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Press Statement

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Asian civil society calls on E.U. to end dental amalgam trade

As the European Union moves to 100% mercury-free dentistry, Asian civil society is insisting the amalgam trade end at the same time.

Dental amalgam comprising 50% mercury, is toxic and inconsistent with the environment and modern dentistry. After a decade of studies and partial bans, the European Union appears poised to set an end date for its use, as is happening elsewhere in the world.

But still under consideration is whether to allow the trade of amalgam to developing countries, so Asian civil society is drawing a line, saying that the amalgam trade must end simultaneously with amalgam use.

Fourteen environmental NGOs from ten Asian nations, including the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), sent a letter to the European Commission calling for the cessation of exports of dental amalgam from Europe.

For too long Western companies have sold toxic products to Asian and African nations after banning them domestically. Such double standards are no longer acceptable.

Across Asia, governments and civil society are working to transition away from amalgam and toward mercury-free dentistry. The Philippines, Nepal, and Indonesia have adopted the full phase-out of amalgam use on a timetable. Vietnam has ended amalgam use for children and for pregnant and lactating women.

In Malaysia, there are certain restrictions on amalgam use, for example for high-risk groups. Malaysia's Dental Health Programme continues to support the reduction of amalgam filling without setting a time target. On this note, CAP has urged the Malaysian government to end the use of dental amalgam for patients under 15 years, and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The export of amalgam to Asia may result in much of the mercury from amalgam being released into the environment because in many places there is not sufficient waste control infrastructure and because waste control is not enough to protect the environment from amalgam.

In order to protect the people and the environment, we must end all amalgam use. Thus the 14 Asian civil society organizations call upon the European Union to do its part by ending the amalgam trade.

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