UN declares access to clean water and sanitation is a human right

Safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights, the General Assembly declared, voicing deep concern that almost 900 million people worldwide do not have access to clean water.

The 192-member Assembly also called on United Nations Member States and international organizations to offer funding, technology and other resources to help poorer countries scale up their efforts to provide clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for everyone. The Assembly resolution received 122 votes in favour and zero votes against, while 41 countries abstained from voting.

The text of the resolution expresses deep concern that an estimated 884 million people lack access to safe drinking water and a total of more than 2.6 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation. Studies also indicate about 1.5 million children under the age of five die each year and 443 million school days are lost because of water- and sanitation-related diseases.

CHILDREN’S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS

Press Releases
Environmental Degradation Plagues Haiti Earthquake Recovery Over six months since the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti, severe deforestation and the uncontrolled dumping of debris are among the complex environmental issues the UNEP is helping to address, UNEP (21/07/2010)

Climate Change in Kenya: Focus on Children UNICEF UK and UNICEF Kenya have produced this case study report to highlight the specific challenges for children related to climate change in Kenya; bringing climate models to life with stories from children in different regions. The study provides examples of how UNICEF can support children in Kenya to adapt to and reduce the impact of climate change, UNICEF (20/07/2010)

Haiti six months after the quake: risks, support and opportunities impact the lives of children in Haiti Six months after the strongest earthquake to hit Haiti in 200 years, the challenges to meet the needs of more than 800,000 affected children and their families remain daunting, UNICEF (12/07/2010)

Key tools to improve education in emergencies UNICEF and partners announce the minimum standards for education to help the 25 million
Air Pollution

Airborne Endotoxin Concentrations in Homes Burning Biomass Fuel

About half of the world’s population is exposed to smoke from burning biomass fuels at home, and the health burdens of this exposure have been well described. Burning unprocessed biological material such as wood and dried animal dung may also produce high concentrations of endotoxin. The authors found high levels of endotoxin in homes burning wood, dried animal dung, charcoal, or crop residues in Nepal and Malawi. The airborne endotoxin concentrations in homes burning biomass fuels are orders of magnitude higher than those found in homes in developed countries where endotoxin exposure has been linked to respiratory illness in children, *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Childhood Incident Asthma and Traffic-Related Air Pollution at Home

Traffic-related air pollution has been associated with adverse cardiorespiratory effects, including increased asthma prevalence. The authors evaluated the relationship of new-onset asthma with traffic-related pollution near homes and schools. The authors report an increase in asthma risk with modeled traffic-related pollution exposure from roadways near homes and schools. Ambient NO2 was also associated with increased risk. The authors conclude that traffic-related pollution exposure at school and home may both contribute to the development of asthma, *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Chemicals

New Orleans before and after Hurricanes Katrina/Rita: A Quasi-Experiment of the Association between Soil Lead and Children's Blood Lead

Lead levels in both soil and children in countries and territories affected by conflict who are currently missing out on their right to primary education, UNICEF (7/07/2010).

Shared Learning in Aftermath of China Earthquake

A new publication from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reflects on two years of cooperation with the Chinese Government to address the environmental impacts of the devastating earthquake that struck the Sichuan Province on 12 May 2008, UNEP (7/07/2010).

International experts limit melamine levels in food

The maximum amount of melamine allowed in powdered infant formula is 1 mg/kg and the amount of the chemical allowed in other foods and animal feed is 2.5 mg/kg, according to new rulings from the United Nations’ food standards body, Codex Alimentarius Commission, WHO (6/07/2010).

Overview of health considerations within National Adaptation Programmes of Action for climate change in least developed countries and small island states

This report reviews health considerations within NAPAs, focusing on three main aspects: identified health impacts; adaptation needs and proposed adaptation actions; and the implementation framework. It concludes that, with few exceptions, the current consideration of public health interventions in NAPAs is unlikely to support resilience processes and protect public health from the negative effects of climate change, WHO (10/06/2010).

In the Media

Can secondhand smoke hurt kids’ grades?

Children and teenagers exposed to secondhand smoke at home may get poorer grades than their peers from smoke-free homes, Reuters.
declined dramatically after hurricanes twice flooded New Orleans in 2005. The authors propose that the flooding altered the soil lead conditions, thereby lowering children's exposure to the neurotoxin. In almost all of the neighborhoods tested, soil lead levels fell by almost 50 percent to well below federal safety standards. At the same time, children's blood lead levels decreased more than 30 percent, *Environmental Science and Technology*  

**Dust from U.K. Primary School Classrooms and Daycare Centers: The Significance of Dust As a Pathway of Exposure of Young U.K. Children to Brominated Flame Retardants and Polychlorinated Biphenyls** Children are likely receiving significant exposure to toxic flame retardant chemicals and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in daycare centers and schoolrooms in the United Kingdom. While chemical levels in dust from U.K. homes and cars are known, this is the first study to measure and evaluate exposures in early childhood classrooms – another place where children spend time. These results aid in understanding sources of exposures and increase the concern over indoor exposures and their affects on children’s health, *Environmental Science and Technology*  

**Relationship between Environmental Phthalate Exposure and the Intelligence of School-Age Children** Concern over phthalates has emerged because of their potential toxicity to humans, especially children. The authors investigated the relationship between urinary concentrations of phthalate metabolites and children’s intellectual functioning. The authors conclude that there is an inverse relationship between phthalate metabolites and IQ scores, *Environmental Health Perspectives*  

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*Damp house linked to kids’ risk of nasal allergies* Children who live in damp, water-damaged homes may be more likely than other kids to develop nasal allergies, Reuters (29/07/2010)  

**84 children detected with lead poisoning in Yunnan** Excessive lead was found in the blood of 84 children in Heqing county of Southwest China’s Yunnan province, China Daily (26/07/2010)  

**Toxic legacy of US assault on Fallujah ‘worse than Hiroshima’** The shocking rates of infant mortality and cancer in Iraqi city raise new questions about battle, The Independent (24/07/2010)  

**Swimming pool disinfectants linked to cancer** Swimming pools can give you cancer, because disinfectants in the water react with sunscreen, sweat, and skin to form a toxic cocktail of chemicals, The Telegraph (22/07/2010)  

**China still facing ‘grave’ food risks** Experts have warned that new rules in China aimed at safeguarding the country’s food quality in the wake of the contaminated milk scandal that killed six infants in 2008 are only a framework on which to try to improve standards, The National (22/07/2010)  

**Some caffeine okay during pregnancy: obstetricians** A cup of coffee a day during...
**Water And Sanitation**

**Arsenic Inhibits Myogenic Differentiation and Muscle Regeneration** Exposure to inorganic arsenic (As), a widely recognized toxicant and carcinogen, has been associated with developmental and reproductive toxicity. Offspring of women exposed to high concentrations of As in drinking water have been reported to have increased incidence of low birth weight. The authors hypothesized that associations may be related to effects of As on skeletal myogenic differentiation and report that submicromolar concentrations of As$_2$O$_3$ inhibited myogenic differentiation in vitro in a dose-dependent manner without effects on cell viability. As$_2$O$_3$ also decreased phosphorylation of Akt and p70s6k proteins in a dose-dependent manner during myogenic differentiation, *Environmental Health Perspectives*

**Reproductive Health**

**Investigation of Relationships between Urinary Biomarkers of Phytoestrogens, Phthalates, and Phenols and Pubertal Stages in Girls** Hormonally active environmental agents may alter the course of pubertal development in girls, which is controlled by endogenous steroids and gonadotropins. The authors investigated associations of concurrent exposures from three chemical classes phenols, phthalates, and phytoestrogens with pubertal stages in a multiethnic longitudinal study of 1,151 girls from three regions of the United States; participants were 6–8 years of age at enrollment. The authors conclude that weak hormonally active xenobiotic agents had small associations with pubertal development, mainly among those agents detected at the highest concentrations, *Environmental Health Perspectives*

**Genes’ role in autism a complicated connection** Though scientists know genetic factors play a part in the array of autism disorders, the vast number of genes involved, plus possible environmental considerations, make narrowing the cause a vastly difficult goal, *Los Angeles Times* (21/07/2010)

**The right to water** Recognising water as a human right is critical, but it is not an instant ‘silver bullet’ solution. It must be enshrined in national laws, *Deccan Herald* (21/07/2010)

**WA farmers using EU banned pesticides** DOZENS of hazardous pesticides, which are banned in other countries, are used on WA farms, *Perth Now* (19/07/2010)

**Nigeria: Nation Suffers Acute Lead-Poisoning Outbreak** The Nigerian government is trying to cope with an outbreak of lead poisoning which has killed over 200 people in Zamfara State, *All Africa* (17/07/2010)

**Vatican masts blamed for causing cancer in children** Radio masts operated by the Vatican’s radio station are causing cancer in children, a medical expert has told a Rome court – resulting in six officials of the station being investigated for manslaughter, *Independent* (15/07/2010)

**China lowers dairy protein levels to curb melamine** China has lowered dairy plants' required protein levels for raw milk as a way of discouraging farmers from adding the industrial chemical melamine to bolster protein-test readings, health ministry officials, *China Daily*

**Pregnancy probably won’t increase a woman’s risk of miscarriage or premature birth**, *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists* said today, *Reuters* (21/07/2010)
UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshop on Children’s Health and the Environment
Held immediately before the 26th International Congress of Pediatrics; 4 August 2010. Johannesburg, South Africa

The 8th Annual Conference on Children’s Health and the Environment
Healthy Homes, Healthy Schools
24 September 2010, Washington DC

Children First Symposium
Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child
1 October 2010, University of California, San Francisco

9th International Conference on Urban Health
27th-29th October 2010, New York

6th Conference Movement and Health and 2nd Conference of HEPA Europe
24th-26th November 2010, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Environmental Health Conference 2011
Resetting our Priorities
6-9 February 2011, Salvador, Brazil

6th World Environmental Education Congress
19 – 23 July 2011. Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Mercury poisoning, the dark side of Colombia’s gold boom
Colombia’s gold bonanza has a dark side, U.N. experts said on Tuesday: mercury poisoning spreading from miners to the population of a northwest state where they use mercury to extract the precious metal, U.N. experts, Reuters (13/07/2010)

Philip Morris Is Said to Benefit From Child Labor
One woman said children as young as 10 working in the fields developed red rashes on their stomachs and necks as they harvested tobacco for use in cigarettes made by Philip Morris, The New York Times (13/07/2010)

Mother’s diet, genes raise birth defect risk in mice
Mothers who eat a high fat diet before and during pregnancy may be putting their offspring at risk of birth defects, Reuters (6/07/2010)

A Promise of Cleaner Air
Editorial focuses on the promise of cleaner air in the USA, The New York Times (8/07/2010)

Anhui province suffers metal emissions
The environmental protection department of Anhui province announced on Friday that the province is suffering severe problems of heavy metal emissions, China Daily (5/07/2010)

Trees a 'low-cost' solution to air pollution and biodiversity loss in cities
Native woods and trees in urban areas, including gardens, provide haven for wildlife, reduce air pollution, surface run-off and flooding, Ecologist (2/07/2010)

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