 

**A communique Issued at the Stakeholders’ Summit on Phase down of Dental Amalgam in the South East, Nigeria – Thursday 24 October, 2019**

The Sustainable Environment Development Initiative (SEDI Nigeria) under the auspices of *World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry* organized a summit on Phase-down of Dental Amalgam Use in South East, Nigeria at the DANNIC Hotels, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria, on 24 October 2019.

The forum brought together over 67 participants drawn from Government, Dental practitioners, Dental students, Dental surgery technicians, Academia, Media and Civil society groups among others, and deliberated on issues bothering on the phasing down of the use dental amalgam in the South East region.

Goodwill messages were delivered by the Dean, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Nigeria; Enugu State Ministries of Health and Environment; Rector, College of Dental Technology and Therapy Enugu, Enugu State Nigerian Dental Association (NDA), Chair, South East Oral Health Forum and the World Alliance for Mercury Free Dentistry (WAMFD).

**During the meeting participants observed the following:**

1. Mercury is a chemical of global concern owing to its long range atmospheric transport, its persistence in the environment once anthropogenically introduced and its ability to bio-accumulate in ecosystems.

2. Exposure to mercury can harm the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, cardiovascular system and immune system, particularly in women, unborn children and infants. Developing organs are the most sensitive.

3. Concerned about the increasing number of non-communicable diseases known to be related to

amalgam exposures (such as cancer, neurological diseases, cognitive & neuro-developmental

disorders, reproductive disorders, *etc*.)

4. Nigeria has signed the Minamata Treaty and has ratified the convention which entered into force on 15th August, 2017. Nigeria is the 88th party.

5. The Federal Ministry of Health is reviewing the National Policy on phase down of dental amalgam and has developed a draft phase down roadmap for Nigeria.

6. Low level of awareness among Nigerians on the dangers of mercury in dental amalgam.

7. Dental amalgam is still widely used and is the most affordable dental filling material serving the restorative health needs of Nigerians.

8. Alternative direct restorative materials such as composites, compomers, glass ionomer cements ceromers, ormocers, amalgomers and giomers can be used for restoration of carious and non-carious cavities involving anterior and posterior teeth based on specific selection criteria and indications.

9. Recognized the role played by the Federal Ministry of Health, Nigerian Dental Association (NDA), Non-governmental organizations, Dental practitioners, Media and other stakeholders in addressing the dangers of mercury in amalgam and seeking alternatives.

10. Amalgam separators were recommended but has a lot of disadvantages and so has been rejected.

11. Need for more funding on research for alternatives to amalgam

12. Need for entrepreneurs to engage in local production of alternative dental restorative materials.

13. Potential toll on the transition in dental practice include initial patient’s confusion and disorientation, dentist’s practice readjustment, dental school’s curriculum change’ etc.

**Recommendations**

1. In compliance with the provisions of the Minamata convention, government should initiate a coordinated multi-sectoral approach for an effective phase down of use of dental amalgam in Nigeria.

2. Dental faculties should be the focal point for mercury amalgam phase down efforts.

3. Updating dental schools training curriculum to emphasize mercury-free dentistry.

4. Implementation of a phase down work plan. This must also include legislative review and development of guidelines, gathering baseline data and developing the national overview.

5. Promote training and research on alternative dental restorative materials.

6. Promote subsidies and tax regimes that favour alternative dental restorative materials.

7. Engaging the public and media as well as other stakeholders in awareness creation on the health impacts of mercury in dental amalgam and the need for prevention of caries.

8. Enhancing tools and mobilizing funds for training and capacity building on minimum intervention dentistry.

9. Behavioural change activities should be implemented, encouraging the participation of all key players.

**Resolutions**

* Assembled this 24th October 2019, we the stakeholders of the South East region: Call for the end of dental amalgam use in children under 16, pregnant and breastfeeding women by December 2020 and amalgam phase out by 2022.
* Urge the South East State governments’ and other stakeholders to implement a phase down in government dental clinics in view of the fact that the Minamata convention is already in implementation.