



CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA: *RESPONDING TO CURRENT AND EMERGING THREATS*

First Announcement

Side Event to be held in the context of the First Inter-Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Africa : Health Security through Healthy Environments

26 August 2008 - Cite de la démocratie, Libreville, Gabon

The World Health Organization (WHO/AFRO) is pleased to announce this event, that will provide an opportunity to discuss how children's health and development are affected by the environment, and also analyze recent incidents that had an impact on African children and their communities. The main objective is to scale up collaboration within the countries and internationally, in responding to existing and emerging environmental threats.

Environmental quality may determine not only a child's survival but also his/her physical and mental development. About 36% of deaths in children up to 14 years old are attributable to adverse environmental factors. Globally, more than three million children under the age of five die every year due to diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory infections, malaria and other diseases linked to the environment. In addition, a child's health and development may be altered by exposure to lead, mercury, pesticides, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), aflatoxins and other environmental toxicants and risk factors. Tools and mechanisms are available and should be further strengthened in order to *prevent childhood disease through healthy environments* – and protect future generations.

Participants will be able to:

1. *Increase their knowledge about children's special vulnerability to environmental factors*
2. *Discuss illustrative examples of environmental emergencies*
3. *Identify the priority actions required and learn about tools and mechanisms available*
4. *Scale up collaboration and the joint health and environment approach for action*

Topics in the agenda include:

Children are not "little adults"; special vulnerability; environmental exposures (e.g. aflatoxins, lead) global environmental change; priorities for research, training and education; how to promote healthier, cleaner and safer environments for rural and urban children in Africa; other.

For more information, please contact WHO (senkoroh@ga.afro.who.int)