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UNEP Chemicals is a branch of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE).

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The UNEP Chemicals Newsletter is published periodically to give readers world-wide an update of activities to promote the environmentally sound management of chemicals and so help protect public health and the environment.

UNEP promotes sustainable development by catalysing vital global actions and building national capacity for the sound management of chemicals through information exchange, training, and capacity building.

Inquiries and editorial correspondence should be sent to the Head, UNEP Chemicals. Material may be reproduced without fee, with acknowledgement.

What is Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining?

Artisanal and small scale gold mining (ASGM) using mercury to extract gold is a significant global development issue, involving approximately 10-15 million miners in 55 countries (mainly Asia, Africa and South America). While producing approximately 20 % of the world's supply of gold, the sector provides valued income to miners and their families. Reducing

the impact from this sector on the environment is possible; however, the informal, and sometimes illegal, nature of the activity can make sustained change and outreach challenging. A global gold rush is emerging with gold prices reaching an all time high in March 2008 – the time to act is now!

Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining - SAICM Quick Start Project

UNEP has recently initiated an ASGM project under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership through the SAICM Quick Start Programme. One project has been funded at 250,000 USD in Asia. This 18 month project, targeted to start in late 2008, initially focuses on activities in the Philippines and Cambodia while including a broader regional element towards the end of the project. The objective is to secure government commitment in addressing ASGM, develop multi-stakeholder strategic plans for mercury

reductions and enhance regional collaboration and coordination (building upon on-going activity). A similar project in South America has been approved under the Quick Start Programme but is currently unfunded. In addition, efforts are underway to initiate a project in Africa.

SAICM / QSP

SAICM initial implementation is progressing under the framework of the Quick Start Programme (QSP) and its trust fund. Stakeholders seeking support for projects are invited to note that the sixth round of applications to the QSP trust fund will open in late

October 2008 and is expected to close in March 2009, with dates to be announced on the SAICM website: www.saicm.org

SAICM Regional meetings

SAICM regional meetings in 2008 were held for the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region in Panama in February, LAC regional coordination committee in Port of Spain in June 2008 and for the Africa region in Dar es Salaam in July 2008. A meeting of the

Central and Eastern European region will take place in Bucharest in September 2008.

Workshops on legal and institution infrastructures

During the last 4 regional meetings for SAICM, UNEP has organized workshops on the development of legal and institutional infrastructures. The workshops are part of a Swedish funded project on development of guidance on legal and institutional infrastructures.

The workshops have shown the great differences in the status for legal and institutional infrastructures between countries as well as provide a good basis for the development of the guidance that will be done during the next 6 months.



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“Guidance for Identifying Populations at Risk from Mercury Exposure”

UNEP Chemicals and WHO, in cooperation with the FAO, recently launched this document intended to assist countries concerned about the impacts of mercury pollution. It aims to provide guidance on estimating exposures through biomonitoring as well as using data on dietary fish intake. It provides an overview of mercury toxicity, exposure pathways, health and environmental impacts, available reference levels, and can be used as resource for research or investigations regarding mercury exposure. <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/Populationsatrisk.htm>

Mercury – work leading up to OEWG-2

Regional consultations

Consultations aimed at preparing the regions for the 2nd Open Ended Working Group meeting (Nairobi, 6-10 October 2008) were held in Qatar, Tanzania, Japan and Romania between June and September 2008. Participants welcomed the opportunity to explore the issues and to identify areas of common interest to the region. UNEP also consulted countries on the issues relating to the control of mercury and the range of options to assist in its development of documents for the OEWG.

Intersessional work

The results of the intersessional work (reports on implementation options, financial considerations, costs and benefits of strategic objectives, current supply and demand, products and processes substitutes, progress on partnerships, among others) have been available as meeting



Photo / Ian Britton, Freefoto.com

documents since late August 2008, providing an opportunity for delegates to the meeting to reflect on their content. Several of these reports will be of value as ongoing information resources and will be continue to be available on the UNEP Chemicals website after the OEWG. <http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/OEWG2/Meeting.htm>

Mercury – Partnerships

A meeting of Governments and other stakeholders was held in April 2008 in Geneva to agree on the overarching framework for the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership. The agreed framework includes a Partnership Advisory Group, operational guidelines and the format for partnership area business plans.

There are currently six partnership areas established under the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership:

- artisanal and small scale gold mining;
- mercury cell chlor alkali production;
- mercury air transport and fate research;
- mercury in products;
- mercury releases from coal combustion;
- mercury waste management.

Formal membership to the partnership areas is open to representatives of Governments, major government and non-government groups and sectors, including NGOs, science, and industry. For further information, please visit http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/new_partnership.htm

Some activities currently underway or near completion are: the inventory pilot project in

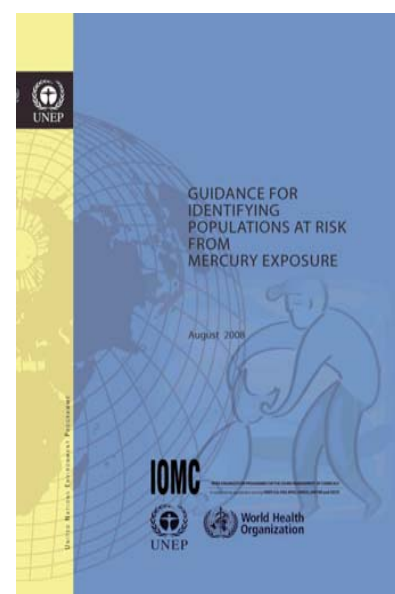


Photo / Kevin Tealner

Small scale gold mining using mercury and cyanide North Sulawesi, Indonesia, 2007

Asia; and development and testing of technical guidelines, including guidelines on mercury waste management that are being developed jointly with the Secretariat of the Basel Convention.

Another important activity underway is the preliminary assessment of the last remaining exporting primary mercury mine in Kyrgyzstan. This assessment will provide information for future assessments and projects to develop a suitable strategy to address this issue.



Where are we going with Mercury?



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There is global agreement that mercury is a serious global hazard and the global concerns are increasing. For a decade UNEP's Governing Council has requested UNEP to increase its activities regarding the substance. Still, although there are decisions addressing significant aspects of the issue, there is no overarching objective or policy to deal with it. In

2007 Governing Council agreed that the efforts to reduce risks from mercury were not sufficient to address the global challenges posed by this substance.

In response, earlier this year UNEP's Global Mercury Partnership was launched. This is a voluntary structure for all stakeholders, covering at the moment 6 different focal areas. In October this year the Open-Ended Working Group, established by UNEP Governing Council to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments is meeting to finalise its report to the Governing Council.

My hope for the outcome of the OEWG is a clear recommendation to the Governing Council on how to deal more effectively and coherently with mercury in the long term.

Per M. Bakken, Head, Chemicals Branch, DTIE, UNEP

DGEF – support to DDT programme

The Global UNEP/WHO/GEF Programme “Demonstrating and Scaling-up of Sustainable Alternatives to DDT in Vector Management” was approved by GEF Council in April 2008. The Programme with a total budget of 78 Mio US\$ aims at protecting human health and the environment through promoting sustainable alternatives to DDT.

First Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment

The First Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa was convened on 26-29 August 2008 in Libreville, Gabon. The conference brought together approximately 300 participants, including 22 ministers of environment and 26 ministers of health. The Conference was co-organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), in partnership with the Government of Gabon. Ministers adopted and signed the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa that will be forwarded to the African Union at a future Summit. The Conference also launched the Joint WHO-UNEP Health and Environment Linkages Initiative Toolkit and Synthesis Report.

In their Declaration Ministers committed their Governments to form an alliance to reduce environmental threats to human health and well-being, and to stimulate the necessary policy, investment and institutional changes to maximize synergies between health, environment and other fields. The Declaration reflects Ministers' recognition of the inter-relationship between health security and a healthy environment.

The ministers agreed to meet again before the end of 2010 to review progress.

DGEF – support to GMP projects

Several regions asked UNEP/GEF to support the implementation of the Global Monitoring Plan. GEF has already cleared project concepts for three regions (Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Western Africa), a concept for GRULAC awaits approval. Projects are expected to start very soon.

Informal Workshop on Stakeholders' Information Needs on Chemicals in Articles/Products



Photo / anonymous

Reduced use of hazardous chemicals is a key challenge in achieving sustainable development. There is a growing interest and understanding of the release and exposure to chemicals contained in products, such as personal computers and textiles. The recent recall of millions of toys containing lead attracted worldwide attention.

Information is needed to enable actors to avoid hazardous chemicals and manage risks to users and the environment.

This workshop is an initial step to address the identified need for better communication throughout the product chain. It is closely linked to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) as well as the Marrakesh process on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The workshop is expected to convey its outcome to the 2nd session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) for consideration in the discussions on emerging issues.

The Workshop will be held 2-4 December 2008 in Bangkok. It is organized by UNEP jointly with the initiator and main sponsor, the government of Sweden. It is supported by the government of Japan and facilitated by the government of the host country, Thailand.

Soft plastic toys may contain phthalates as softeners. Many toy manufacturers have discontinued their use.

Update on mainstreaming events

The UNDP-UNEP partnership initiative for the integration of sound management of chemicals into development planning has now been successfully launched in 4 countries: Uganda, Zambia, Macedonia and Cambodia, and is preparing for the launching of the initiative in Belarus, Ecuador and Belize during coming months. The countries in which the initiative has been launched are at present working on the development of the necessary background information for the economic assessments of the effects of chemicals on human health and the environment. In parallel with the country activities, a Norwegian funded workshop in Kampala, Uganda took place from 9-11 September 2008. The participants came from Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. The objective was to discuss how to facilitate and improve understanding between officials responsible for development planning and officials from

environment and health responsible for chemicals management with respect to integrating or “mainstreaming”, sound management of chemicals into development planning. Similar workshops will be carried out in the Asian-Pacific region, the Central and Eastern European region and the Latin American and Caribbean Regions.



Photo / Ian Britton, Freefoto.com

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Stockholm Convention

As part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Stockholm Convention in reducing or eliminating releases of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) into the environment, a global monitoring plan (GMP) is being undertaken to provide for collection of comparable monitoring data and information on the presence of the POPs worldwide. The GMP is being implemented with the contribution of partners with expertise in passive air or human milk monitoring and with financial support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and national donors. This includes: over 30 countries were engaged in a World Health Organization human milk survey;

28 countries in Africa undertook air sampling with the support of Research Centre for Environmental Chemistry and Ecotoxicology (Czech Republic); 10 countries are receiving assistance from the Global Atmospheric Passive Sampling (Canada) to produce air data; and 4 GEF-funded projects are being set up to help build capacity in regions. The GMP Coordination Group will meet in November 2008 to prepare the global monitoring report based on regional reports for consideration by Stockholm Convention Conference of the Parties in May 2009. It will serve as a baseline for further evaluations.

Some updates on Chemicals Information Exchange Network (CIEN)

Under the auspice of the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and Environment, a CIEN activity was launched in Sierra Leone in August 2008 to provide the POPRC members and national stakeholders with the knowledge of tools available to obtain information and effectively communicate on POPRC matters within the framework of the Stockholm Convention implementation. 20 chemicals management officials and 6 webmasters were trained using the combined assets of the CIEN organizational framework and the technical facilities of the ESTIS to build national websites and foster networking (www.estis.net/sites/cien-sl). Read more on: <http://jp1.estis.net/communities/cien>

Adoption of Bali Declaration on Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood

The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (COP 9), held in Bali, Indonesia, on 23-27 June 2008, focused on the theme of “Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood”. A High-Level Forum, chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP and featuring prominent speakers from all sectors, reaffirmed the political importance of the Convention and its contribution to implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Ministers adopted the “Bali Declaration on Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood”, sealing this interlinkage. The meeting also launched a way forward on the entry into force of the Ban Amendment, following an initiative of the President of COP 9. For more information please visit www.basel.int

COP 9 also adopted a Decision on enhanced cooperation and coordination between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, providing for establishment of joint Secretariat services in specific areas. This was considered by many as a significant step towards streamlining international processes.



Photo: ISD / Earth Negotiations Bulletin

Mr. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, signed the first day cover of the release of stamps dedicated to COP 9 by the Government of Indonesia. With Mr. Rachmat Nadi Witoelar Kartaadipoetra, COP 9 President and Ms. Katharina Kummer Peiry, Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention