase down plans, the Malaysian government should prioritise stopping the use of dental amalgam for children below the age of 14, pregnant women, breastfeeding women and those having kidney and immunity problems as they are most affected by the use of amalgam. Malaysia should pave the way to transition to mercury-free dentistry expeditiously," said Mohideen Abdul Kader, president of the Consumers' Association of Penang.

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¹http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/ES_Africa_Amendment_Proposal_April_2021.pdf

²http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/News/ES_EU_Amendment_Proposal_April_2021.pdf

³https://www.mercuryconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/working_document/4_5_DentalAmalgam.English.pdf

⁴ WHO, *Report of the Informal Global WHO Consultation with Policymakers in Dental Public Health* (2021),

https://www.mercuryconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/information_document/4_INF26_DentalAmalgamWHO.English.pdf