

First Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa

International agreements and regulatory frameworks for chemicals and wastes

Side Event to be held on 27 August 2008 from 14:00 to 15:00

This side event will provide a background briefing on the current status of implementation of the three global chemicals and wastes conventions and SAICM in Africa, and provide participants with an opportunity to discuss current initiatives and developments that are directly relevant to reducing chemicals-related threats to human health and the environment.

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) adopted by the international community in 2006, provides an international policy framework to guide efforts to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that by 2020, chemicals will be produced and used in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment. Institutional arrangements include a network of national SAICM focal points, currently in 152 countries, SAICM regional focal points and SAICM focal points of non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. The African region is an active participant in SAICM implementation. The second African regional meeting on Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management was recently held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, from 16 to 17 July 2008. This meeting resulted in a number of important outcomes which will guide regional preparations for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. This Conference will be held in May 2009, in close proximity to the Sixty-second session of the World Health Assembly and will have high-level segment with a theme of public health, the environment and chemicals management.

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, taken together, aim to provide an international legislative framework to cover the key elements of a life cycle approach to the environmentally sound management of hazardous chemicals and wastes. Currently work is in progress to prepare joint recommendations on enhanced cooperation and coordination for all three Conventions, focusing on strengthening implementation at the national, regional and global levels, enhancing efficiency in the provision of support to Parties and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels. The upcoming Conferences of the Parties of the Rotterdam Convention (27-31 October 2008) and of the Stockholm Convention (4-8 May 2009) will consider recommendations on these matters.