The first International Conference on the primary prevention of cancer through environmental and occupational interventions will be held in Asturias, Spain, 17-18 March 2011. The conference aims to strengthen the ability of Member States to address the environmental and occupational determinants of cancer, and to further engage the public health and scientific communities, and the civil society.

Cancer is the second highest cause of death worldwide, causing 12.7 millions new cases and 7.6 million deaths in 2008. Currently, 63% of all cancer deaths are reported from low- and middle-income countries and this figure is predicted to increase. Roughly 19 per cent of all cancers are estimated to be attributable to the environment, including work settings. Environmental and occupational interventions are key for reducing the incidence of cancer. Decreasing exposure to carcinogens can be cost-effective and contributes to the overall well-being of communities.

The two-day conference will review key policy options and interventions to reduce environmental and occupational exposures, and to promote innovative public health approaches, including those involving civil society. Furthermore there will be a "Call to Action" to strengthen primary prevention of environmental and occupational cancers within the framework of comprehensive cancer control programmes.

The Conference is organized by the World Health Organization and hosted by the Government of Spain and the Regional Government of Asturias. It will bring together public health scientists and epidemiologists, health promotion and behavioural specialists, policy-makers and government representatives, as well as representatives of civil society, NGOs and advocacy groups, trade unions, private sector, professional associations and cancer networks, including patient groups.