

Improvement of health through sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals

The Sixty-third World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;¹

Recalling resolution WHA59.15 on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;

Recognizing the outcomes of the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Geneva, 11–15 May 2009) regarding human health and, in particular, resolution II/8 on health aspects of the sound management of chemicals which drew attention to the need for a greater involvement of health sector, Member States² and the WHO Secretariat in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management³ because of the adverse effects some chemicals may have on human health, and noting that some of the global priorities for cooperative action identified within the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management also have to be dealt with by the health sector;

Recognizing that pesticides are designed to kill or control harmful organisms and pests, and may have adverse acute and chronic effects, and that, although they are regulated in most countries, they may affect populations' health and the environment, particularly when improperly used and stored, including when they are obsolete;⁴

Recalling WHO's Constitution, and recognizing the following relevant international agreements and instruments: the Bali Declaration on Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood (2008), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

¹ Document A63/21.

² And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

³ Document WHA59/2006/REC/1, Annex 1.

⁴ The International HCH and Pesticides Association (IHPA) estimates that total amount of obsolete pesticides is about 260 000–265 000 tonnes in central and eastern Europe and the countries of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Estimated amounts in 25 Member States of the European Union are 22 000–24 000 tonnes, south-east Europe 36 000–41 000 tonnes, the countries of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 199 000 tonnes, Africa 50 000 tonnes (estimated by FAO in its Africa Stockpiles Programme), South-East Asia 6500 tonnes (FAO, first rough indication), Central and South America 30 000 tonnes (FAO, 2005).

1992), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002), the adoption of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Dubai, 2006), the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (1989), the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (2004, revised 2008), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm, 2004), and the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972 and 1996 Protocol Thereto (London 1972), and the International Health Regulations (2005);

Recognizing that all the forums, conventions and instruments mentioned in the preceding paragraph are important global tools for the preservation and protection of human health and the environment that provide measures and guidelines to deal with certain aspects of chemicals' life-cycle, and that, in that sense, the closely linked Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal¹ foresee the development of appropriate strategies for identification of persistent organic pollutant wastes, stockpiles of persistent organic pollutants and their management;

Recognizing that hazardous waste and highly toxic pesticides fall under the global priority areas identified for cooperative action within the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, and that the Health Assembly in resolution WHA59.15 on Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management urged Member States to participate in national, regional and international efforts to implement the Strategic Approach;

Mindful of the new challenges and determinants of health and of the need for additional action in order to preserve and protect human health and the environment;

Recognizing the risks to human health and environment from obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals, particularly through local and global chemical accidents and disasters;

Recognizing also the risks to human health and environment from obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals, linked to the creation of stockpiles resulting from their regulation (such as withdrawal from the market without appropriate phase-out period) or inherited from past periods of pesticides over-consumption, which might further lead to spreading of improperly stored chemicals worldwide;

Recalling the fact that the exposure of humans and the environment to obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals may also be due to their long-range transport;

Recognizing the threat of unsafe storage of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals, which, owing to illegal use, package deterioration, or accidents may cause localized or widespread pollution and represent a potential risk to human health and the environment;

Mindful of the clear evidence that, besides environmental benefits, health benefits can be expected from safe and efficient handling and disposal of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals;

¹ The fundamental aims of the Basel Convention are the control and reduction of transboundary movement of hazardous and other wastes subject to the Convention, the prevention and minimization of their generation, the environmentally sound management of such wastes and active promotion of the transfer and use of cleaner technologies.

Acknowledging the progress regarding obsolete pesticides made by African countries through the interagency Africa Stockpiles Programme with the support of FAO, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and other partners;

Welcoming the work of the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal in developing technical guidelines on the environmentally sound disposal of wastes containing persistent organic pollutants;

Further recognizing that only a comprehensive and long-term strategy of sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals can be effective,

1. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to adopt, where necessary, or strengthen sound national policies and legislation on safe handling and disposal of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals;

(2) to adopt, where this has not already been done in the context of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and other existing instruments, comprehensive national implementation plans or other strategies as the basis for taking action towards the elimination of risks from obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals;

(3) to enhance social responsibility through awareness-raising in the area of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals and chemicals with potential transboundary risks to human health;

(4) to increase support for training and capacity building, and coordinated technical activities for implementing relevant international conventions and instruments;

(5) to encourage and promote cooperation between Member States in this regard;

(6) to establish or strengthen capacity for the regulation of the sound management of pesticides and other chemicals throughout their life-cycle, as a preventive measure to avoid accumulation of obsolete chemicals;

2. INVITES all relevant stakeholders, including Member States, regional economic integration organizations, bodies in the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations including regional, international and national nongovernmental organizations and foundations, waste-management companies, pesticide manufacturers, donors and the remaining international community:

(1) to promote sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals in order to minimize and, wherever possible, avoid adverse impacts to human health and the environment;

(2) to mobilize efforts and cooperate with other stakeholders on the implementation of national implementation plans and strategies, through local, regional and global networks among other means;

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

(3) to consider the synergies to be gained from sharing technical experience, expertise and capacity-building efforts among international instruments, conventions, regulations and processes;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to support the development of appropriate and efficient strategies (at national, regional and international levels) for minimizing the risks of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals and thus promote the relevant WHO policy goals and practices;

(2) to enhance WHO's capacity to foster the strategies mentioned in subparagraph 3(1) above;

(3) to facilitate implementation of the strategies on sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals with a view to reducing inequities in health and securing an unpolluted living environment;

(4) to work with UNEP, in connection with the WHO/UNEP Health Environment Linkages Initiative and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as well as with UNDP, FAO, the World Bank and other appropriate institutions in assisting Member States to implement their national strategies and existing guidance, for instance under the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal¹ and strategies for sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals at the global level;

(5) to include obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals among WHO's priorities in order to reduce and prevent risks to human health and the environment from their adverse effects and to support their safe disposal;

(6) to ensure full support of WHO to the activities of the Secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;

(7) to support the ongoing joint efforts of FAO and WHO in capacity building of Member States in the sound management of pesticides;

¹ Technical guidelines on the safe disposal of obsolete pesticides
(<http://www.basel.int/meetings/sbc/workdoc/techdocs.html>):

- Updated general technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with persistent organic pollutants,
- Technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with 1,1,1-trichloro-2,2-bis(4-chlorophenyl)ethane (DDT),
- Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with the pesticides aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), mirex or toxaphene or with HCB as an industrial chemical.

(8) to report to the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board, on progress in implementing this resolution.

Eighth plenary meeting, 21 May 2010
A63/VR/8

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