International Conference on Chemicals Management

The third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-3) met from 17–21 September 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya. Over 400 delegates, representing 122 governments, 19 international organizations and 79 nongovernmental organizations and industry partners participated in the week-long conference to consider progress in achieving the “Sound Management of Chemicals” by 2020 goals, and related policy issues.

The conference adopted nine resolutions – three of which are most relevant to work and collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO):

- the Strategy to Strengthen Engagement of the Health Sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which will support implementation by governments of World Health Assembly Resolution 59.15 on SAICM;
- a resolution on lead paint, which noted the establishment by WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) of a Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint and expressed support for an international lead poisoning prevention day of action with initial focus on the elimination of lead paints;
- a resolution on endocrine-disrupting chemicals that invites Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) organizations to collaborate on awareness-raising activities.

A high-level dialogue on strengthening SAICM for more effective implementation was also convened. WHO urged Member States to take practical actions to address negative health impacts of hazardous chemicals, such as increasing access to poisons centre services; stopping the use of a small number of highly hazardous pesticides that contribute to poisoning in developing countries; implementing effective interventions on the WHO ten chemicals of major public health concern; and enhancing local actions for the prevention and management of chemical incidents, including through implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005). Click here for the full coverage or for further information.

Urgent action needed to reduce growing chemical hazards

Coordinated action by governments and industry is urgently needed to reduce the growing risks to human health and the environment posed by the unsustainable management of chemicals worldwide, according to a new report developed by UNEP in collaboration with WHO. The report Global chemicals outlook: Towards sound management of chemicals highlights the fact that risks are compounded by the steady shift in production, use and disposal of chemical products from developed countries to emerging and developing economies, where safeguards and regulations are often inadequate.

The report reveals that the estimated costs of poisonings from pesticides in sub-Saharan Africa now exceed the total annual overseas development aid given to the region for basic health services (excluding HIV). Between 2005 and 2020, the accumulated cost of illness and injury linked to pesticides in small-scale farming in sub-Saharan Africa could reach US$90 billion. Click here for the full report and press release.
Endocrine disrupters and child health

Endocrine disrupters and child health: possible developmental early effects of endocrine disrupters on child health presents a short summary of the current knowledge of the effects of endocrine disrupters on child health. The main focus is on congenital disorders, cryptorchidism and hypospadias, which have an endocrine connection, on thyroid hormone-related problems, and on puberty. There is ample evidence of endocrine disruption in wildlife, and the mechanisms of action of endocrine disrupters have been elucidated in animal experiments. However, there is limited understanding of the association of human disorders with exposure to endocrine disrupters. Emerging evidence suggests that many adult diseases have fetal origins, but the causes have remained unexplained. The report has been supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and was launched at a side-event during the Third International Conference on Chemicals Management.

The healthy development measurement tool

The Healthy Development Measurement Tool is a comprehensive set of evaluation and planning tools designed to introduce health considerations into urban development. For example, the Sustainable Communities Index (of the San Francisco Department of Public Health) tracks progress towards a healthy city, in terms of being livable, equitable and prosperous. The index includes over 100 performance indicators related to seven themes: Environment, Transportation, Community, Public Realm, Education, Housing and Economy. The city’s Department of Public Health uses the index to prioritize initiatives on social and environmental determinants of health. City planning, transportation, housing, and economic development agencies use the index in planning and development. Similarly, community groups use the index as an advocacy tool. The Department of Health now plans to transform the Index into an open data source for further applications. Learn more at: www.sustainablesf.org

World Environment Health Day: 26 September

26 September has been declared World Environmental Health Day, to be celebrated each year. The initiative was launched last year by the International Federation of Environmental Health. This year’s theme focuses on “Building for the future”, a broad goal to enable people and communities to use their imagination in addressing local issues. Read the announcement here or click here for more information.

Endocrine disrupters and child health

Global chemicals outlook: Towards sound management of chemicals

UV radiation and its effects on the skin and eyes

Excessive UV exposure results in a number of chronic skin changes:

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the skin: a malignant cancer, which generally progresses less rapidly than melanoma and is less likely to cause death.
- Basal cell carcinoma of the skin: a slow-growing skin cancer appearing predominantly in older people.

Photo-ageing: a loss of skin tightness and the development of solar keratoses.

For the full fact sheet click here or click here for more information.