



UNEP Chemicals Newsletter

February 2010

Division of Technology, Industry and Economics



From the Head of Branch

This issue of the Chemicals newsletter coincides with a number of important initiatives to increase the cooperation and coordination of our efforts in addressing the WSSD goal of 'universal sound management of chemicals by 2020'. In addition to the extraordinary Conference of the Parties for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on the synergies between the three conventions, UNEP itself is reforming to ensure that the key skills available across the organization are brought to bear on the most important environmental themes. Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste, one of the six themes under the new matrix arrangements, is coordinated by the Chemicals Branch and will include not just our work but activities by other UNEP units towards the objectives of the theme. While this issue reports the recent work of the Chemicals Branch, future editions of this newsletter will also include reports of others working with us to deliver the Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste theme.

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Towards a new agreement

The next step towards a global legally-binding mercury instrument was taken by the ad hoc open ended working group which met in Bangkok from 19 to 23 October 2009. The group agreed on draft rules of procedure for the intergovernmental negotiating committee, the venue and date for the committee's first session and discussed scheduling of issues for negotiations. Four regions agreed on candidates for the bureau of the committee. The secretariat was tasked with preparing documents for the first session.

A number of regional consultations to prepare governments for the negotiations have been organized, in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Central and Eastern Europe. A meeting is planned for Latin America and the Caribbean in March 2010. Consultations include awareness raising



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sessions and opportunities to discuss issues of national concern and possible strategies for the negotiations. The first session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, from 7 to 11 June 2010. Invitations will be issued early in 2010.

The Global Mercury Partnership

The Global Mercury Partnership has seen a steady growth in the number of partners as well as growth progress in a number of partnership areas over the past months. The partnership currently has 46 partners, many of which are international organizations that represent a broader constituency of national or sectoral members. The Partnership remains open to new members.

Outline of a few key activities:

- The Supply and Storage partnership area, currently being led by Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group, has drafted its initial business plan. Recent activities in this area include the side events on UNEP regional storage initiatives and the Kyrgyzstan Primary Mercury Mine. At the Ad-hoc Open Ended Working Group Meeting in Bangkok in October 2009, these events generated much interest and built momentum in these important project areas.
- UNEP is collaborating with WHO with regard to determining best practices for the management of dental caries and the management of mercury-containing amalgams in the dental health sector. An expert meeting held in late 2009 at WHO will report in early 2010.
- A series of strategic planning workshops are taking place relating to artisanal and small scale gold mining between December 2009 and February 2010. The workshops are a first step in the development of national strategic plans for artisanal and small scale gold mining in Bolivia,

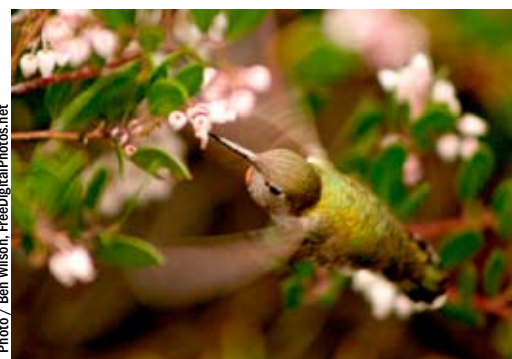


Photo / Ben Wilson, FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Cambodia, Peru, the Philippines and two African countries to be identified. Results are expected by the end of 2010.

- The Process Optimization Guidance Document to assist in reducing mercury releases from coal combustion in power generation has been developed and is currently being reviewed in 4 countries, namely China, India, Russia and South Africa. National experts will also develop additional guidance specific to coal-fired power generation in these countries. In addition in these 4 countries, the partnership area is collecting information on coal, coal usage and characteristics of the coal power sector to be used in developing new emissions inventories and preparing a stronger basis for evaluating possible measures to reduce mercury releases from the sector.
- For more information visit: www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/partnerships/new_partnership.htm

Focus on children's environmental health



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Awareness of the links between environment degradation, exposure to harmful chemicals and human health are gathering new momentum as a result of mounting evidence from the impacts of chemicals on children's development. Increased exposure to certain chemical groups has been implicated in recent studies of growing rates of birth abnormalities, caused by defects in or damage to the developing foetus; and diseases, such as asthma, caused by impairment of children's immune systems.

Of particular concern are the so-called endocrine disruptor chemicals that mimic natural hormones in the human body and disrupt the chemical systems that guide development of the brain and reproductive systems.

While national regulation has banned many of the chemicals of greatest concern, the melting of the Arctic ice and the warming of lakes as a result of climate change may be contributing to the re-release of toxic chemicals such as persistent organic pollutants and mercury.

The meeting of environment ministers of the G8 nations in April 2009 gave impetus to strengthened government efforts on children's environmental health. This was taken up at the Third International Conference on Children's Environmental Health (CEH) convened by WHO in Busan, Korea in June 2009. The Busan Pledge for Action called on WHO to facilitate the development of a global plan of action to improve CEH and to report regularly on its progress. UNEP participated in this meeting and will work with WHO and other partners in the implementation of the global plan.

Commission for Sustainable Development

The Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) which created after the 1992 Earth Summit to ensure effective follow-up, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Agenda 21, will focus on chemicals as one of the five thematic clusters to be considered during its 2010-2011 cycle (CSD 18 and 19).

UNEP Chemicals Branch and the secretariats of SAICM and the Stockholm Convention are supporting the CSD reviews. They have prepared and submitted background documents to the regional meeting that proceeds the sessions of the CSD and have contributed to the Secretary

General's report. The SAICM secretariat facilitated the participation of SAICM regional focal points at the regional meetings. UNEP Chemicals Branch has, with SSC, developed a document on "Practices in the Sound Management of Chemicals" that provides an overview of trends in the production and use of chemicals and sets out lessons learned from a number of recent efforts to introduce sound chemicals management. The CSD's consideration of chemicals provides an important opportunity to raise awareness amongst political decision makers of the need for the sound management of chemicals to ensure sustainable development.

Mainstreaming the Sound Management of Chemicals

Many developing countries and countries with economies in transition lack an adequate regulatory legal framework for the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMC) and often lack the financial capacity to progress on this front. UNEP Chemicals Branch, with the financial support of Sweden and Norway, is currently developing integrated guidance on legal and institutional infrastructures for SMC and the use of economic instruments for its financing. National testing of the concept began in December 2009. The integrated guidance will be launched in March 2010 and followed by demonstration projects.

Please visit our website: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/unepsaicm/mainstreaming/default.htm>

SAICM - update



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Following the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Geneva, 11-15 May 2009), the next phase of implementation is under way for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

SAICM regional meetings in late 2009 and early 2010 are being combined with UNEP consultations on the upcoming mercury negotiations, OECD/UNITAR/IOMC workshops on nanotechnology and an industrial chemicals workshop offered by the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention and WHO.

The Quick Start Programme Trust Fund now supports SAICM enabling activities through over 90 projects valued at almost \$20 million. The next application round closes on 14 February 2010. The Programme will be evaluated during 2010.

The health sector strategy requested by the International Conference will be the subject of a consultative meeting in Ljubljana on 4-5 January 2010. The secretariat has also been active in preparations for chemicals discussions at the Commission on Sustainable Development in its 2010-2011 work cycle.

Other current activities include the launch of the SAICM information clearing house and a study on illegal traffic in Africa. For more information please visit: www.saicm.org.

20th anniversary of the adoption of the Basel Convention

A celebratory event to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was held on 17 November 2009 in Basel, Switzerland. The highlight of the event was the inauguration of the Basel Waste Solutions Circle, a global initiative to promote protection of human health and livelihood through environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes world-wide. The Circle was launched by the distinguished representatives of Switzerland, host country of the Basel Convention Diplomatic Conference in 1989, Kenya, Indonesia and Colombia, in their capacity as past, current and future presidencies of the Conference of the Parties.

The event also included a high-level panel discussion on "visions for waste in the next 20 years". Distinguished representatives of Switzerland, Kenya, Indonesia and Colombia, as well as the Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention, shared their visions for a future world in which wastes are managed in such a way as to protect human health and livelihood, and combat poverty. For more information please visit: www.basel.int



Photo: Juni Weiss, e-Government, Web und Bildredaktion, Basel
From left to right: H.E. Mr. Manuel Sager, Ambassador, Switzerland, H.E. Mr. Philip Richard Owade, Ambassador, Kenya, H.E. Prof. Dr. Gusti Muhammad Hatta, Minister of Environment, Indonesia, Ms. Claudia Mora Pineda, Vice-Minister of Environment, Colombia, Ms. Katharina Kummer Peiry, Executive Secretary, SBC

SBC, SRC, SSC synergies process and extraordinary COP

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions share the same objective: to protect human health and the environment. Recognizing the importance of coordination and cooperation amongst these Conventions, the meetings of the Conferences of the Parties of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions recently adopted groundbreaking decisions on synergies.

These synergies decisions include common recommendations on enhanced cooperation and coordination among the three Conventions and are based on the Parties' conviction that "actions taken to enhance coordination and cooperation should be aimed at strengthening implementation of the three Conventions at the national, regional and global

levels, promoting coherent policy guidance, enhancing efficiency in the provision of support to Parties with a view to reducing their administrative burden and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels."

The decisions also call for the convening of simultaneous extraordinary meetings of the Conferences of the Parties of the three Conventions in coordination with the eleventh special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Environment Ministerial Forum. The meetings are scheduled to take place from 22 to 24 February 2010 in Bali, Indonesia. For more information, please visit: <http://excops.unep.ch/>

POPs Monitoring and Laboratory Analysis

UNEP Chemicals Branch is training laboratories in more than 30 countries to analyze POPs in air and mothers' milk and is assisting them in the generation of POPs data for their regional reporting. These projects are supplemented by an interlaboratory proficiency study for Asian POPs laboratories. Funding for this work is provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the SAICM Quick Start Programme with further cofinancing from SSC and the Government of Australia.

For further information, please visit: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/Pops/GMP/>.

New Dioxin Emission Factors for Open Burning

Two UNEP-coordinated projects to develop methodologies for measuring dioxin concentrations from open burning of waste and of biomass have been successfully concluded. For the first time, dioxin emission factors have been experimentally determined for open burning of waste in developing countries (China and Mexico). For the biomass burning – forest fires and sugarcane burning – the results were in very good agreement between research groups so that the former variations in emission factors (100-fold difference) could be corrected and one emission factor was agreed for each type of fuel.

For further information, please visit: http://www.chem.unep.ch/Pops/pcdd_activities/projects/.

CIEN – update

CIEN was created in response to requests from developing countries and countries with economy in transition for assistance in gathering and sharing chemicals information and management tools. CIEN trains sectoral stakeholders involved in the sound management of chemicals and encourages development of networking arrangements with academic institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector to facilitate data gathering and identification of issues of national concern.

Since our last Newsletter issued in May 2009, CIEN has been implemented in Vietnam and Côte d'Ivoire.

Please visit: <http://jp1.estis.net/sites/cien-vn> for VietNam and <http://jp1.estis.net/sites/reic-ci> for Côte d'Ivoire.

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

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

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.

Information on chemicals in products

In May 2009 the second session of the International Conference of Chemicals Management (ICCM2) adopted Resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues including "Chemicals in Products" (CiP). It agreed to undertake a project to review existing information systems pertaining to chemicals in products; to assess the needs of stakeholders for information; and to develop specific recommendations for actions to promote implementation of SAICM with regard to such information. UNEP was invited to lead and facilitate the work.

Recognizing the vast and multiple issues linked to the field of CiP, a Survey has been undertaken to gather stakeholder input on needs and priority areas, on existing information systems and resources, and their

gaps. The survey results were considered at the "Scoping Meeting for the Study of Stakeholder Needs for Information on Chemicals in Products" held in Geneva, Switzerland on 17-18 December, 2009 with the goal of providing guidance on priorities for the project research phase currently underway.

The project research phase will provide a well-defined overview of existing information systems and their potential as CiP information systems. The results of this research will be a major input to the CiP project workshop scheduled for mid-2010. For further information, please visit: (<http://www.chem.unep.ch/uneipsaicm/cip/default.htm>).

Lead in paint

ICCM2 Resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues contains agreed actions on lead in paint. UNEP Chemicals Branch and WHO are in process of establishing the global partnership to promote phasing out of the use of lead in paint. Initial activities and progress include:

- i) an outreach to potential partners expected to contribute with resources (financial or in-kind) or expertise to the development and implementation of partnership activities;
- ii) an initial working meeting organized to adopt a framework and terms of reference (tentatively scheduled to take place early in 2010 in

Geneva),

- iii) an information note to elicit information from potential partners and contributors;
- iv) distribution of a dedicated newsletter and information on the planned approach to the global partnership work and
- v) the establishment of the website relevant to this global partnership as a portal to background information.

For further information please email us at: noleadinpaint@unep.org

Global chemicals Outlook

UNEP will collaborate with OECD, WHO and other organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) in developing a Global Chemicals Outlook to provide trends in production and use of chemicals, as well as a convincing argument for a revitalized commitment to the sound management of chemicals. The publication will contribute to the UNEP Green Economy Initiative and will send a positive message about the economic opportunities deriving from sound management of chemicals. The Global Chemicals Outlook will tackle the related causes of ill-health and disease and environmental degradation; develop an economic argument, including the cost of inaction and the potential benefits of actions; and provide policy and management options and measures for safer alternatives.

Endocrine disruptors – update

Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that interfere with hormonal systems and can cause adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune system effects in both humans and wildlife. UNEP's involvement focuses on managing risks to wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Jointly with WHO, UNEP recently initiated a project to update the IPCS document "Global Assessment of the State of the Science of Endocrine Disruptors" from 2002. The update, which will cover new developments both in human health and environment, is expected to be released during 2011.

Establishment of a Scientific Expert Group on Environment and Chemicals

Following up on a recommendation from stakeholders, UNEP has established an Expert Group to provide scientific advice to policy and decision makers and other stakeholders involved with environmental issues for sound management of chemicals. The group will provide expertise in areas such as ecotoxicology, ecosystem services and sensitivities, environmental fate and exposure. It will advise UNEP in its implementation of SAICM and its work and priorities will inter alia be guided by needs expressed at meetings with stakeholders.