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Implementing Appendix E of the Mercury Treaty: Creating opportunities for Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Miners.

The global legally binding instrument on mercury (The Minamata Convention) has been discussed and almost agreed upon for implementation. The Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) recognizes this treaty as an important achievement by the international community, and supports the shift from banning mercury towards a broader and more integral approach that acknowledges the complexity of the mercury issue. ARM welcomes the visibility this process is giving to the often ignored reality of Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Miners, and stresses that implementation of the instrument must be accompanied by an agreed upon integral formalization process and recognition of the Artisanal and Small-scale Miners' rights.

"We miners cannot formalize on our own. Now it is important that governments implement the mercury instrument as a policy and take on the responsibility of supporting us in the formalization process," says Manuel Reinoso, artisanal miner, Vice President of ARM and President of the National Small-scale Mining Society of Peru (SONAMIPE).

ARM, along with national partners and governments in various countries of Latin America and Africa, supports organized miners to promote their formalization and trains them in implementation of best mining practices, using market instruments. In francophone West Africa, ARM collaborates with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in a program whose main objective is the mitigation and reduction of mercury use in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM), and certification systems as an instrument to promote formalization and welfare of miners.

The Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) believes the National Action Plans (Appendix E of the Treaty) offers a great opportunity for formalization of Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM), and commits to implementing the instrument in collaboration with miners, governments, civil society and the mining industry to ensure that the national mercury reduction programs will have the intended positive impact on the hundreds of mining communities that depend on this activity. ARM stresses that the implementation of Appendix E requires governments to invest in formalization processes through appropriate mechanisms and direct support to the miners that will guarantee their access to training, credit and cleaner technologies. These actions are urgent due to the planned rapid and drastic reduction in the mercury supply. Without leaving alternatives the instrument could criminalize miners forcing them to buy mercury in illegal markets leaving them in the hands of criminal networks that control part of the mercury and gold trade.

The Mercury Treaty supports important elements of an effective formalization of ASGM, and the reduction of mercury emissions, as the invitation to better the relationship between ASM and the industrial sector. This means solutions depend on an integral approach on which all actors, including industry and governments, have a responsibility of defining a viable and fair policy for a sustainable ASM sector.

The international community has treated the main aspects of the world's mercury problem. The challenges are now to address the more profound roots of the problem and assure that policies and programs are adapted to the local contexts and realities so that the mercury treaty will have the desired effect on health, environment and the lives of the miners.

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For more information please contact:

Maria Laura Barreto, Chair of the Board of Directors.
tel: +33 6 61 36 12 30 and email: laurabarreto@sympatico.ca

Patrick Schein, Executive Board Member.
Email: schein.patrick@gmail.com

Siri Teilmann-Ibsen, Communications Coordinator.
tel: (+574) 3324711 and email: siriteilmann@communitymining.org

Notes to editors:

The Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) is an independent, global-scale, pioneering initiative established in 2004 to enhance equity and wellbeing in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) communities. ARM is committed to social justice and environmental responsibility as the values driving the transformation of ASM. ARM's vision is for ASM to become a formalized, organized and profitable activity that uses efficient technologies, that is socially and environmentally responsible, that increasingly develops within a framework of good governance, legality, participation and respect for diversity, and increases its contribution to the generation of decent work, local development, poverty reduction and social peace in our nations, driven by a growing consumer demand for sustainable minerals and ethical jewelry.

For more information on ARM please go to:
www.communitymining.org

For more information on ARM's position on mercury use go to:
www.communitymining.org/index.php/en/mercury-use