

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

GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

CHEMICALS PROGRAMME

Submission by the United States of America

The Governing Council,

Aware of the concerns of the international community regarding the sound management of chemicals, as expressed in chapter 19 of Agenda 21,

Underlining the need to take measures to protect human health and the environment, and to closely integrate control of chemicals and pollution control,

Recalling its decision 19/13 of February 1997 by which it welcomed and endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Government-designated Group of Experts on Further Measures to Reduce Risks from a Limited Number of Hazardous Chemicals, and invited Governments, Intergovernmental Organizations, and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, as addressed in specific recommendations, to review the report of the group of experts and its annexes and consider taking action, as appropriate, to implement them,

Taking note of the progress made by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee 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 negotiations of the convention for implementing international action on certain persistent organic pollutants,

Considering the report presented in UNEP/GC.21/INF/20 on options for enhanced coherence and efficiency among international activities related to chemicals,

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

Acknowledging the important role and responsibility of industry and other stakeholders in the chemicals area,

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 to strengthen international cooperation in the field of chemical management and enhance coherence and efficiency,

Promoting the implementation of the priorities outlined in the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety in all countries, including least developed countries and countries with economies in transition,

Acknowledging the work accomplished under chapter 19 of Agenda 21 and the action priorities of Forum III, but

Noting that much needs to be done to accomplish the intent of chapter 19, including the commitment to seek ways of securing greater and more stable flows of resources to enable further work on those pressing priorities on which we have already agreed,

1. Welcomes and endorses the Bahia Declaration 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 of 2000;

2. Emphasizing the essential role of sound management of chemicals in sustainable development and the protection of human health and the environment, requests the Executive Director to act as a recipient and disseminator for the information made available pursuant to chapter II, paragraph 2 of the Bahia Declaration, and assist in the development of an information exchange network on capacity-building for the sound management of chemicals;

3. Calls on the Executive Director to encourage countries to sign and ratify two major international chemical conventions –on persistent organic pollutants and the prior informed consent – and to assist in the capacity-building work that will be required to equip countries to implement these important conventions;

4. Requests the Executive Director to promote the elaboration of guidelines for national plans to phase out the use of lead additives in gasoline as well as recommendations on measurable actions by both governments and industry;

5. Urges Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, and civil society to participate actively in assisting national governments in this phase-out, including by making 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 the phase-out;

6. Invites individual countries to share their national experiences in chemicals management with the Executive Director, as appropriate, to assist in the capacity building efforts outlined in the Bahia Declaration;

7. Requests the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its twenty-second session on the progress of the implementation of the elements of the Bahia Declaration and the status of the phase-out of lead additives in gasoline;

[NOTE: The United States of America considers endorsement of the Bahia Declaration along with work on phase-out of lead in gasoline and assessment of mercury to be a tremendous amount of work that should be more than enough for United Nations Environment Programme. If, however, there is an emerging consensus to go beyond these, the United States could reluctantly support additional work in the following order:]

8. Requests the Executive Director in cooperation with the Inter-Organization Programme for Sound Management of Chemicals to:

- (a) Explore possible approaches for ensuring that health and environmental information become available to the public and authorities as soon as possible;
- (b) Examine approaches to find substitutes and alternative technologies for use of persistent organic pollutants chemicals;
- (c) Examine the advantages and drawbacks of linkages between secretariats of relevant chemicals conventions;
- (d) Suggest possible ways of coordinating and where possible integrating chemicals management into other relevant environmental areas.
