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Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle,
House of Lords,
London,
SW1A 0PW

17 November 2025

Dear Baroness Bennett,

I am writing to respond to two points you raised in the House of Lords debate on 30 October 2025 on The Control of Mercury (Enforcement) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. These related to mercury levels in English waters and mercury pollution on a global scale from gold mining.

I do recognise the need to address the issue of mercury contamination in English waters, which stems in part from historic pollution and from transboundary sources. The action we are taking at both a domestic and international level is aimed at removing mercury added products from the market and, where such products continue to be used, working to phase them out while also taking action to mitigate impacts on the environment and human health. Action we are taking includes the following:

- We are laying legislation that will come into force before the end of this year to prohibit the import, export and manufacture in Great Britain of a number of products containing intentionally added mercury. The legislation will prohibit mercury-containing products including a number of fluorescent lamps, photographic film and paper and propellant for satellites and spacecraft, thus contributing to our goal of protecting human health and the environment from the harmful effects of mercury. These products will also be phased out in Northern Ireland via the EU Mercury Regulation.
- Although the UK has a number of restrictions on mercury in cosmetics we are aware that some products are still illegally imported. The EA is taking action to address this illicit trade. At the recently concluded sixth Conference of the Parties of the Minamata Convention on mercury (COP-6), we collaborated with Parties to ensure a decision was adopted aimed at strengthening the implementation of Article 4 of the Convention, which, amongst other things, restricts the manufacture and trade of mercury-added cosmetics.

- Parties at Minamata COP-6 also agreed a phase out date for dental amalgam of 2034, with exemptions for use considered necessary by the dental practitioner based on the needs of the patient. This is an important environmental agreement in which the UK was deeply involved. We will implement this phase out in due course. In the meantime, UK law currently requires dental practices to use only pre-dosed encapsulated amalgam and follow strict protocols for dental amalgam management and disposal. High performance filters, known as amalgam separators, prevent water contamination by dental clinics and became compulsory in January 2019.
- Under our Environmental Improvement Plan, we are taking steps to reduce mercury emissions including from crematoria. As part of this, the Government will soon publish the updated Process Guidance Note for crematoria and the accompanying government consultation response, which will include further guidance on emission abatement technologies in crematoria.

You also highlighted the issue of mercury poisoning from gold mining. I recognise that gold mining significantly contributes to global mercury emissions which not only harms ecosystems but also puts affected communities' health at risk. That is why we continue to support measures that promote better due diligence in gold supply chains; harmonised international standards for gold trading; and greater data transparency to identify illegal and illicit activity.

The Government works with international partners and industry to combat the illicit gold trade and, as a major international bullion centre, is committed to playing a leading role in tackling these flows, including by promoting artisanal and small-scale gold mining professionalisation and compliance with our international obligations such as the Minamata Convention. At COP-6 the UK supported a decision encouraging the environmentally sustainable management of gold supply chains and improved transparency and accountability throughout the gold industry, with a view to discourage mercury use and illicit gold trade.

Thank you for your engagement on this matter. I will place a copy of this letter in the House library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth', followed by a small horizontal line.

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke on Trent
Baroness-in-Waiting [Government Whip]**