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**International Conference on Chemicals Management**

**Second session**

Geneva, 11–15 May 2009

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management: implementation of and coherence among international instruments and programmes**

**Regional health and environment processes**

**Note by the secretariat**

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, in the annex to the present note, information on regional health and environment processes submitted by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization for the information of the Conference. The information is being circulated as submitted without formal editing.

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\* SAICM/ICCM.2/1.

## Annex

### **Information provided by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization on regional health and environment processes**

1. Evidence shows that modifiable environmental factors play a role in more than 80% of the commonly reported diseases and that almost a quarter of the global burden of disease burden can be attributed to environmental factors.<sup>1</sup> Regional health and environment processes play an important role in strengthening political commitment and providing additional focus for cooperative regional action on priority health and environment issues, including toxic and hazardous substances, children's environmental health, and the implementation of international agreements. The following information has been provided by the secretariats of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme for the information of the Conference.

#### **I. Africa**

2. The first Interministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa was held from 26 to 29 August 2008 in Libreville, Gabon. Ministers recognized the mutual importance and inter-linkages between their respective sectors and the opportunities and synergies that may be derived from intensified collaboration. Through the Libreville Declaration<sup>2</sup>, they committed their countries to establish a strategic alliance between health and environment sectors as a basis for joint plans of actions. They requested the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme to:

(a) Support, along with other partners and donors, including the African Development Banks and African sub-regional economic communities, the implementation of the Declaration, and increase their efforts in advocacy, in resource mobilization and in obtaining new and additional investments in order to strengthen the strategic alliance between health and environment;

(b) Help African countries in sharing experiences, developing capacity and establishing a mechanism to monitor progress towards the fulfilment of the commitments made at the Conference, through peer review, and organize a second Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa before the end of 2010; and

(c) Support the implementation of health and environment-related conventions and agreements and the establishment of an African network for surveillance of communicable and non-communicable diseases, in particular those with environment determinants.

3. The Governments of Gabon and Kenya have submitted a joint application in the sixth application round of the Strategic Approach's Quick Start Programme Trust Fund for a project to enable the development of a country situation analysis and needs assessment to assist implementation of the Libreville Declaration with a specific focus on chemical risks.

#### **II. The Americas**

4. The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together the Heads of State and Government of the 35 States in the Western Hemisphere<sup>3</sup> to discuss and take action on political, economic and social aspects that are of particular interest to the region. Through a series of Summits of the Americas held from 1994 to 1998, ministers of health and environment were called upon to take action to improve the

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<sup>1</sup> The WHO report "Preventing disease through healthy environments" sets out to quantify how much disease could be prevented through better management of the environment and summarizes the results globally, by different regions and separately for children

([http://www.who.int/quantifying\\_ehimpacts/publications/preventingdisease/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/preventingdisease/en/index.html))

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.afro.who.int/declarations/LibrevilleDeclaration.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> A list of the 35 members of the Organization of American States can be consulted on the website of the Organization of American States <http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/memberstates.asp>

health and environmental conditions of the countries of the region. Of particular importance in this regard was the Special Summit of the Americas held in Monterrey in January 2004, which instructed the Health and the Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA) to develop a cooperative agenda to prevent and minimize negative impacts on the environment and health. The Declaration of Mar del Plata which emanated from the second HEMA meeting held in Mar del Plata on 14 and 15 June 2005 succeeded in setting out a cooperative agenda focusing on:

- (a) action at national level;
- (b) regional cooperation on priority issues;
- (c) provision of tools and resources for decision makers; and
- (d) expansion of the participation of civil society and major groups

5. Three priority issues are identified in the Declaration of Mar del Plata for regional cooperation: integrated management of water resources and solid waste; the sound management of chemicals; and children's environmental health. The annex to the Declaration of Mar del Plata contains the areas of cooperation for each of these priority issues<sup>4</sup>.

6. Recent work on the development of a regional action plan for the Latin American and the Caribbean region by the Organization of the American States was presented at the Caribbean workshop on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and related chemicals and hazardous wastes management instruments, which was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 10 to 13 March 2009.

### III. Europe

7. Four European Ministerial Conferences on the theme of Environment and Health have been held: Frankfurt (1989), Helsinki (1994), London (1999) and Budapest (2004). The fifth Ministerial Conference will be held in Parma, Italy in the first quarter of 2010. The European Environment and Health Committee is steering the process to prepare the Conference<sup>5</sup>. The Conference will have two main focuses, to review national implementation of the Children's Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe, prioritizing any areas not adequately covered; and to address the impacts of climate change by promoting the stewardship role of health in intersectoral policies on adaptation and preparedness. Other priorities of the Conference agenda will include addressing socioeconomic and gender inequities in times of economic climate, working with stakeholders at different levels of authority and the specific needs of newly independent states and south-east European countries.

8. Regional Priority Goal IV of the Children's Environmental Health and Action Plan for Europe covers chemical safety. Reporting back on environmental health performance reviews<sup>6</sup> and subsequent implementation as well as a review of national policies collated by the European Environment and Health Information System, will be reported to the fifth Ministerial Conference.

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<sup>4</sup> Document SAICM/RM/LAC.1/INF/19 prepared for the first Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management provides more information on the cooperative agenda of the Declaration on Mar del Plata.

<sup>5</sup> The Environment and Health Committee includes government representatives nominated by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the United Nations Economic Committee for Europe, and representatives of civil society, intergovernmental and international organizations.

<sup>6</sup> Environmental health performance reviews are country-based interdisciplinary assessments that support Member States in the reform and upgrade of the overall public health system and include planning for preventive interventions, service delivery and surveillance in the field of environment and health [http://www.euro.who.int/healthimpact/mainacts/20020619\\_3](http://www.euro.who.int/healthimpact/mainacts/20020619_3).

## IV South-East and East Asia

9. A Regional Forum on Environment and Health in South-East and East Asian countries was launched in 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the first Ministerial Meeting adopting the Charter of the Regional Forum<sup>7</sup>. The general objective of this regional initiative is to deal effectively with the environmental health problems within and among countries by increasing the capacity of South-East and East Asian countries in environmental health management. It aims to strengthen the cooperation of the ministries responsible for environment and health within the countries and across the region by providing a mechanism for sharing knowledge and experiences, improving policy and regulatory frameworks at the national and regional level, and promoting the implementation of integrated environmental health strategies and regulations. Fourteen countries in the region currently participate in the regional initiative.<sup>8</sup>

10. The World Health Organization's Regional Office for South-East Asia and its Regional Office for the Western Pacific and the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific provide the secretariat for the Forum. The first Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health was held from 8 to 9 August 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. A Ministerial Regional Forum is planned to take place every three years. The second Ministerial Regional Forum is planned to take place in 2010.

11. The Charter of the Regional Forum sets out the framework for cooperation and identifies the following six environmental and health priorities for 2007-2010:

- (a) air quality;
- (b) water supply, hygiene and sanitation;
- (c) solid and hazardous waste
- (d) toxic chemicals and hazardous substances;
- (e) climate change, ozone depletion and ecosystem changes; and
- (f) contingency planning, preparedness and response in environmental health emergencies.

12. In respect of the thematic working group on toxic chemicals and hazardous substances, the work is focused on activities to:

- (a) share information and data on the chemicals and their health and environmental impacts (e.g., cases of poisoning) and good practices including infrastructure model (e.g., legislative model) and innovative approaches to reduce the health and environmental impacts among member countries;
- (b) improve the technical knowledge and skill among personnel of member countries on risk assessment and risk management of the chemicals; and
- (c) strengthen regional institutions networking and collaboration on toxic chemicals.

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<sup>7</sup> The website of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health for South-East and East Asia contains information on the Ministerial Declaration, the Charter for the Regional Forum, the Thematic Working Groups and their associated workplans (<http://www.environment-health.asia/initiative.cfm>).

<sup>8</sup> The fourteen countries participating in the South-East Asia and East Asian Regional Initiative on Environment and Health are Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia; Mongolia, Myanmar; Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.