



**IIMA**  
Human Rights Office  
Istituto Internazionale  
Maria Ausiliatrice



**FMA NATIONAL**  
DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Geneva, 20 September 2022

51<sup>st</sup> HRC Session

Item 3 – ID with the Special Rapporteur  
on the implications for human rights of  
the environmentally sound management and  
disposal of hazardous substances and wastes

Speaker: Mr. Ajoyraja LENIN

Oral statement submitted by

**VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development**

And co-signed by

**IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice**

With the support of

**FMA Provincials Conference of India (PCI)**

and

**National Development Forum (NDF) - India**

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur, which highlights the harms and risks for human rights of the use of mercury in small-scale gold mining.

We share the Special Rapporteur concerns that India has become an important free-trade transit zone for mercury.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we highlight that artisanal mining in India represents an informal, illegal and unregulated system of small-scale mining by local communities. A family-based practice where men enter the abandoned mines to collect the quartzose ore, while children help them in crushing activities and the women are involved in recovering the gold through panning and mercury amalgamation.<sup>2</sup>

Due to inadequate facilities and illegal operations, artisanal miners do not earn large gains and even risk their own lives in these often-unsafe mining operation to make a livelihood.

Moreover, this mining results in mercury pollution of surface water, surface degradation and subsequent accumulation in food staples.

We fully support the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur, and we particularly stress the need for:

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/51/35, §§ 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> Using a kerosene lamp for lighting the narrow openings through the reefs, they mine out the quartzose ore with the help of chisel and hammer and bring it out as head load. The ore is then crushed and panned under water, when the gold separates into the fines from which it is recovered using a bead of mercury. The portion of the mercury without gold is recovered for reuse and kept in small vials. The portion with gold is then burnt to recover the fine bead of gold releasing mercury into the air.

- creation of a broader information base, delineating a responsible body to deal with this kind of mining;
- the undertake of legal reforms leading to definitional changes;
- and finally, the recognition of the poverty alleviation potential of this sector in the accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.