

HECANET * October - November 2006**

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IN THIS ISSUE

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

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- (1) HECA Developments**
- (2) Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI)**
- (3) WHO Air Quality Guidelines**
- (4) New WHO report: Fluoride in drinking water**
- (5) Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade**
- (6) Young Environmental Envoy UNEP/Bayer**
- (7) Rainwater harvesting. UNEP**
- (8) Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign - Commitment to Action**
- (9) Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Year Book 2006**
- (10) UNICEF Report: Progress for Children No. 5: A Report Card on Water and Sanitation**
- (11) The 2006 Human Development Report. Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis. UNDP**
- (12) New Report Underlines Africa's Vulnerability to Climate Change.**
- (13) Children's Environmental Health Research: Past, Present and Future. NC, U.S. 22nd to 24th January 2007**
- (14) Summit on Environmental Challenges to Reproductive Health and Fertility, San Francisco, U.S. 28th to 30th January 2007**
- (15) 7th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Integrating Environment and Human Health. Washington, U.S. 1st and 2nd February 2007**
- (16) 4th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. Vienna, Austria. 10th to 12th June 2007**
- (17) Tunza International Youth Conference 2007. Leverkusen, Germany. 8th to 12th September 2007**
- (18) Graduate Certificate in Children's Environmental Health. 2007**
- (19) Child Participation in WASH Workshop Eastern and Southern Africa region. 9th to 11th October 2006**
- (20) Health and Environment in Aragón Seminar. Zaragoza, Spain. 24th and 25th October 2006**
- (21) Healthy Environments, Healthy Children, Commitment for Action. Buenos Aires, Argentina. November 2006**
- (22) International Conference for the Evaluation of Global Strategies on Health: The Ottawa and Bangkok Charters - From Principles to Action. Florence, Italy. 21st and 22nd November 2006**
- (23) Informal Working Group on Lead Exposure in Children: Review and Update of Guidance Materials. Munich, Germany. 30th November to 1st December 2006**
- (24) International Society for Children's Health and the Environment (ISCHE)**

- (25) EPA activities on children's environmental health**
- (26) Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety: Final report**
- (27) Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change: Publication of the Stern Review's final report**
- (28) The March of Dimes Global Report on Birth Defects, The Hidden Toll of Dying and Disabled Children**
- (29) New report: Paediatric Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness: A Resource for Paediatricians**
- (30) World Medical Association Statement on the Role of Physicians in Environmental Issues**
- (31) "Stay Healthy, Stop Mercury" Launches Fact Sheet Series**
- (32) World's worst polluted places: The Top Ten**
- (33) New Surveillance System of Air Pollution via Internet. Europe**
- (34) CHEC Blog: 90 tips for 90 days**
- (35) New Websites Related to Chemicals and Hazardous Substances in Jordan**
- (36) CEFIC's position on Children Health & Environment**
- (37) Eurosafe: Home Injury Fact Sheets, Parent Tip Sheets & Child Safety Product Guide**
- (38) The Alliance for Safe Children**
- (39) CHE Fertility Online Abstracts Library**
- (40) Ecoclubs activities**

ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

Many articles this month refer to air pollution and its health effects, particularly asthma and respiratory disease in the neonatal period. WHO guidelines challenge the world to improve air quality. Environmental tobacco smoke has been linked to impairment in fetal growth, allergic rhinitis and hyperactivity in children. In the area of chemicals, two publications warn against the impact of chemicals on developing brains. Lead is found again in running water and in pipes and the problem of offshoring lead pollution is raised. A very interesting article in EHP connects lead exposure at each stage of pregnancy and its effects in infant mental development. The dilemma between malaria and DDT is mentioned in the pesticides' section. The E.U. proposes a ban on EU mercury exports in the mercury section. Water and sanitation articles include facts about the scarcity of clean water in the world, specially in developing countries, where diarrhoea continues to be a major killer of children. The global change sections deals with the reappearance of certain diseases, the widening of the ozone hole and the option of rainwater harvesting as a solution to the water shortage problems. Several articles explore the reproductive health repercussions of environmental risk factors.

Different environmental health issues affect various parts of the world. In the Americas, authorities have to deal with water crisis and the impact of mining and oil industries on indigenous people. In Asia, Filipinos flee a village after a chemical waste dump, Vietnam faces the war's legacy of Agent Orange, India suffers from a new outbreak of Dengue fever and Indonesia phases out leaded petrol. In Africa, the continent is slowly burning into a desert; Zanzibar implements a ban on plastics and sees its malaria incidence rates decrease; and Egyptians live in a black cloud for the seventh year. Finally in Europe, Copsa Mica is the most polluted town, where infant mortality is the highest in the continent.

Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

- (1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Indoor air pollution (b) Outdoor air pollution (c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking**
 - (2) CHEMICALS: (a) General, (b) Lead, (c) Pesticides, (d) Mercury**
 - (3) WATER AND SANITATION**
 - (4) GLOBAL CHANGE**
 - (5) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General (b) Reproductive Health (c) Americas (d) Asia (e) Africa (f) Europe**
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Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) is a world-wide alliance to reduce environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and sometimes work, by providing knowledge, increasing political will, mobilizing resources, and catalysing intense and urgent action.

HECANET is an international mailing list dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children. The list provides updates on the activities of the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) and its members, as well as an overview of media coverage of children's environmental health issues and relevant meetings, research findings and information and advocacy resources.

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

(1) HECA Developments

For more information on HECA's latest developments, please visit the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance website: <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>
International Network to Promote Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage: http://www.who.int/household_water/en/

(2) Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) Newsletter

The CEHI Newsletter has been set up to engage partners with the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI). It aims to provide up-to-date information on relevant global, regional and national indicator activities. The CEHI Newsletter N°8 (December 2006) issue will shortly be available on the [CEHI Newsletter website](#). This issue highlights upcoming events, news and children's environmental health indicators activities.

To sign up to the newsletter, to contribute information or to find out more, please visit the website [WHO | Children's environmental health indicators newsletter \(CEHI\)](#) or contact: cehindicators@who.int

(3) WHO Air Quality Guidelines

Clean air is considered to be a basic requirement of human health and well-being. However, air pollution continues to pose a significant threat to health worldwide. According to a WHO assessment of the burden of disease due to air pollution, more than 2 million premature deaths each year can be attributed to the effects of urban outdoor air pollution and indoor air pollution (caused by the burning of solid fuels). More than half of this disease burden is borne by the populations of developing countries.

Air quality guidelines have been published by WHO in 1987 and they were revised in 1997. Given the wealth of new studies on the health effects of air pollution that have been published in the scientific literature since the completion of the second edition of the Air Quality Guidelines for Europe, including important new research from low-and middle-income countries where air pollution levels are at their highest, WHO has undertaken to review the accumulated scientific evidence and to consider its implications for its air quality guidelines. The result of this work is presented in this document in the form of revised guideline values for selected air pollutants, which are applicable across all WHO regions.

"By reducing particulate matter pollution from 70 to 20 micrograms per cubic metre as set out in the new Guidelines, we estimate that we can cut deaths by around 15%," said Dr Maria Neira, WHO Director of Public Health and Environment. "By reducing air pollution levels, we can help countries to reduce the global burden of disease from respiratory infections, heart disease, and lung cancer which they otherwise would be facing. Moreover, action to reduce the direct impact of air pollution will also cut emissions of gases which contribute to climate change and provide other health benefits."

The Executive summary of the revised air quality guidelines is available at http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair_aqg/en/

(4) New WHO report: Fluoride in drinking water

Millions of people are exposed to excessive amounts of fluoride through drinking water contaminated from natural geological sources. As a result, many suffer conditions ranging from mild dental fluorosis to crippling skeletal fluorosis. With the problem continuing to be unrecognized and neglected, guidance is sorely needed.

Guidance is particularly needed because fluoride is found in all natural waters at some concentration. Low concentrations are good for teeth, but excessive concentrations can lead to debilitating disease, such as skeletal fluorosis, which has devastated some communities. In China alone, more than 10 million people are estimated to suffer from skeletal fluorosis.

The WHO publication, Fluoride in Drinking Water will be an invaluable reference source for all those concerned with the management of drinking water containing fluoride and the health effects arising from its consumption, including water sector managers and practitioners as well as health sector staff at policy and implementation levels. To access the report, please go to http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/fluoride_drinking_water/en/index.html

(5) Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade

The 3rd Conference of the Parties took place from 9-13 October. WHO participated as an observer. Consideration of the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Convention was a key issue. Many delegations welcomed the clear WHO statement on the hazards of chrysotile and availability of safer substitutes. Although the conference agreed that all the requirements of the Convention for the listing of chrysotile have been met, the Parties have not yet reached consensus on its listing and it remains on the agenda for the next Conference. The Conference agreed to use the voluntary information exchange provisions of the Convention to assist countries to make informed national decisions on the import and management of chrysotile.

Information available at

http://www.who.int/ipcs/capacity_building/stockholm_rotterdam/en/index.html

(6) Young Environmental Envoy UNEP/Bayer

Bayer and UNEP: Partners for Youth and Environment. Bayer is the first company in the world to enter a long-term partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the area of youth and environment. The partners first began cooperating on youth environmental projects in Asia in the late 1990s. In the summer of 2004, Bayer and UNEP signed a framework agreement to globalize this partnership, and the partners now jointly organize a dozen environmental projects for young people around the world.

The centrepiece of this unique partnership is the “Young Environmental Envoy” program established by Bayer. Schoolchildren and college students who have displayed a particularly strong commitment to environmental issues can apply to become environmental envoys for their countries. Founded in 1995 in Thailand, the program now includes 15 other countries in Asia, eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa.

Four young men working in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development made their countries proud of their achievements during a recently concluded field trip to Leverkusen, Germany. The study trip to Germany allows young people to have experience of the principles and practice of modern environmental protection in Germany. The aim is to give young people a full understanding of how industry, authorities and private households can interact for environmental protection. For more information, please go to <http://www.bayeryoungenvoy.com/>

(7) Rainwater harvesting. UNEP

UNEP and the World Agro-forestry Centre underscored the [potential of rainwater harvesting](#) in Africa in a new report released at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 12), held in Nairobi from 6 to 17 November 2006. Those talks placed a focus on the particular vulnerability of Africa to the effects of climate change. The report concludes that many communities and countries suffering or facing water shortages as a result of climate change could dramatically boost supplies by collecting and storing rain falling freely from the clouds. Maasai women, taking part in a pilot in Kisumui, Kenya, are gaining four hours in a day because of the reduced demands on their time to find and fetch water. Having water supplies on their doorstep has thus liberated them from a daily chore, giving them more time to spend on education, child-care, cultivation and alternative livelihoods. Before the project, some women used to leave early and sleep close to the river, leaving school children going to school unattended.

(8) Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign - Commitment to Action

Under the Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign, people, communities, organizations, business and industry, civil society and governments are being encouraged to plant trees and enter their tree planting pledges on this web site. The objective is to plant at least one billion trees worldwide during 2007. The idea for the Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign was inspired by Professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 2004 and founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, which has planted more than 30 million trees in 12 African countries since 1977. When a corporate group in the United States told Professor Maathai it was planning to plant a million trees, her response was: "That's great, but what we really need is to plant a billion trees."

Recognizing that there are many tree planting schemes around the world, UNEP proposes to federate these efforts. People and entities – individuals, children and youth groups, schools, community groups, non-governmental organizations, farmers, private sector organizations, local authorities and national governments – are encouraged to enter pledges on the online form. Each pledge can be anything from a single tree to 10 million trees. The responsibility will lie with the person/organization making the pledge via the campaign website to arrange for the tree planting. All contributing participants will receive a certificate of involvement. They will be encouraged to follow up via the web site so UNEP can verify that the trees have survived, in partnership with certification mechanisms, such as the Forest Stewardship Council. The website will record the ongoing tally of pledges, and also publish photos and accounts from registered campaign members of what they have achieved.

The campaign encourages the planting of indigenous trees and trees that are appropriate to the local environment. Advice on tree planting will be made available via the website, as well as information about reforestation and other tree-related issues, including links to appropriate partner organizations best equipped to give locally tailored advice, such as the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). Because ideal planting conditions vary in different regions, the campaign will operate throughout the year. For more information, please go to <http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/about/index.asp>

(9) Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Year Book 2006

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Year Book 2006 is the third annual survey of the changing global environment produced by the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with many world experts in environmental research and action.

The Year Book includes global and regional overviews. It highlights the linkages between environmental well-being, vulnerability and poverty; records recent findings on the value of ecosystem services; and describes new research findings on polar and ocean changes that may prove a turning point in the urgency of our awareness and response to global change. A special feature focus analyzes the environmental, socio-economic and public health impacts of energy-related air pollution. The emerging scientific and policy challenges of crop production in a changing climate and fish and shellfish farming without damage to marine ecosystems are examined in detail. The GEO Indicators provide an up-to-date, graphic snapshot of key trends in managing our planetary habitat. Essential, informative and authoritative reading for anyone with a role or an interest in our changing environment. To download the book, please go to <http://www.unep.org/geo/yearbook/yb2006/>

(10) UNICEF Report: Progress for Children No. 5: A Report Card on Water and Sanitation

It is estimated that unsafe water and a lack of basic sanitation and hygiene every year claim the lives of more than 1.5 million children under five years old from diarrhoea. This tragic statistic underscores the need for the world to meet its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) commitment on water and sanitation: MDG 7, which aims to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

This report card (released in September 2006), the fifth in a UNICEF series that monitors progress for children towards the MDGs, measures the world's performance in water and sanitation. It projects that, if current trends continue, the world is on track to meet the target for drinking water – though some countries and regions are lagging behind – but the target for sanitation appears distant.

To access the report, please go to www.unicef.org/wes/files/Progress_for_Children_No._5_-_English.pdf

(11) The 2006 Human Development Report. Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis. UNDP

Throughout history water has confronted humanity with some of its greatest challenges. Water is a source of life and a natural resource that sustains our environments and supports livelihoods – but it is also a source of risk and vulnerability. In the early 21st Century, prospects for human development are threatened by a deepening global water crisis. Debunking the myth that the crisis is the result of scarcity, this report argues poverty, power and inequality are at the heart of the problem. In a world of unprecedented wealth, almost 2 million children die each year for want of a glass of clean water and adequate sanitation. Millions of women and young girls are forced to spend hours collecting and carrying water, restricting their opportunities and their

choices. And water-borne infectious diseases are holding back poverty reduction and economic growth in some of the world's poorest countries.

Beyond the household, competition for water as a productive resource is intensifying. Symptoms of that competition include the collapse of water-based ecological systems, declining river flows and large-scale groundwater depletion. Conflicts over water are intensifying within countries, with the rural poor losing out. The potential for tensions between countries is also growing, though there are large potential human development gains from increased cooperation.

The Human Development Report continues to frame debates on some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. It investigates the underlying causes and consequences of a crisis that leaves 1.2 billion people without access to safe water and 2.6 billion without access to sanitation; argues for a concerted drive to achieve water and sanitation for all through national strategies and a global plan of action; examines the social and economic forces that are driving water shortages and marginalizing the poor in agriculture; looks at the scope for international cooperation to resolve cross-border tensions in water management; includes special contributions from Gordon Brown and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, President Lula, President Carter, and the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

To access the report, please go to <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/>

(12) New Report Underlines Africa's Vulnerability to Climate Change.

A new report on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation in Africa, released by the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and based on data from bodies including the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicates that the continent's vulnerability to climate change is even more acute than had previously been supposed. It is estimated, for example, that 30 per cent of Africa's coastal infrastructure could be inundated including coastal settlements in the Gulf of Guinea, Senegal, the Gambia and Egypt. Between 25 per cent and over 40 per cent of species' habitats in Africa could be lost by 2085.

To access the report, please go to

http://unfccc.int/adaptation/adverse_effects_and_response_measures_art_48/items/3743.php

(13) Children's Environmental Health Research: Past, Present and Future. NC, U.S. 22nd to 24th January 2007

The goal of this workshop is to develop new strategies for research, exposure and effects monitoring, intervention and prevention in children's environmental health. Specific objectives are to maximize the effectiveness of scientific research - basic science, exposure monitoring/biomonitoring, epidemiology, toxicology, clinical medicine and multidisciplinary studies - and to enhance the translation of research to the bedside, to the community and to public policy.

This meeting is open to the public with time set aside for public discussion. For additional information, please go to

<http://www-apps.niehs.nih.gov/conferences/od/cehr/>
or contact Dr. Kristina Thayer at thayer@niehs.nih.gov

(14) Summit on Environmental Challenges to Reproductive Health and Fertility, San Francisco, U.S. 28th to 30th January 2007

2007 University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Summit on Environmental Challenges to Reproductive Health and Fertility, UCSF Mission Bay Conference Center, San Francisco, U.S., 28th to 30th January 2007. For more information, please go to <http://www.ucsf.edu/coe/prhesummit.html> or refer to HECANET Newsletter of August-September 2006. Specific questions may be directed to Mary Wade, Summit Manager: wadem@obgyn.ucsf.edu(415) 476-2563

(15) 7th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Integrating Environment and Human Health. Washington, U.S. 1st and 2nd February 2007

Join over 850 scientists, policymakers, businesspeople, and civil society representatives at NCSE's 7th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Integrating Environment and Human Health, in Washington, D.C. on February 1st and 2nd 2007. Over 120 experts will speak in plenary sessions, symposia, and topical breakout sessions. The conference is interactive and will address the many essential roles the environment plays on our well-being today, as well as the multi-dimensional relationships between human health and environmental components, which may have far-reaching consequences for society. Join leading scientists, policy makers, educators, and others to develop science-based solutions to protect people and the planet.

For more information, please go to <http://www.ncseonline.org/2007conference/>

(16) 4th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. Vienna, Austria. 10th to 12th June 2007

This conference - the fourth after Amsterdam (1998), Washington (2001) and London (2004) - is initiated by the International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES) in collaboration with the University for Health Sciences, Medical Informatics and Technology - Dept. of Public Health, Medical Decision Making and Health Technology Assessment, and the University of Vienna, Institute of Environmental Medicine. It is meant to be a world-wide platform dealing with health problems of children caused by important environmental influences. The conference will take place from 10th to 12th June 2007 at the premises of the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. For more information, please go to <http://www.inchesnetwork.net> or send an email to inches@umit.at

(17) Tunza International Youth Conference 2007. Leverkusen, Germany. 8th to 12th September 2007

UNEP will be organizing its Tunza International Youth Conference in Leverkusen, Germany from 8 to 12 September 2007. It will bring together 150 youth leaders to discuss their role in environmental issues. The Conference will explore environmental issues related to Gender & Environment, Sustainable Production & Consumption, and Poverty & Environment. It will have a number of workshops, plenary sessions, focused group discussions, field trips as well as panel discussions and result in individual commitments by the participants.

For more information on the Conference and to submit a nomination from your organization please visit our website at <http://www.unep.org/tunza/youthconference>

(18) Graduate Certificate in Children's Environmental Health. 2007

Graduate certificate in Children's Environmental Health, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research on Children's Environmental Health, Perth, Western Australia, March 2007. For more information contact Professor Peter D. Sly at peters@ichr.uwa.edu.au ; visit the website www.ichr.uwa.edu.au or refer to HECANET Newsletter of August-September 2006.

(19) Child Participation in WASH Workshop Eastern and Southern Africa region. 9th to 11th October 2006

Representatives of UNICEF Country Programmes from seven countries in eastern and southern Africa and their partners met for three days to discuss best practices and lessons learned specific to Child Participation in WASH Programmes in the region. Each programme and country has made some progress in this sub-sector. The UNICEF Regional Office based in Kenya organized this workshop with support from UNICEF New York. Forty one (41) practitioners from the region and beyond participated in this workshop which was a direct result of the Regional WASH for Schools meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi, 29th January to 1st February 2006 and as an indirect result of other global events including the Oxford Roundtable meeting held in the UK, in early 2005, and the Children's World Water Forum in Mexico, 2006. All of these events brought children and young people together with adults to discuss issues relating to the impact of WASH issues on their lives. The main workshop objectives were to enable the UNICEF Country Offices and Partners to better understand the needs and capacities of children as partners in WASH programme activities. Participants shared their experiences and lessons learnt through their activities which take place primarily in schools, communities and youth groups. A minimum set of indicators for WASH in schools that can be used to monitor and manage large-scale programmes was drafted on as a basis for further refinement and use. The workshop examined key inputs to child and youth participation in WASH: child participation, advocacy and mobilization. The participants also addressed key issues for managing scaling up with quality by developing indicative plans. For more information, please contact dgoodman@unicef.org

(20) Health and Environment in Aragón Seminar. Zaragoza, Spain. 24th and 25th October 2006

The IV Session of the "Health and Environment in Aragón Seminar" took place on the 24th and 25th October in Zaragoza, Spain. WHO was invited to give a conference on the activities and tools it is developing on children's environmental health (CEH). The seminar was organized by

the Public Health Directorate of the Aragón Government (Dirección General de Salud Pública del Gobierno de Aragón), the Foundation Ecology and Development (Fundación Ecología y Desarrollo) and the CAI-ASC Foundation. The objective of the session was to inform participants about the effects on children's health derived from environmental risk factors and study the different collaboration possibilities between public health centres in Aragón and research projects on children that are taking place elsewhere in the State. For more information, please go to <http://www.ecodes.org>

The Fundación Ecología y Desarrollo sends a newsletter "Salud y Medio Ambiente" in coordination with the Direction of Public Health of Aragón, This newsletter intends to be a tool for sharing information and news on environmental health and for compiling subjects and interesting contacts in the area so as to be up to date on environmental health news both from the public and the private sectors. It is aimed at a multidisciplinary public that includes professionals of the health sector, environment experts, consumers, among others. To subscribe and see the previously published newsletters, please go to http://www.ecodes.org/pages/areas/salud_medioambiente/suscripcion.asp

(21) Healthy Environments, Healthy Children, Commitment for Action. Buenos Aires, Argentina. November 2006

At the 2nd International Conference on Children's Environmental Health: "Healthy Environments, Healthy Children Increasing Knowledge and Taking Action" held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 2005, participants agreed on a number of priority issues and on a commitment for action that went through an extensive consultative process. The English and Spanish versions will soon be available at www.who.int/ceh as well as on the respective website of the Ministry of Health of Argentina and the Argentinean Paediatric Society (SAP). We hope this commitment will serve as a source of inspiration and action for those concerned about healthy environments for healthy children.

(22) International Conference for the Evaluation of Global Strategies on Health: The Ottawa and Bangkok Charters - From Principles to Action. Florence, Italy. 21st and 22nd November 2006

This conference was organized by the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) and the International School on Environment, Health and Sustainable Development (SIASS), with the support of the Tuscany region and WHO, in collaboration with the Tuscany Agencies for Health (ARS) and for Environment (ARPAT), the Meyer Paediatric Hospital and its WHO Collaborating Centre (Health Promotion & Capacity Building on CAH), the Instituto degli Innocenti (UNICEF) and the International Academy of Environmental Sciences. Over 200 health care professionals participated at the event, where speakers from Italian organizations, UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO) and NGOs (ISDE, INCHEM) discussed how to take actions on the basis of existing commitments and taking into account new global and local conditions. The conference focused on the tools, mechanisms and synergies required for promoting CEH activities and reviewed existing experiences, stressing the importance of updating the Convention on Children's Rights to a safe environment. Other sessions dealt with the integration of health policies, with an interesting review of the Ottawa and Bangkok Charters

and a very critical analysis of the roles played by WHO in promoting health and more. For more information on the program, please go to www.who-cc.dk/news-1/depliantultimo.pdf

(23) Informal Working Group on Lead Exposure in Children: Review and Update of Guidance Materials. Munich, Germany. 30th November to 1st December 2006

An informal Working Group on "Lead exposure in children: Review and update of guidance materials" was organized by WHO and hosted by the German Network of Children's Health at the Ludwig Maximilian's University of Munich (LMU), Munich, Germany, on 30th November and 1st December 2006. The objective of the workshop was to review guidance materials for the health sector in order to increase their awareness about the problem and strengthen their capacities in the diagnosis, prevention and management of lead exposure in childhood. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss related issues, such as the updating of existing documents (monographs, training modules, leaflets), the inclusion of lead antidotes into the WHO List of Essential Drugs, and the consideration of stronger global initiatives to protect children and their communities from lead exposure. Participants were professionals from Canada, China, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, USA, UK and South Africa with recognized expertise on lead exposure in children, in addition to WHO professionals from HQ, EURO and EMRO. Participants agreed on the contents of the document and the timetable towards publication (by mid-2007) and made concrete suggestions as to how to promote stronger global actions to prevent lead exposure in children. The report of the meeting and presentations made will be available at the WHO website by mid-December. Workshop on Lead Exposure in Children. Review and Update of Guidance Materials. Munich, Germany, 30th November and 1st December 2006.

(24) International Society for Children's Health and the Environment (ISCHE)

The International Society for Children's Health and the Environment (ISCHE) is an international organization dedicated to the protection of children from adverse environmental influences (chemical, physical, biological and social) through research, training, policy, clinical care and education. The Society also seeks to promote children's health by enhancing the quality of their environments. For more information, please go to <http://www.ehponline.org/ische/>

(25) EPA activities on children's environmental health

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) announced a 60-day public comment period for the external review draft document titled, "Child-Specific Exposure Factors Handbook". The draft document was prepared by the National Center for Environmental Assessment within EPA's Office of Research and Development. The "Child-Specific Exposure Factors Handbook" provides a summary of statistical data on various exposure factors used in assessing children's exposures, including: drinking water consumption; soil ingestion and mouthing behaviour; inhalation rates; dermal factors including skin surface area and soil adherence factors; consumption of retail and home-grown foods; breast milk intake; and activity pattern data. This Handbook serves as a resource for exposure assessors for calculating children's exposures. An interim final version of this handbook was published in 2002. This updated version provides analysis of exposure factors data using the age groups for children

recommended in the EPA document entitled, "Guidance on Selecting Age Groups for Monitoring and Assessing Childhood Exposures to Environmental Contaminants". Available online at <http://cfpub2.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recordisplay.cfm?deid=56747>

The annual Children's Environmental Health Report highlights the EPA's recent efforts to protect the health of children by addressing threats in the environments where they develop, grow, and thrive. Improving school environments, addressing indoor and outdoor air quality, and reducing exposures to chemicals and pesticides are a few of the activities described in the report. To access the report, please go to [http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/CEH06_Final.htm/\\$file/CEH06_Final.pdf](http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/CEH06_Final.htm/$file/CEH06_Final.pdf)

Children may be just a third of the world's population, but they are 100 percent of our future. Each October, EPA celebrates Children's Health Month, which, with the school season in full swing, is a perfect time to focus on the important work that parents, communities and public agencies do to protect our children. EPA has long held protection of children's health as a high priority. Their growth and physical activity make them much more exposed to environmental conditions than the average adult. This year's focus on schools makes good sense when we remember that children spend a great amount of time in schools - more than in any other environment other than their homes. EPA has a number of other programs and initiatives dedicated to protecting children. EPA's website is featuring a number of these programs. Please visit the website <http://www.epa.gov/> to learn more about efforts to protect children and to share concerns and ideas about how improve the protection of children's health.

The Healthy Homes Clearinghouse has just been launched and contains more than 600 documents on healthy homes issues and is searchable by keyword, author, title, publication name, publication date or abstract. You can access the clearinghouse at www.healthyhousing.org/clearinghouse

(26) Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety: Final report

The final report of the Fifth Session of the IFCS (Forum V) that took place on 25th to 29th September 2006 is now available online at <http://www.who.int/ifcs/forums/five/en/index.html>

(27) Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change: Publication of the Stern Review's final report

Sir Nicholas Stern, Head of the Government Economics Service and Adviser to the Government of the United Kingdom on the economics of climate change and development presented his report to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Economics of Climate Change on 30 October 2006. The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change is a serious global threat, and it demands an urgent global response. This Review has assessed a wide range of evidence on the impacts of climate change and on the economic costs, and has used a number of different techniques to assess costs and risks. From all of these perspectives, the evidence gathered by the Review leads to a simple conclusion: the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting. Climate change will affect the basic elements of life for people around the world – access to water, food production, health, and the

environment. Hundreds of millions of people could suffer hunger, water shortages and coastal flooding as the world warms.

The investment that takes place in the next 10-20 years will have a profound effect on the climate in the second half of this century and in the next. Our actions now and over the coming decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century. And it will be difficult or impossible to reverse these changes. So prompt and strong action is clearly warranted. To access the report, please go to http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm

(28) The March of Dimes Global Report on Birth Defects, The Hidden Toll of Dying and Disabled Children

Every year an estimated 8 million children—6 percent of total births worldwide—are born with a serious birth defect of genetic or partially genetic origin. Additionally, hundreds of thousands more are born with serious birth defects of post-conception origin due to maternal exposure to environmental agents. At least 3.3 million children less than 5 years of age die annually because of serious birth defects and the majority of those who survive may be mentally and physically disabled for life.

This new report from the March of Dimes is the first to provide a global estimate of serious birth defects of genetic or partly genetic origin. It details the birth prevalence rates and the numbers of affected births in 193 countries. The report recommends steps that can be taken to prevent birth defects and improve the care of those affected in developing countries. Experience from high-income countries shows that overall mortality and disability from birth defects could be reduced by up to 70 percent if the recommendations in this report are broadly implemented. To access the report, please go to http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/871_18587.asp

(29) New report: Paediatric Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness: A Resource for Paediatricians

Paediatric Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness: A Resource for Paediatricians enables paediatricians to become informed and aware of their roles in disaster preparedness and response, as it can be consulted in planning for and responding to natural disasters and bioterrorist events. The accompanying 35-page summary highlights significant parts of the report for quick reference. The report was prepared for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) by the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP). To access the report, please go to: <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/pedprep/resource.htm#down>

(30) World Medical Association Statement on the Role of Physicians in Environmental Issues

The World Medical Association Statement on the Role of Physicians in Environmental Issues was revised in October 2006. To access the statement, please go to <http://www.wma.net/e/policy/d5.htm>

(31) "Stay Healthy, Stop Mercury" Launches Fact Sheet Series

Two major European health networks announced the launch of an anti-mercury campaign on 27 October 2006 with a series of fact sheets for citizens and health professionals. Health Care Without Harm and Health and Environment Alliance are producing a series of educational fact sheets with the help of mercury experts in different countries as a first step in their "Stay healthy, Stop mercury" campaign.

"Mercury is a toxic chemical yet many people are unaware of its potential health impacts, particularly to those most at risk such as pregnant women and young children," says Génon Jensen, Executive Director of Health & Environment Alliance. "Our campaign aims to get the health facts on mercury out to a wider audience and mobilize public opinion to rally around this public health challenge. We need to reduce mercury in every way we can - replacing it in our products, choosing to eat less contaminated fish and ultimately achieving a global agreement on a mercury ban as soon as possible."

For more information, please go to <http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?ID=1430&type=document> or contact: Karolina Ruzickova, Health Care Without Harm Europe, Tel/Fax +420 222 78 28 08, Mobile: +420 731 321 or Diana Smith, Communications, Health and Environment Alliance, Tel: +33 1 55 25 25 84

(32) World's worst polluted places: The Top Ten

Most poor countries have cities or estates where industry is concentrated, usually well away from the capitals. In these places we find soil, air and water contamination not just from active enterprises (many of them antiquated), but also from the legacy of decades of uncontrolled emissions. There are soil and groundwater that have been poisoned, rivers that ooze toxins, and lakes that cannot be approached safely, let alone used for irrigation or drinking. There are some towns where life expectancy approaches medieval rates, where birth defects are the norm not the exception. In other places children's asthma rates are measured above 90 percent, or mental retardation is endemic. In these places, life expectancy may be half that of the richest nations. The great suffering of these communities compounds the tragedy of so few years on earth.

Despite the emotional and incomparable suffering of poor communities world wide, this report (October 2006) attempts to objectively expose sites that have the most extreme effects on human health. Despite isolation of the sites and complacency of those responsible, this list recognizes that the challenges of pollution are far from resolved for millions in the developing world. This report, prepared by the Blacksmith Institute, is also intended to indicate that there are potential remedies for these sites. Problems like these have been solved in the developed world, and we have the capacity and the technology to spread our experience to our afflicted neighbours. This report's purpose is to highlight significant problem sites, and show that something can be done to

begin to fix them. A discussion of solutions is presented later in the document. To access the report, please go to <http://www.blacksmithinstitute.org/top10/10worst2.pdf>

(33) New Surveillance System of Air Pollution via Internet. Europe

The European Environment Agency has launched a new surveillance system of air pollution via internet. This new internet tool allows users to find out the level of ozone pollution in any place in Europe. To access it, please go to <http://www.eea.europa.eu/maps/ozone/welcome>

(34) CHEC Blog: 90 tips for 90 days

In a continuing effort to promote the health and well being of all children, families, and communities, Children's Health Environmental Coalition (CHEC) announced the launch of their newest online initiative - the CHEC Blog. The CHEC Blog begins with 90 Tips for 90 Days, which provides the valuable, practical, and easy solutions to create a healthier lifestyle, and keep children and their families safe from harmful environmental exposures. It is open for everyone to join in the ongoing conversations about children's health and environmental issues. "As our newest educational forum, CHEC's Blog will consistently generate useful, science-based content so that parents and others will understand that better information and simple actions will equal better health for all children," says CHEC Board Chair, Tessa Hill. "This blog will provide insights on trouble-free steps, healthier products, current news articles, and valuable solutions to reduce harmful chemical exposures in our daily lives."

To access CHEC Blog, please go to <http://www.cheblog.org/>

(35) New Websites Related to Chemicals and Hazardous Substances in Jordan

http://www.rss.gov.jo/computer/softpro_hazardous.html This website is developed and maintained by the Jordan Integrated Hazardous Substances Information Management and Control System Project (JI-HSIMCS) which is a multiphase national project, started in 2003. Its current and second phase is intended to be completed by the end of 2006. The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and is implemented by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS). The main objective of the JI-HSIMCS project is to create an automated system that will serve as a tool for managing and controlling hazardous substances that are imported and manufactured in Jordan. This system will also serve as a source of information about hazardous substances to all concerned ministries and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

<http://www.jcsw.moenv.gov.jo/> This website is one of the outputs of the project "Developing and Sustaining an Integrated National Program for Sound Chemicals and Waste Management". One of the major tasks of the project was to develop an National Information Exchange mechanism. This website is the basis for that mechanism. It will help create a virtual area where concerned people can contact each other and find the resources and information related to Chemical and Waste management. This website will also help collect, organize and disseminate the results of the project.

(36) CEFIC's position on Children Health & Environment

Protecting children is a shared societal value and CEFIC (European Chemical Industry Council) is proud that advances in chemistry and allied technologies have helped to improve children's lives. Modern medicine and better living conditions have dramatically lowered the global death rate, especially for infants and children. Indeed, in its 1994 report, State of Health in the EC, the European Commission confirmed that "children are healthier" and "infant death rates have been falling throughout the century". CEFIC and its members are committed to ensuring that this positive trend continues. While great progress has been made to alleviate basic risks to children resulting from poverty, disease, poor hygiene and inadequate food and water, society is now turning its attention to the so-called "modern" and "emerging" risks that could harm our children. Crime, war, road traffic accidents and drugs present the most obvious threats among these risks, but the possible long-term impact of climate change or exposure to chemicals in the environment are less well understood.

Current European regulations require the chemical industry to assess risks in a prudent manner – using conservative safety factors to cover uncertainty in the data or extrapolations of the data to humans. While it is acknowledged that the developing child, might at certain early stages, is more vulnerable to the effects of chemical exposure than adults; it is none the less believed that this conservative approach is protective of all human populations, including children. For more information, please go to http://www.cefic.be/files/publications/CHE_position.pdf

(37) Eurosafe: Home Injury Fact Sheets, Parent Tip Sheets & Child Safety Product Guide

In preparation for its Home Safety campaign launched at the end of November 2006, the European Child Safety Alliance made some home injury fact sheets and parent tip sheets and produced a Child Safety Product Guide. The European Child Safety Alliance in partnership with its member countries is undertaking a home safety campaign throughout Europe. The Alliance defines home injuries as those occurring in or around the home, including the garden, garage and driveway, and excluding the sidewalk, street or community playground. For more information on Eurosafe and these latest products, please go to <http://www.eurosafe.eu.com>

(38) The Alliance for Safe Children

The Alliance for Safe Children (TASC) is a global child injury prevention foundation started in 2002. Their mission is to reduce child death and disability from accidents throughout the developing world. TASC staff pioneered community based research which has documented the prevalence of child injury among children ages 1 to 17 years in Asia. Over the past four years, surveys on child injury conducted by TASC and partners have proven that injury is a leading killer of children as well as a major cause of disability. TASC is now working on designing and implementing programs that reduce and prevent injury to children. Focus countries currently are Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. For information on TASC activities, please go to <http://www.tasc-gcipf.org/index.html>

(39) CHE Fertility Online Abstracts Library

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)'s Fertility/Early Pregnancy Compromise Work Group announced the launch of a multilayer search-capable Online Abstracts Library, and a companion Catalogue of CHE Fertility-Relevant Organizational Reports and News Stories. The abstracts library catalogues scientific reports (going back over two decades) relevant to the topic area: contaminant impacts on upstream reproductive health/fertility (key animal and human data). Reports on pregnancy loss and birth outcomes that inform patients' self-identification as subfertile/infertile, or experiencing impaired fertility; and selected population-level data reports such as on birth rate and sex ratio alterations are also included. It will be updated monthly. To access the library, please go to http://www.healthandenvironment.org/wg_fertility_news/652

(40) Ecoclubs activities

Ecoclubs organized several activities in different parts of the world, including, among others, the First Binational Encounter of Ecoclubs from Tacna (Peru) and Arica (Chile) that took place in Tacna on 27th and 28th of October and where the region's water and desertification issues were discussed. From the 12th to 14th April 2007, the First International Days on Water and Youth will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where 300 young people from all over the world will get together to discuss water issues. For more information on Ecoclubs and their activities, please go to <http://www.ecoclubes.org>

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION:

(a) Indoor air pollution

[IEA tables shocking data on deaths from biomass smoke](#) Data by IEA at climate change conference in Nairobi showed that while malaria kills 1.2 million people annually in developing countries, smoke from biomass claims 1.3 million. It's very polluting and causes lung diseases mainly in those around the cooking place: women and children. L. Barasa. [Nationmedia.com](#) 14 November 2006.

[Battling Household Air Pollution](#). Most people look to the sky for billowing smokestacks when concerned about air pollution. But K. Spector of CHEC says parents of young children usually look down. "We get many calls from people concerned about new carpeting ". EPA researchers estimate the air inside homes is 2 to 5 times more polluted than outside. M. Knopper. [Chronogram](#). October 2006.

(b) Outdoor air pollution

[Exposures to Airborne Particulate Matter and Adverse Perinatal Outcomes: A Biologically Plausible Mechanistic Framework for Exploring Potential Effect Modification by Nutrition](#) The

findings would be relevant for PM regulation and primary prevention of CVD and other diseases influenced by the pathways proposed and reducing the risks for adverse birth effects. S. Kannan. EHP. November 2006.

[Personal and Ambient Air Pollution is Associated with Increased Exhaled Nitric Oxide in Children with Asthma](#) Research has associated paediatric asthma outcomes and airborne PM. PM associations with airway inflammation in asthmatics may be missed using ambient particle mass, which may not sufficiently represent causal pollutant components from fossil fuel. R. Delfino. EHP. November 2006.

[Gaseous Air Pollutants and Hospitalization for Respiratory Disease in the Neonatal Period](#) Current levels of ambient air pollution are associated with morbidity and mortality in the general population. Neonates are experiencing adverse effects of air pollution at current levels in Canada, and that accounts for a significant proportion of hospitalizations in this subgroup. R Dales. EHP. November 2006.

[Scientists Link Urban Air Pollution to Distant Forest Fires](#) Besides clouding the air, smog can contribute to serious health problems— triggering breathing problems, aggravating asthma and emphysema, and potentially causing permanent lung damage in children. WHO estimates that 800,000 people die each year from smog and other forms of air pollution. Z. Chafe. Worldwatch Institute. 6 October 2006.

[WHO challenges world to improve air quality](#) Stricter air pollution standards could reduce deaths in polluted cities by 15%. WHO is challenging governments to improve air quality in their cities in order to protect people's health. Experience has demonstrated that simple actions can lower sulfur dioxide levels and result in lower rates of childhood death and disease. WHO Media Centre. 5 October 2006.

(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[International Studies of Prenatal Exposure to Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Fetal Growth](#) Results confirm the adverse reproductive effect of relatively low PAH concentrations in two populations and suggest increased susceptibility of NYC African Americans. Fetal growth impairment has been linked to child developmental and health problems. H. Choi. EHP. November 2006.

[Effects in Infants from Tobacco Smoke, Mold, and Older Siblings](#) Exposure to ETS increased an infant's risk of developing allergic rhinitis by almost threefold. Investigators found that exposure to mould in the home was associated with increased risk of upper respiratory infections but not allergy, which differed from previously reported research in older children and adults. J. Phelps. EHP. October 2006.

[Lead and smoking blamed for rise in hyperactive children](#) One-third of all children with attention deficit problems can blame their disability on their mothers smoking in pregnancy and on lead pollution, according to a US study. The research casts light on the causes of ADHD, which

blights the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and their families. G. Lean. The Independent. 1 October 2006.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

Exposure to chemicals may harm young brains Exposure to industrial chemicals in the womb or early in life can impair brain development but only a few substances, such as lead and mercury, are controlled with the purpose of protecting children. There is also a lack of research to identify which chemicals cause the most harm or how they should be regulated. Reuters. MSNBC. 8 November 2006.

A precautionary approach should be taken to protect pregnant women and children against industrial chemicals Neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. autism, attention deficit disorder, cerebral palsy) are common, costly and can cause lifelong disability. 1 in every 6 children has a developmental disability and often these disabilities affect the nervous system. P. Grandjean. The Lancet. 8 November 2006.

Chemical campaigns 'misleading' Leading toxicologists have warned green groups are "misleading" the public with chemical contamination campaigns. In particular, they criticized a WWF campaign that has highlighted the presence of certain chemicals in blood, food and in umbilical cords. One cannot assume that because a trace amount is detected it poses a danger. R. Morelle. BBC News. 16 October 2006.

Immunization: Childhood PCB Exposure May Weaken Vaccinations Exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCB's, can make children's diphtheria and tetanus vaccinations less effective, a new report suggests. The study included 240 children who were routinely vaccinated in early childhood. Maternal blood and breast milk levels of PCBs were measured. N. Bakalar. NY Times. 5 September 2006.

(b) Lead

Lead on tap An alarming return of lead in drinking water is being ignored by the EPA and municipal officials. Numerous studies confirm that very low levels of lead in children's blood are linked to short attention spans and reading problems. In adults, low levels are linked to high blood pressure and an increased risk of death from heart disease and stroke. R. Renner. Salon. 27 November 2006.

Lead Astray What happens when an American company offshores pollution? We know that exposure to lead causes anaemia, high blood pressure, developmental delays, behavioural problems, decreased intelligence, and central nervous system damage. Children are the most vulnerable; no amount of lead in their bloodstreams is considered safe. S. Shipley Hiles. Mother Jones Magazine. November 2006.

Fetal Lead Exposure at Each Stage of Pregnancy as a Predictor of Infant Mental Development Toxicokinetics of lead in the maternal-fetal unit are poorly understood. Fetal lead exposure has an adverse effect on neurodevelopment, an effect that may be most pronounced during the first

trimester and best captured by measuring lead in either maternal plasma or whole blood. H. Hu. EHP. November 2006.

[Lead pipes and child mortality](#) This paper uses national data from the public use sample of the 1900 Census of Population and data on city use of lead pipes in 1897 to estimate the effect of lead pipes on child mortality. Estimates suggest that tens of thousands child deaths were attributable to the use of lead pipes and many surviving children experienced IQ impairment. K. Clay. NBER. October 2006.

(c) Pesticides

[Breast cancer more likely in farm workers: study](#) The study set out to determine if a woman's occupation affects her risk of breast cancer. The current study's results offer a starting place for scientists struggling to explain the rising rates of breast cancer in industrialized countries like Canada, and how the causes of the disease may begin early in life. CTV.ca, Canada. 12 October 2006.

[The Revival of a Notorious Solution to a Notorious Scourge](#) Of all the wars in Africa, the most deadly is between humans and mosquitoes. More than a million Africans die of malaria every year, the vast majority of them small children. One reason the mosquitoes are winning is that the single most effective weapon has been discarded, DDT. T. Rosenberg. The New York Times. 5 October 2006.

(d) Mercury

[U.S. energy agency considers selling mercury stockpile](#) One federal agency is considering plans to sell a huge stockpile of the toxic metal on the world market. Once used widely in batteries and other manufacturing, mercury now is considered one of the most toxic substances that can harm people, especially pregnant women and children. Michael Hawthorne. The Baltimore Sun. 27 November 2006.

[European Commission Proposes Ban on EU Mercury Exports](#) The European Commission has proposed legislation to ban all European Union exports of mercury from 2011. The ban forms a key part of the EU's strategy for reducing global exposure to mercury. The export ban is expected to reduce global supply and emissions of the heavy metal into the environment. ENS. 30 October 2006.

[Conflicts of Interest Taint Institute of Medicine Seafood Panel Examining Mercury Risks, Say Advocates](#) FDA has made it clear that consuming high mercury fish can put women of childbearing age and young children at risk, yet that information keeps getting buried for the sake of tuna sales. It can be communicated easily by simply posting signs at the point of sale. U.S. Newswire. 16 October 2006.

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[European Aquatics and UNICEF agree to work together on safe drinking water and sanitation for all children](#) The LEN and UNICEF have agreed to develop a partnership to raise awareness on the importance of clean water for every child and to support the UN Millennium Goal of reducing by half the number of people without safe water and sanitation. [UNICEF Press Centre](#). 21 November 2006

[Water for all \(who can afford it\)](#) Nearly 2 million children a year die for want of clean water and proper sanitation while the world's poor often pay more for their water than people in Britain or the U.S. according to the UNDP in its Human Development Report. 1,1-billion people do not have safe water; 2,6-billion suffer from inadequate sewerage. A. Seager. [Mail & Guardian online](#). 20 November 2006.

[Unsafe water imperils lives of almost half of humanity](#) About 4,500 children die daily because of poor sanitation and wells, WHO says. Shockingly, almost half the world's population, 2.6 billion residents concentrated mainly in Africa and Asia, lacks access to basic sanitation. One in six people worldwide, more than one billion, is without safe drinking water. A. Picard. [Globe and Mail](#). 17 November 2006.

[A drop-sized way to bring clean water to a thirsty world](#) Dripping taps in rich countries lose more clean water than is available to more than 1 billion people in the developing world. Close to half of all people living in poor countries present health problems related to dirty water and poor sanitation. 1.8 million children die each year because of diarrhoea. P. Bosshard. [CS Monitor](#). 10 November 2006.

[UNICEF helps villagers in Comoros to protect water from volcanic eruptions](#) More than 1,500 cisterns have already been covered with metal sheds provided by UNICEF, ensuring a lasting supply of clean, safe water. The villagers' health has improved since the cisterns were covered. There are fewer cases of diarrhoea, especially amongst children. [UN News Centre](#). 10 October 2006.

[A Simple Solution](#) Diarrhoea kills more young children around the world than malaria, AIDS and TB combined Yet a simple and inexpensive treatment can prevent many of those deaths. Why isn't it more widely used? While diarrhoea is a major killer in developing countries, developed nations channel health-care funds into areas perceived as presenting greater risks. A. Gerlin. [Time Europe](#). 8 October 2006.

(4) GLOBAL CHANGE

[Diseases Appear on Rise With Temperature](#) A warmer world already seems to be producing a sicker world, health experts reported, citing surges of such diseases as malaria, heart ailments and dengue fever. Besides disrupting normal climate zones, continued temperature rises will increase threats to human health, particularly in lower income populations. C. Hanley. [ABC News](#). 14 November 2006.

[Rainwater harvesting could end much of Africa's water shortage, UN reports](#) Overall the quantity of rain falling across the continent is equivalent to the needs of 9 billion people, one and

half times the current global population. About a third of Africa is deemed suitable for rainwater harvesting if a threshold of 200 mms of arrival rainfall is used. [UN News Centre](#). 13 November 2006.

[Ailments Surge as Ozone Hole Widens](#) Skin cancer, eye lesions and other infections are on the rise. The Antarctic ozone hole is still a serious problem, especially for Argentina and Chile, where ultraviolet radiation during the spring months increases 25 %. In Chile, it is recommended to especially to protect children from direct exposure to the sun. S. Leahy. [IPS News Agency](#). 11 November 2006.

[Trade, desertification blamed for world hunger increase](#) J. Ziegler, a UN expert on food rights, said some 852 million people were "gravely, permanently undernourished on this planet" at the end of 2005, an increase of 11 million from the year earlier, specially in Africa where drought, climate change and poor farming practices are spreading the Sahara Desert farther southward. [CNews](#). 26 October 2006.

[Al Gore picks up literary prize](#) Former US presidential candidate Al Gore has won a prestigious Quill literary award for his book *An Inconvenient Truth*. Mr Gore's climate change book, which is also a documentary film, won in the history, current events and politics category. The book looks at scientific evidence on the causes and likely impacts of global warming. [BBC News](#). 12 October 2006.

(5) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

[An Epidemic No One Understands](#) From 1985 to 2001, the prevalence of asthma rose 100 %. About 300 million people have asthma, 255,000 die from it, and deaths could increase by 20 % over the next 10 years, according to WHO. Children in the inner cities seem to be especially hard hit, with exposure to cockroaches and diesel fumes suspected as the culprits. D. Grady. [NY Times](#). 28 November 2006.

[Genotoxicants Target Distinct Molecular Networks in Neonatal Neurons](#) Exposure of the brain to environmental agents during critical periods of neuronal development is considered a key factor underlying many neurologic disorders. Study of molecular networks may explain the variable response of the developing brain to different types of environmental genotoxicants. G. Kisby. [EHP](#). November 2006.

[Indian scientist develops solar vaccine cooler](#) The resurgence of polio in parts of India could be attributed, among other factors, to faulty storage of the vaccine: now an Indian scientist has invented a solar vaccine cooler for use in rural areas, where electricity supply may be erratic. SolarChill is a vaccine cooler developed by Rajendra Shende under the auspices of UNEP. [The Hindu](#). 1 November 2006.

[Caring for Children Amidst Chaos: Guidelines to Maintain Health](#) Young children are those most likely to die during humanitarian crises caused by famine, war, and natural disasters. A 2006 report by the NRC, *Child Health in Complex Emergencies*, suggests, that agencies'

efficiency in safeguarding child health might be increased if clinical guidelines were available to all. A. Burton. EHP. October 2006.

[Chlorinated Pool Attendance, Atopy, and the Risk of Asthma during Childhood](#) The causes of rise in childhood asthma prevalence are largely unknown. Use of indoor chlorinated pools by young children interacts with atopic status to promote the development of asthma. Findings further support the hypothesis implicating pool chlorine in the rise of childhood asthma. A. Bernard. EHP. October 2006.

[An Exploration of Ethical Issues in Research in Children's Health and the Environment](#) Consideration of ethical issues in paediatric environmental health is a recent phenomenon. Discussions of biomedical ethics, research on children, and environmental health research have a longer history. The CEHN held a working meeting on 5 and 6 March 2004 to explore this topic. J. Paulson. EHP. October 2006.

[EHPnet: Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators](#) 2 million children under the age of 15 perish due to acute respiratory infections each year. A number of significant commitments and initiatives were agreed upon in a bid to combat these figures. One of these was the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators, led by the WHO. E. Dooley. EHP. October 2006.

[Trials and Tribulations of Protecting Children from Environmental Hazards](#) A framework to protect children from environmental hazards must include regulations to test new chemicals and other potential hazards before they are marketed, a strategy to conduct research necessary to protect children from persistent hazards that are widely dispersed in their environment. B. Lanphear. EHP. October 2006.

[No Consensus on Chrysotile Asbestos](#) Unable to reach a consensus yet on adding chrysotile asbestos to a global trade "watch list", the member Governments of the Rotterdam Convention have decided to postpone a decision to their next meeting in 2008. The inclusion of chrysotile in the Convention would improve the ability of countries to address its potential risks. UNEP News Centre. 13 October 2006

[Preschool Puberty, and a Search for the Causes](#) Parents often think their children grow up too quickly. Some physicians worry that children are at higher risk of early puberty as a result of the increasing prevalence of drugs, cosmetics and contaminants: endocrine disruptors that can cause breast growth, pubic hair development and other symptoms of puberty. D. Sanghavi. NY Times. 17 October 2006.

(b) Reproductive health

[Fertile Grounds for Inquiry: Environmental Effects on Human Reproduction](#) A person's reproductive potential begins shortly after conception. Exploration of environmental effects on fertility will require demographers, epidemiologists, clinicians, biologists, wildlife researchers, geneticists, molecular biologists, exposure assessment specialists, toxicologists, and others. J. Barrett. EHP. November 2006.

[Looking Hard at Early Exposures](#) Protection of children's health is part of the basis for a joint declaration by scientists of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology and the European Respiratory Society, presented at a September meeting, which calls for European Union authorities to strengthen proposed air quality directives. K. Thigpen Tart. EHP. October 2006.

[Privacy and Ethics in Pediatric Environmental Health Research—Part I: Genetic and Prenatal Testing](#) This article discusses privacy concerns and informed consent within pediatric environmental health research contexts and then turns to specific ethical challenges associated with research on genetic determinants of environmental risk, prenatal studies and maternal privacy. C. Fisher. EHP. October 2006.

[Privacy and Ethics in Pediatric Environmental Health Research—Part II: Protecting Families and Communities](#) This article identifies issues arising from and potential solutions for the privacy and informed consent challenges of paediatric environmental health research intended to adequately protect the rights and welfare of children, family members, and communities. C. Fisher. EHP. October 2006.

[Everything you didn't want to know about sex...](#) Falling sperm counts, rising infertility and genital abnormalities in babies could all result from exposure to hazardous chemicals used in perfumes, carpets, electronics, clothing and a host of other consumer goods, a Greenpeace report revealed. Many disorders could originate in the developing stages of the child's life. Greenpeace international. May 2006.

(c) Americas

[Water crisis is big test for Peru's president](#) For the impoverished people living on the sandy desert fringes of Lima, reliable water supplies and politicians' promises are two things they know never to rely on. UN estimates Peru could cut the death rate among young children by 60 % with the installation of working toilets and sewage systems across the country. R. Emmott. Reuters. 27 November 2006.

[Training for "Servants of the Environment"](#) In December the first 30 youths will graduate from a Honduran education project that for 2 years has been teaching children of farming families about environmentally friendly farming techniques. The "servants of the environment" graduates will be specialists in agro-ecology and that will allow the region to flourish. Tierramérica. 20 November 2006.

[A Study Links Trucks' Exhaust to Bronx Schoolchildren's Asthma](#) The South Bronx is home to miles of expressways, more than a dozen waste-transfer stations, a sewage-treatment plant and truck traffic from wholesale produce, meat and fish markets in the world. It is also home to some of the highest asthma hospitalization rates for children in the city. M. Fernández. NY Times. 29 October 2006.

[Indigenous People, Ignored Even by the Statistics](#) Peruvian President has promised support for indigenous family farms. But a new report points to a bigger challenge: millions of indigenous people are feeling the impact of the mining and oil industries. Cadmium and lead above acceptable limits were found in the bloodstreams of local residents, especially children. M. Salazar. IPS. 10 October 2006.

[Canadian physicians group calls for cosmetic pesticide ban](#) Physicians at the annual meeting of the Prince Edward Island Medical Society called for a ban on all cosmetic pesticides, but failed to call for an government study of links to rising cancer rates. It's the first time in history that the medical profession on Prince Edward Island has taken a stand on the issue. PANUPs. 28 September 2006.

(d) Asia

[Filipinos flee village after chemical waste dump](#) Dozens of people were hospitalized and 3,000 abandoned their homes after chemical waste was dumped near a river in a town north of Manila, local officials said. Authorities shut down a public high school in Manila's financial district, sending home 1,200 pupils due to leaking chemicals from a science laboratory. Reuters. 28 November 2006.

[In Vietnam, Old Foes Take Aim at War's Toxic Legacy](#) During war, American forces sprayed about 12 million gallons of Agent Orange over the jungle canopies and highlands of Vietnam. Because Vietnam lacked resources to clean up, dioxin-related birth defects were diagnosed in thousands of children whose parents were not exposed during the war. A. Faiola. Washington Post. 13 November 2006.

[The quest for clean energy: China's green revolution](#) The air in Beijing was classified as 'hazardous' but following dire warnings of rampant pollution, alternatives are emerging. People in the highly polluted cities often complain that their children have nowhere to go to escape the bad air, and that they are worried about what all this will mean for their health. C. Coonan. The Agonist. 22 November 2006.

[Hospital death sparks China riot](#) About 2,000 people protested outside a hospital in southwest China after a boy died after mistakenly drinking pesticide. The 3-year-old boy accidentally drank farming chemicals from a soft drinks bottle. China is facing a growing healthcare crisis. Medical fees continue to rise beyond the means of the nation's rural poor. BBC News. 12 November 2006.

[Stuck in a haze](#) Will the neighbours ever dare to penalize the polluters? This year's haze has forced the closure of schools and airports in parts of Indonesia. Hospitals in Singapore report a rise in respiratory illness. Environment ministers from South-East Asia were due to hold an emergency meeting in Pekanbaru, on October 13th to discuss the choking haze. The Economist. 12 October 2006.

[Malaysian government lifts ban on paraquat](#) Community groups and public health experts in Malaysia are dismayed and outraged by the Malaysian government's recent decision to lift a ban on the dangerous herbicide paraquat. Paraquat poisoning has caused many deaths, poisonings

and chronic illnesses in Malaysia, which prompted its ban there in 2002. [PANUPS](#). 12 October 2006.

[India on alert as dengue fever spreads](#) An outbreak of mosquito-borne diseases across India has left scores of people dead and swamped hospitals and clinics, exposing the country's shabby public health system. Children play in clouds of pesticide as a fumigation lorry makes its way through a New Delhi neighbourhood to contain the outbreak of dengue fever. R. Ramesh. [The Guardian](#). 5 October 2006

[UN applauds phase-out of leaded petrol in Indonesia](#) UNEP and the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles have praised the planned phase-out of leaded petrol in Indonesia. In children lead acts as a neurotoxin, hampering the development of their brains. Studies show a significant reduction of IQ levels in children living in environments where leaded petrol is used. [SUTP](#). 4 October 2006

[A poison spreads amid China's boom](#) China doesn't only export cheap goods, people who benefit from the China Price around the world need to be aware of a potential threat coming from Chinese-made environmental hazards affecting Chinese. Doctors treating a 5-year-old boy were surprised to find dangerously elevated levels of lead in his blood. M. Zhao. [China Digital Times](#). 30 September 2006.

(e) Africa

[Help urged for Ivory Coast waste](#) The international community must meet the costs of cleaning and restoring sites in Ivory Coast contaminated by toxic waste, the UN says. It is the people of one of the world's poorest countries who are now being forced to pay the bill for removal and clean-up operations," said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. [BBC News](#). 24 November 2006.

[Gambia: Stepping Up Operation Clean the Nation](#) It is an agreed fact that most of the diseases often contracted by children especially diarrhoea and eye-diseases are spread by flies that usually breed in dirty places. It is indeed good to observe a united group of people in action in order to achieve the common goal of cleaning their environment. [AllAfrica.com](#) 23 November 2006.

[Uganda: Straight Talk Scoops Environment Award](#) Straight Talk Foundation got an award for making tree planting a lifestyle. It was among organizations and communities awarded for conserving the environment. Ofua primary school in Adjumani district got the award of 'green school' for instilling environment management values among children. N. Kajoba. [AllAfrica.com](#) 19 November 2006.

[Zanzibar implements ban on plastics](#) Authorities in Zanzibar began to implement a ban on the importation, distribution and sale of light plastics. Nearly 100 percent of raw liquid waste from Zanzibar was being directed into the ocean without treatment, posing "a threat to children who turn up every evening to swim in polluted water near beaches". [Reuters](#). 9 November 2006.

[African apocalypse: The continent burning into a desert](#) Nowhere is the effect of global warming more dangerous than in Somalia, where the worst drought in 40 years is affecting the lives of 1.8 million people. Children have been dying, and the land is "turning to desert". Water is becoming scarcer with the drought and the rain that falls comes in heavy storms. G. Lean. The Independent. 29 October 2006

[Water woes hit Guinea worm fight in Ghana](#) Guinea worm, is contracted by drinking water contaminated with microscopic water fleas carrying larvae. Once in the abdomen, worm larvae grow for around a year before emerging through an agonizing blister. It is now endemic in just 9 countries in Africa. Children are kept out of school to care for adults with the disease. O. Ryan. Reuters. 25 October 2006

[Black cloud threatens Egyptians' health](#) For the seventh year, a mysterious black cloud has appeared over Cairo, triggering serious health concerns for the polluted city's 16-million residents. Cairo has one of the highest rates of pollution, ten times higher than global indicators defined by the WHO, making it one of the most polluted cities in the world. A. Navarro. Mail and Guardian. 25 October 2006.

[Zanzibar: Winning Its Fight against Malaria](#) Health clinics have reported a marked decrease in the incidence of malaria in Zanzibar with the completion of the first phase of an anti-malaria campaign. He added that the United States government had given more than 200,000 Insecticide Treated mosquito Nets (ITNs) to pregnant mothers and children younger than five in Zanzibar. UNPO. 11 October 2006.

[Ethiopia can beat its biggest killer with historic push - UNICEF](#) For the first time in history, Ethiopia has a chance of beating malaria. Ethiopian government launched Africa's biggest ever push against the disease which infects nine million Ethiopians a year and can kill more than 100,000 Ethiopians – many of them young children - during an epidemic. UNICEF Press Centre. 28 September 2006.

(f) Europe

[Exclusive: Most Polluted Town in Europe The Real Cost of Climate Change](#) Copsa Mica is a town poisoned by the 20th Century. Its people die young and drink to relieve the misery. Life expectancy is 7 years less than national average, infant mortality rate is the highest in Europe. Lead concentrations are twice the safe maximum, zinc is almost 10 times that. A. Antonowicz. Mirror. 28 November 2006.

[Europe's Underwater Chemical Dump](#) Some 3,500 barrels of mercury have been found in the Baltic Sea off the coast of Sweden. There may be thousands more to be discovered. Experts say the sea is full of industrial waste, but nobody knows how much. The mercury is mixed with concrete, apparently as part of a strategy to make sure the barrels actually sank. C. Hawley. Spiegel Online. 30 August 2006.
