

Twenty-first session
Nairobi, 5-9 February 2001
Agenda item 4 (b)

Chemicals management

Draft decision submitted by the Czech Republic, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and
Sweden (on behalf of the European Union)

The Governing Council,

Aware of the concerns of the international community with regard to the environmentally sound management of hazardous chemicals, including the prevention of illegal international traffic of hazardous chemicals, including pesticides, as reflected in chapter 19 of Agenda 21,

Underlining the need to take further measures in a preventive and precautionary manner for the protection of human health and the environment and to closely integrate control of chemicals and pollution control,

Recalling its decision 19/13 of 7 February 1997 and its decision 20/23 of 4 February 1999,

Taking note of the progress made by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in preparing for the entry into force of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade,

Welcoming the completion of the negotiation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants,

Emphasizing the need to prepare draft guidelines on compliance with international environmental agreements and on effective national environmental enforcement and international cooperation and coordination in combating environmental crime,

Underlining the importance of transparency and accessibility of information, including classification and labelling of chemicals, to civil society for the sound management of chemicals,

Stressing the need for further work to strengthen international cooperation in the field of chemicals management,

I. Further international action in the field of chemicals

Stressing the long-term goal of eliminating from the environment all synthetic substances that represent a threat to human health and the environment,

Recognizing the need to enhance coherence and efficiency among international activities related to chemicals,

Concerned about the impact on human health and the environment from diffuse dissemination of chemicals, including those contained in manufactured goods,

Underlining that the polluter should in principle bear the cost of pollution and acknowledging the important role and responsibility of industry and other stakeholders in the chemicals area,

1. Welcomes and endorses the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety and the Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 adopted by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety at its third session in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, in October 2000;
2. Requests the Executive Director, in cooperation with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, to investigate the merits of elaborating a global strategy on chemicals management, including a proposal on the strengthening of international cooperation on chemicals. Such an investigation should especially:
 - (a) Explore possible approaches for ensuring that health and environmental hazard data become available to the public and authorities in the shortest possible time;

- (b) Examine ongoing approaches to discovering environmentally sound substitutes and best available techniques for hazardous chemicals and best environmental practices, as well as possibilities for further developing the use of such substitutes and alternative technologies;
- (c) Address the risks from storage and disposal of discontinued chemicals;
- (d) Suggest possible ways of coordinating and where possible integrating chemicals management into other relevant environmental areas;
- (e) Explore the possibility of developing international standards for placing chemicals on the market;
- (f) Consider the impact on human health and the environment from diffuse dissemination of chemicals, including those contained in manufactured goods;
- (g) Undertake a review of activities and international regulations with a view to identifying gaps with respect to the protection of the environment and human health;
- (h) Examine possibilities for optimizing the work, administration and collaboration of international conventions addressing chemicals management;

3. Invites the Executive Director, based on the results of the investigation, to develop recommendations for further international action in the field of chemical safety;

II. Action on mercury and other heavy metals and their compounds

Concerned about the health risk to humans and serious effects on the environment caused by exposure to certain heavy metals, in particular mercury, lead and cadmium and their compounds,

Recognizing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, including pollution by heavy metals, and the report of the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Global Programme of Action,

Noting ongoing regional cooperation to assess the risks associated with heavy metals and their compounds, as well as to develop strategies and action to deal with those substances, in particular the Protocol on Heavy Metals to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe,

Also noting that mercury and its compounds are currently listed in the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade in the pesticide category,

Aware that mercury as well as certain other heavy metals and their compounds are known to be transported over long distances globally and therefore exist in measurable and increasing concentrations far from where they originate,

Mindful of the urgent need to improve scientific understanding of heavy metals and their compounds as regards their sources, transport and other pathways as well as their human health, environment and socio-economic effects, as a basis for the development and adoption of effective and realistic response strategies, policies and measures at the national, regional and global levels,

1. Invites the United Nations Environment Programme, in cooperation with other members of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, to initiate an expeditious global assessment process, beginning with mercury and its compounds and, as appropriate, other heavy metals that cause similar concerns, for example those listed in the Protocol on Heavy Metals to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, adopted in Århus on 23 June 1998. 1/ This process should:

- (a) Consolidate existing information available from the International Programme on Chemical Safety, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and other relevant sources on the chemistry and toxicology of the substances concerned (particularly the impact on human, plant and animal health);
- (b) Analyse the relevant transport pathways and the origin, transport, deposition and transformation of these substances on a global scale;
- (c) Examine the sources, benefits, use patterns and other considerations relevant to the production and use of these substances;
- (d) Evaluate the availability, including the costs and effectiveness, of environmentally sound substitutes and best available techniques as well as best environmental practices, where applicable;
- (e) Assess realistic response strategies, policies and mechanisms for reducing and/or eliminating use, emissions, discharges and losses of heavy metals and their compounds;

1/ These heavy metals are: mercury, lead and cadmium (and their compounds).

2. Invites the Executive Director, based on the results of this process, to develop recommendations and information on international action, including such information as would be needed for a possible decision regarding appropriate international action on heavy metals and their compounds;

III. Lead in gasoline

Concerned about the health risks to humans, especially children, caused by exposure to lead in gasoline,

Recalling the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session in 1997, in which the Assembly emphasized the importance of accelerating the process of eliminating the unsafe uses of lead, including the use of lead in gasoline, worldwide,

1. Calls upon Governments to eliminate unsafe uses of lead, including the use of lead in gasoline;
2. Requests the Executive Director to promote the elaboration of a voluntary international code to phase out lead in gasoline, including recommendations on measurable actions by both governments and industry to assist them in their endeavour;

IV. Action to implement the present decision

1. Requests the Executive Director, in pursuance of this decision, to:
 - (a) Convene a consultative open-ended ad hoc working group, including representatives of science, labour organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to assist him in this work;
 - (b) Support the work of this process as necessary;
 - (c) Take the special circumstances of developing countries and countries with economies in transition into account;
2. Calls on the United Nations and its specialized agencies and other relevant organizations, including regional economic integration organizations, to participate actively and provide contributions both for the assessment process and for the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

3. Urges Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, civil society and the private sector to participate actively in this endeavour;

4. Calls upon Governments and other actors to make available information, technical assistance, capacity-building and funding necessary to enable developing countries, especially least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, to take an active part in this process;

5. Requests the Executive Director to present to the twenty-second session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum:
 - (a) Recommendations for further international action, including the possible development of a global strategy for the sound management of chemicals;

 - (b) Recommendations for further international action on heavy metals;

 - (c) Recommendations on the elaboration of a voluntary international code to phase out lead in gasoline;

6. Further requests the Executive Director to present a progress report to the seventh special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in 2002;

7. Decides to revisit the chemicals management issue at its twenty-second session.
