



Friends of the Nation

PRESS RELEASE

FoN to support the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Ghana

Sekondi, June 23, 2015 – Friends of Nation (FoN), a socio-environmental advocacy NGO in the Western Region, is proud to announce a new project that contributes to the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Ghana. The project will complement the Government of Ghana's efforts on reducing the use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) through the development and implementation of a National Action Plan in accordance with the Minamata Convention. This initiative is part of the African Caribbean Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Phase 2 (ACP MEAs 2) project funded by the European Commission and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations via the European Environmental Bureau/Zero Mercury Working Group (EEB/ZMWG).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the focal point for the Minamata Convention in Ghana and will be the lead agency for developing the National Action Plan. With its experience on the ground, FoN will complement the EPA's efforts by providing connections on policy matters as well as on technical issues related to the reduction of mercury use in ASGM. FoN will also identify and engage with key stakeholders, plan and host meetings, undertake community consultations and offer input into the draft action plan.

FoN has already held initial consultation meetings with different stakeholders working in the ASGM sector to introduce the project and seek their co-operation. These stakeholders include the EPA, Minerals Commission, Geological Survey Department of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ghana Health Service. FoN is now in the process of engaging with other civil society organizations undertaking work within the ASGM sector and will organize a forum with miners in Tarkwa in July.

"We congratulate the Government of Ghana for signing the Minamata Convention. It is a commitment to protect the health of our population from mercury pollution", says Donkris Mevuta, Executive Director of Friends of the Nation. "We are therefore very proud to have been chosen for this project. Friends of the Nation will ensure that civil society, miners and stakeholders at the district and regional levels have input into the development and implementation of the action plan."

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury. The Convention has 128 Signatories and 12 countries have ratified it, including six African nations. Ghana signed the Convention on September 24, 2014, but has not yet ratified it. ASGM is the largest anthropogenic source of mercury pollution. While the Minamata Convention does not require an outright ban on mercury use in ASGM, the National Action Plan must contain strategies to reduce and where feasible, eliminate mercury use. Amongst a number of elements, the treaty also requires the National



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Action Plan to outline steps to facilitate the formalization of the ASGM sector and strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations to mercury, particularly children, women of child-bearing age and pregnant women.

Friends of the Nation is socio-environmental advocacy NGO based in the Western Region. FoN operates in the thematic areas of Resource Governance, Population, Health and Environment Education (PHE), Local Governance and Business Advocacy.

For interviews and further information contact:

Solomon Kusi Ampofo
Communication, Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator
Tel: 024-4055951
Email: s.ampofo@fonghana.org or info@fonghana.org
Website: www.fonghana.org



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