

8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 3-4 FEBRUARY 2007

Key Messages: Chemicals

KEY CHEMICAL ISSUES

The Global Civil Society Forum participants met on February 3rd to define the key messages to the Member States at the Governing Council Meeting (UNEP/GC/24/INF/10)

The key issues which Civil Society wants to draw attention to are the need to strengthen financial support for SAICM, the need for global action on Mercury and other heavy metals, the need for addressing actions by different UN agencies conflicting with global environmental conventions, the need to address electronic waste and used tires, and finally, the need to address asbestos.

MERCURY, CADMIUM AND LEAD

The risks from mercury, lead and cadmium needs to be expediently addressed by appropriate actions at the local, national, regional and global levels.

We therefore urge the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and Governments to authorize and initiate work on legally binding global instruments¹ to reduce mercury emissions and the mercury supply by ceasing primary mining of mercury, restricting mercury exports from developed nations, and managing mercury from the closure of chlor-alkali facilities;

Explore the value of regulating heavy metals under existing or new multilateral instruments;

- to establish a mercury use reduction goal (70 per cent by 2017) and achieve this goal by reducing mercury use in products, chlor-alkali plants and small scale gold mining;
- to reduce the demand for and supply of lead and cadmium,
- to improve the management and disposal of wastes containing heavy metals;
- to require manufacturers to assume responsibility for products that contain hazardous metals throughout their life-cycle
- by phasing out lead in transportation fuels and replacing lead and cadmium in products with less hazardous materials;
- by implementing practices identified and recommended by the Lifecycle Initiative developed by UNEP and the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry.

Because actions to reduce mercury supply, demand and emissions are urgent, partnerships and other voluntary actions should be reinforced, reflecting on regional priorities, while work on legally binding global instruments is initiated (for example, urgent provision of information to vulnerable groups on main pathways of mercury intake or addressing that deforestation can liberate existing mercury in the environment).

Additional research is needed to highlight the relationship between health effects and mercury.

SAICM, FUNDING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND MAINSTREAMING

Pursue all available funding mechanisms (GEF, multilateral trust funds, official development assistance, focused partnerships, private financial flows) to support sound chemical management in developing countries & economies in transition. New and additional funds should be made available for SAICM implementation.

¹ on this point the business and industry major group has a different opinion

SAICM to give sufficient capacity-building at all levels, including institutional framework, i.e. legal framework, infrastructure, physical and non-physical requirements and needs.

Mainstreaming SAICM into national development plans.

UN REFORM, UNEP, SYSTEM WIDE COHERENCE AND THE EXAMPLES OF THE STOCKHOLM, ROTTERDAM AND BASEL-CONVENTION

We call on UNEP to take a leading role in assuring system wide coherence with regards to global environmental conventions, in particular.

Mandate UNEP to work with WHO to review from its DDT and Malaria policy regarding DDT as a central tool for Malaria in light of the phase-out agreement contained in Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants.

Mandate UNEP to form an international coordinating mechanism of the three main conventions dealing with chemicals & hazardous wastes, in particular the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm convention, so as to help preventing future criminal activities as happened with the toxic waste dumping in Ivory Coast.

Mandate UNEP to promote measures to address breach of procedure of international environmental conventions by member states such as the case of Annex III (crysotile asbestos) of the Rotterdam Convention.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mandate UNEP to work with the Basel Convention and national governments to develop urgent measures where the international waste trade and hazardous waste conventions are not yet effectively implemented, to halt the export of used tyres, electric and electronic waste².

Request the Stockholm secretariat (UNEP), as part of its capacity building activities, to provide regulatory and technical guidelines, on halting incineration and co-incineration of hazardous waste.

ASBESTOS

UNEP should promote better understanding of global and regional impact of all forms of asbestos, on the environment and public health and provide guidelines for a programme towards the global elimination of asbestos use.

We call on those countries, which have already banned use and production of asbestos in their own countries to stop trade in asbestos and set up policies for safe clean up and disposal of asbestos waste.

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND CHEMICALS

Chemicals, including pesticides, industrial chemicals and consumer chemicals, have become indispensable in many economic activities and are increasingly used in the industrial, agricultural and consumer sectors of society, and by the military.

Prepared by the Chemicals Working Group during the Global Civil Society Forum from 3-4 February 2007. This document attempts to represent the outcomes of discussions among the major groups present and was explicitly endorsed by the following: science and research; trade unions; business; women; indigenous peoples; children and youth; and environmental NGOs.

² Business is of other opinion, and would add "if appropriate and safe recycling is not assured", e.g. by pre-paid recycling fees