



UNEP Chemicals Branch Newsletter

October 2013

Division of Technology, Industry and Economics



2010 Kumamoto Pref. "Kumamon"

Friends and Colleagues,

The time is now. You as negotiators and other stakeholders have worked hard over the past several years to get where you are now – the adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury as the newest global multilateral environmental agreement. The Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Kumamoto should now be an opportunity for all of you to be extremely proud of what you have accomplished in such a few intergovernmental negotiating sessions. This would not have been possible without your dedication, commitment and stamina (for those late nights or even all-nighters!). The time is now, but the work is only beginning towards entry into force and full implementation. Support to assist in ratification and early implementation has already been pledged and started to arrive. Many are eager to get started putting the final building blocks in place towards the first Conference of Parties and entry into force. UNEP stands ready to support you in putting your new MEA into action!

*Tim Kasten, Head,
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Minamata Convention on Mercury

In 2009, the UNEP Governing Council requested the Executive Director to convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to prepare a global legally binding instrument in acknowledgement of the need to manage mercury in an effective, efficient and coherent manner. After just two and a half years, the text of a global legally binding instrument on mercury was agreed during the fifth INC meeting, which was held in Geneva in January 2013.

The final text, now named the Minamata Convention on Mercury, will be opened for signature at the Diplomatic Conference for the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to take place in Kumamoto, Japan, on 10 to 11 October 2013. The Conference will be preceded by a open-ended intergovernmental preparatory meeting and a

Ceremonial Day to be held in Minamata on 9 October. The Minamata Day will seek to share information about the lessons of the Minamata Disease and the harm mercury causes to human lives and the environment. The Minamata Day will also provide an opportunity for all delegates to visit the Ecopark in Minamata as well as the Minamata Museum and Archives.



Dangers of mercury

Mercury is a particular threat to human health and the environment despite existing as a natural element. It is toxic at low levels of contamination and lethal at high doses. It can cause permanent brain and neurological damage and also can affect the kidneys and the digestive system. Vulnerable populations are at higher risk especially babies and children who are the most affected by mercury poisoning. The Minamata disease is an illustration of the severe neurological syndromes the chemical element can trigger.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury monitors the production, export and import of mercury-containing products, such as thermometers and energy-saving light bulbs, and embeds reduction plans for the two most significant sources of emissions: coal fired power generation and small-scale gold mining. The latter accounted for 37% of the global anthropogenic mercury emissions in 2010, while the former contribute to approximately 61% of the annual emissions. Such emissions have been rapidly increasing in the last decade. An international legally binding instrument on mercury is of fundamental importance to control mercury,



A coal-fired power plant

as mercury emissions spread broadly in the air, are persistent in the environment and circulate across regions, countries and borders thereby making it a global issue.

Anthropogenic mercury emissions released from human activities reached 1,960 tons per year according to the 2010 UNEP estimates: even after the Minamata Convention comes into force, further international actions will need to be taken to control this toxic substance.

Latin America and Caribbean region reinforces commitment to SAICM



Photo / Viajes y Convenciones SA, Mexico

QSP Award, LAC region

The SAICM secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Mexico, organized the 4th Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) regional meeting on SAICM, in Mexico City on 19-23 August 2013. This first regional meeting since the third session of ICCM and was attended by approximately 90 delegates. The meeting supported the region to review progress on implementation of SAICM, identify regional priorities, exchange experiences and share information on activities undertaken at national and regional levels and review and provide input to the Overall Orientation and Guidance to facilitate achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management.

Focused information sharing sessions were hosted on: endocrine disrupting chemicals, manufactured nanomaterials, children's environmental health, lead in paint, lead-acid batteries partnership cooperation, chemicals in products and highly hazardous pesticides.

Highlights of LAC SAICM regional meeting outcomes include:

(i) LAC region agreement to a process for completing an action plan for the region in the coming three months;

(ii) Resolutions adopted on endocrine disrupting pesticides as well as highly hazardous pesticides.

The resolution on endocrine disrupting pesticides reinforces the ICCM3 resolution on EDCs, focusing on pesticides. Amongst other things, it invites UNEP and WHO, subject to availability of resources, to:

(i) develop a report with regional input that is targeted to the situation and needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition and;

(ii) recommends a robust series of awareness-raising activities.

The resolution on highly hazardous pesticides (HHP) invites the FAO to develop an information paper on safer alternatives to HHPs. It also encourages countries in the LAC region to perform surveys of HHPs and recommends the LAC Regional Coordination Committee utilize the HHP surveys to collect success stories on HHP phase-outs. The resolution also encourages the development of an on-line clearinghouse of HHP registrations, restrictions, and prohibitions in the LAC region.

Quick Start Programme (QSP) Update

A QSP Awards Gala was hosted at the LAC regional meeting on 20 August 2013. The event allowed for recognition and information sharing concerning three outstanding projects that have been completed in the region. Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras and Uruguay as well as UNDP, UNITAR, UNEP and the NGO "Sustainlabour" were all recognized for outstanding efforts.

The QSP Trust Fund Implementation Committee will review proposals under the 13th application round and consider them for funding on 25-26 November 2013. Stakeholders are reminded that the QSP Trust Fund is open for contributions to fund QSP projects, having received approximately \$500,000 during 2013 towards a target of \$2.4 million for the year.

Knowing what's in it: the chemicals we put in products



Photo / Tommy Wong / Wikimedia Commons

To support sound chemicals management decisions for chemicals contained in everyday products, where does information on these chemicals need to flow? Who should be responsible for providing this information? With whom should they be exchanging it? What are effective mechanisms to accomplish this exchange? These are some of the complex questions to be addressed through a Chemicals in Products (CiP) programme. UNEP leads the development of this programme, and will propose the programme to the international chemicals-policy community at ICCM4 in 2015.

Progress continues on drafting the CiP programme proposal, which will:

1. identify roles and suggest responsibilities in chemical information exchange for major stakeholder groups throughout the life cycle of products; and
2. develop guidance on how chemicals information could be transferred, accessed and exchanged.

Stakeholder engagement and outreach for the development of the CiP programme and its eventual piloting and implementation are underway. These take place through the CiP project steering group, in information sessions built around key stakeholder events and SAICM regional meetings, and through targeted interviews and stakeholder contact. A CiP programme proposal is expected in early-2014, with plans for a pilot demonstration to follow.

Mainstreaming the Sound Management of Chemicals in Africa

Representatives of 28 African countries met in Nairobi, Kenya on 2-4 July 2013 to discuss Mainstreaming the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMC) into National Action Plans. The regional workshop supported the 8 years, 8 actions initiative launched by the Swedish Minister of Environment, Ms Lena Ek, in April 2012 to assist in the achievement of the 2020 goals.

The workshop recognized that SMC is not prioritized in most of the African countries national development plans or in national budgets. The workshop recommended a number of elements to increase priority given to sound management of chemicals. The elements included:

1. Targeted awareness raising for different stakeholder groups;
2. Development of national policies on chemicals management;
3. Review of legislative, institutional infrastructures and funding;

4. Development of a mechanism for information exchange;
5. A second awareness raising campaign;
6. Adoption of a revised legal framework, administrative infrastructures and funding mechanisms.

Under these main elements a number of activities were identified at the workshop and have been developed into a roadmap to better understand the necessary elements for the SMC throughout their lifecycle to achieve the 2020 goal.

Further information on the workshop and the roadmap is available on our website: www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Events/WorkshopSoundManagementofChemicals/tabid/106482/Default.aspx



UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi

Photo / UNEP

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint

The International Week of Action on Prevention of Lead Poisoning, with initial focus on lead in paint, will take place on 20-26 October 2013.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (GAELP), a voluntary collaborative initiative, jointly undertaken by the UNEP and WHO, focuses and catalyzes the efforts of a diverse range of stakeholders to achieve international goals to prevent children's exposure to lead in paint and to minimize occupational exposures to lead paint.

The Global Alliance is focusing initially on efforts to eliminate exposures to the most vulnerable populations through its work on eight priority actions identified in its business plan strategy. This international campaign, which is among the priority actions of the Global Alliance, aim to raise awareness about lead poisoning and highlight countries' and partners' efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning and to urge further action to eliminate lead paint.

Further information, please visit: www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/LeadCadmium/PrioritiesforAction/LeadPaints/FocalAreasofWork/GAELP/tabid/106381/Default.aspx

Libreville - The Third Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa

Five years after the adoption of the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa by ministers of health and environment from 52 African countries, a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the Libreville Declaration will assess progress, present lessons learnt, identify challenges and opportunities and decide on the way forward. UNEP and WHO are preparing for, along with other partners, the Third Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment expected to be held in Libreville, Gabon in early 2014.

Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals

Endocrine disrupting chemicals were recognized by SAICM as an emerging issue of concern in 2012. They produce effects in both humans and wildlife. These effects, caused by a range of chemicals including heavy metals such as mercury, include not only reproductive effects, but also effects on neurodevelopment, thyroid and adrenal effects, bone disorders, effects on immune function, and possible links to certain cancers. UNEP and WHO have published a new report "State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals - 2012" in February 2013. UNEP, OECD and WHO have commenced a joint programme of work, including

regional awareness-raising meetings. The first meeting was held in Mexico City in August, and promoted lively discussion on the issue, and possible ways forward. Further meetings are planned in other UN regions, as well as other activities to raise awareness and to gather further information on the scope of the problem, particularly from areas where there is currently limited knowledge. The results of these activities will contribute to a report on EDCs for the fourth session of the ICCM, as well as to further updates of the report.



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The UNEP Chemicals Branch 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: chemicals@unep.org.

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A list of publications is available from UNEP Chemicals Branch and on the Web (www.chem.unep.ch). Publications are free of charge.

UNEP-WHO survey reveals dioxins/furans pose highest risk to mothers

An assessment of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) present in breast-feeding mothers around the world reveals that all mothers had concentrations of dioxins/furans above levels that would be considered safe. Although the pesticide DDT, formerly used in agriculture and today in some parts of the world to kill malaria-bearing mosquitoes, had concentrations 10-million times higher than the TEQs for the dioxins, "only" 5% of all the mothers analysed had concentrations above safety standards. For the six most common polychlorinated polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), only 25% of the mothers had a body burden considered below the safety standards. This assessment is undertaken jointly by UNEP and the World Health Organisation (WHO) as part of the Global Monitoring Plan on Persistent Organic Pollutants under the Stockholm

Convention on POPs. Polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins, polychlorinated dibenzofurans, DDT, and PCB belong to the initial 12 POPs slated for elimination under the convention. UNEP and WHO continue to implement the human monitoring project in 2014 to detect changes with time and also plan to establish science-based safety levels for other POPs.

	Unit	Safety Standards as "Equivalent human milk concentration"	Ranges in human milk (pooled samples)						
			Min	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile	90th percentile	95th percentile	Max
WHO _{TEQ} -TEQ _{WHO} (UB)	pg/g lipid	0.2-0.9	1.5	5.6	9.4	14.3	20.3	23.7	49.0
Sum PCBs	ng/g lipid	7	2	19	38	121	223	347	1009
Sum DDTs	ng/g lipid	2300	23	171	396	1015	1849	2816	23472

*) in human milk as sum of 6 indicator PCBs
 **) in human milk calculated after correction of metabolites for molecular weight
 Red numbers are groups of mothers above the safety level

UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group Meeting

The fifth meeting of the Partnership Advisory Group (PAG) of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership (GMP) took place on 27 July 2013 in Edinburgh, Scotland. The leads of all eight Global Mercury Partnership (GMP) areas, together with observers from government, industry and civil society, attended the meeting. New Co-chairs were elected for the GMP; Mr. Atle Fretheim from Norway and Mr. Mitch Cuna from the Philippines. GMP leads presented progress made in each area. UNEP presented its work on global assessments, national inventories, communication, and financing.

One important agenda item discussed was how the GMP can support Governments to address the measures set out in the Minamata Convention on

Mercury. Article 14 of the Convention text mentions GMPs as a means to deliver capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer. The PAG regards the GMP as a key element of this article and agreed a proactive role in analyzing the needs of Parties to the Convention, identifying issues of common concern and supporting interventions to address them.

The PAG recommended developing a matrix that will show how the work of the GMP addresses the various articles of the Minamata Convention. An e-brochure containing the matrix will be presented at the Diplomatic Conference and form a basis for a side event.

Calendar of events

- 18-22 November 2013: Africa regional meeting on SAICM. Pretoria, South Africa.
- 25-26 November 2013: 16th Meeting of the SAICM Quick Start Programme, Trust Fund Implementation Committee. Vienna (UNIDO), Austria
- 26-28 November 2013: meeting of the IOMC. Vienna (UNIDO), Austria
- 2014 (date to be determined): The third interministerial conference on the Libreville Declaration on Health and the Environment in Africa. Libreville, Gabonese Republic
- 2014 (date to be determined): PCB Elimination Network, Fifth meeting of the Advisory Committee. Stockholm, Sweden.
- 14 February 2014: EU-JUSSCANNZ regional meeting on SAICM. Paris, France.
- June 2014: United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). Nairobi, Kenya.