



*25 - 29 September 2006  
Budapest, Hungary*

*Chemical Safety for Sustainable Development*

**Thought Starter**

**Health and environmental concerns associated with heavy metals; global needs for further action?**

**Side-event on heavy metals  
23 September 2006**

**Prepared by: Switzerland**

***R O O M D O C U M E N T***

*Document will be available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish*

Switzerland will organize a full-day side event on 23 September 2006 on heavy metals. This thought starter is intended to provide a short overview of the planned side event and its objectives

The outcome of the side event will be brought forward to Forum V plenary (agenda item # 8). A discussion in Forum V plenary will provide an additional important opportunity to further examine the issues and problems. The output may be a compilation of the items identified for which the Forum V may wish to provide guidance on what to do on the field of heavy metals in the immediate future. This would help to support countries who are eager to start implementing SAICM and follow up on the heavy metals priorities.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

**Title of the event:**

Health and environmental concerns associated with heavy metals; global needs for further action?

**Background / Context:**

Reference to heavy metals in the context of international environmental and chemical policy making have increased over the recent years. The opinion has been expressed that dealing effectively with the challenges posed by the three heavy metals, mercury, lead and cadmium would require international coordination and action. Thus, several international institutions and processes have begun to address heavy metals. Namely, the WSSD Global Plan of Action promoted the reduction of risks posed by heavy metals; UNEP decided to review scientific data so that in future it would be able to take an informed decision on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium and established a mercury programme; and the SAICM outcome documents include several references to heavy metals (SAICM OPS para 14.d; GPA Executive Summary 7(d), GPA activities 57-59).

The focus and the success of these initiatives and activities have so far been mixed. To contribute and enrich ongoing discussions and activities in the different international institutions and fora dealing with chemicals, it would be useful to allow for discussion and broader information exchange among countries, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as with other stakeholders. This side-event will allow for such an open and inclusive discussion involving governmental, non-governmental, private actors and stakeholders.

**Purpose:**

The side event shall provide the opportunity to discuss sources of exposure and solutions to problems through a case studies approach. Through this, it will help to identify obstacles faced by developing countries and countries with economies in transition and to find out their particular needs. At the same time, it might help sensitize policy makers participating at the IFCS Forum V and provide additional information concerning international aspects of the challenges posed by heavy metals.

**Structure of the side-event**

The workshop will be based on the presentation of case studies related to metal exposure. The lessons learnt from these case studies will be further discussed in 3 parallel working groups on lead, cadmium and mercury, respectively. Moreover, the main relevant international institutions will have the opportunity to inform about their activities in this area.

**Possible outcomes**

Forum V should be informed about the side event and a discussion in Forum V plenary would provide an additional important opportunity to further examine the issues and problems. The output could be a compilation of the items identified in this discussion and possibly a decision on potential additional activities on that issue.

**Participants**

Broad participation of IFCS V participants should be enhanced through adequate public announcement; to be further discussed!