



**Environment Committee Report
Report and Projections for This Coming Year
42nd Annual General Assembly
May 18, 2008**

*Peter Orris, MD, MPH
Chair*

2007-8 ACTIVITIES

A. Bringing g environmental issues to the international public health community:

1. Continued participation in the **International Activities of Health Care Without Harm** with emphasis during this past year on the development of joint United Nations Environmental Program/HCWH global educational campaign to promote reducing mercury use in the health care industry. This included meetings in Beijing with NGO activists from throughout the country, Johannesburg with health care professionals and environmental activists, and Mexico City at the National Pediatric Hospital.
2. The **GEF 7 Country Medical Waste Project** is still awaiting its go live date which is reported to be any day now. This includes projects in Argentina, India, Philippines, Latvia, Senegal, and Vietnam.
3. We began emailing occasional environmental developments with human health implications thought to be of interest to WFPHA member organizations and their environmental focal points. This activity was suspended for a while during the last year due to lack of administrative support. We have secured some funding for a project promoting the SAICM process and this has allowed us to recruit administrative help through Health Care Without Harm. Fatou Hann is based in Senegal working for Oxfam, HCWH, and WFPHA Environment Committee. We have therefore a rather large virtual office which, with emails, skype, and other technologies is working remarkably well. This has allowed us to begin again the emails on environmental topics and assures functioning for our committee. **We look forward to attempting regular communication amongst committee members during this next year and coordinating our efforts to a greater degree.** Fatou broadens our rather restricted language capabilities as well.
4. Presented a brief background review of Mercury toxicity and safer substitutes for health care at the **World Medical Association** Assembly in Copenhagen in October, 2007. We have begun to send materials to the national associations on mercury including the WHO background position piece and a speech by the President of the South African Medical Association on removing mercury from health care. We are working with the American Medical Association, the Japanese Medical Association and the Korean Medical Association to provide interventions on the environment and human rights at the

WMA General Assembly in Seoul in October, 2008 as well as a half day seminar on several current environmental topics.

5. Represented **WFPHA as an NGO focal point for the SAICM** (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management) Process of UNEP, WHO, IFCS, and other UN and international agencies. This process, through multiyear consensus building activity, seeks to develop a global approach to the safe handling of chemicals.
6. The issue of **DDT and its proper place in the control of Malaria** has continued to be one of great controversy during this past year within and without WHO. It has been particularly sharply discussed in several African countries and within the Stockholm convention process. This is a debate, for which we have had guiding policy since 1995, and have been actively involved in since before our Beijing Congress. This year has brought further calls for our advice and counsel as to the science and policy related this issue as the debate has become more complex and heated. We have continued to maintain the importance of local decision making, involving both public health and environmental agencies of government, as to the proper means to fight malaria in differing parts of the globe. In addition we have continued to emphasize the balanced WHO policy on this area that we had the privilege of contributing to.

We continue to advise the International POPs Elimination Network, the UNEP funded global coordinating structure of NGOs involved in Chemicals Policy issues, on this issue. We participated as well in a meeting of stakeholders in Geneva hosted by UNEP and WHO concerned with the development of a business plan to develop alternatives to DDT for Malaria control.

7. **SAICM Health Care NGO Educational Project:**

In 2006, governments and stakeholders adopted a new global policy and strategy called the *Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management* (SAICM).¹ The objective of this Strategic Approach is to change how chemicals are produced and used in order to minimize harmful effects on human health and the environment.

The SAICM was adopted by a consensus of Environment Ministers, Health Ministers and other delegates from more than one hundred governments participating in the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM), held in Dubai, February 2006. The Conference was organized by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) with active support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international agencies with chemicals-related programs.

Public health and environmental advocacy NGOs from all regions also participated in the ICCM and in the preparatory meetings leading up to it. Representatives of international trade union federations participated, as did trade associations representing chemical and pesticide manufacturing industries and metals and mining industries. In the end, all Conference participants joined with the representatives of governments and international agencies in approving the SAICM by consensus. The SAICM is not a legally-binding treaty. It does, however, constitute a global political commitment on the part of governments and others that recognizes health and environmental harms caused by chemical exposure and that pledges effective action to reform how chemicals are produced and used in order to minimize that harm.

The International POPs Elimination Network secured funding from Scandinavian, European, and UNEP to conduct an educational campaign over this next year to alert

Civil society to the activities and concepts of the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management consensus process. IPEN has asked WFPHA to participate in this activity and an MOU was signed between the organizations. **WFPHA's principal task in this project will be to bring the Common Statement developed to Health Care and Trade Union organizations along with educational materials and secure their support of this process. The Common Statement is attached to this report.**

B. Developing joint Occupational and Environmental health initiatives between WFPHA and Trade Unions

1. International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC):

We have continued to work closely with the Health Safety and Environment Office of the ITUC around a number of projects chief amongst them being the drive to secure a Global Ban on Asbestos. As you know we are joined by the International Commission on Occupational Health, the international professional association of physicians and nurses, and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment are participating in this effort as well.

In addition we have begun to work with the Confederation around issues related to SAICM and chemicals policy.

2. We attended both **WHO – Global Trade Union consultations** on the WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers Health. The first had 5 union confederations present and the last in April of this year had over 20 representatives of various secretariats and federations. The ICOH and WFPHA are the 2 non union NGOs invited to continue our participation in this activity by WHO and the unions.

3. **We have been asked to develop a more formal relationship both with the ITUC, ICOH, and the Public Health and Environment Branch of WHO but to this point have not had the time to pursue these MOUs but it remains on the agenda for this next year**

4. Sustainlabour

Helped with reviewing some educational materials produced in this last year and will participate in their UNEP funded global training program concerning hazardous chemicals in Geneva later this month. **Have facilitated a small minigrant for SAICM work with labor unions and will be working with SustainLabour and ITUC on this project over the next year.**

5. Health Care Waste Handlers Project

Have secured commitment from **WHO Public Health and Environment group and from the Union Federation Public Services International based in Geneva to jointly produce this training manual** during the next year (assuming funding availability). **Health Care Without Harm and WFPHA** will also be collaborating organizations assuming the final draft passes all the needed organizational reviews.

C. Additional Activities:

Through the work of Dr. Hatcher and Dr. Samir N. Banoob, the Chair of the APHA's International Health Section, **WFPHA accepted as an active member of GEO/GEOSS.** The Group on Earth Observations (or GEO) is coordinating international efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). This emerging public infrastructure is interconnecting a diverse and growing array of instruments and systems for monitoring and forecasting changes in the global environment. This "system of systems" supports policymakers, resource managers, science researchers and many

other experts and decision-makers. More information can be found at <http://earthobservations.org/>. **It is hoped that this area of activity will be developed in the next year and active involvement is sought amongst the national associations.**

Funding and Support:

These activities have been undertaken with the support of the Global Chemicals Policy Center of the Great Lakes Centers of Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. This past year's activities have again been facilitated by a grant from the Panta Rhea foundation in the US at \$15,000. More recently the SAICM activities have received \$25,000 in support from several Government and International Agency Donors

ATTACHMENT

NGO/CSO Global Common Statement on The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management¹

Recognizing that “fundamental changes are needed in the way that societies manage chemicals,”² Environment Ministers, Health Ministers and other delegates from over 100 governments together with representatives of civil society and the private sector declared in Dubai, February 6, 2006, that “the environment worldwide continues to suffer from air, water and land contamination, impairing the health and welfare of millions.”³ They adopted the *Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management* (SAICM), a global plan of action whose stated goal is: “to achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life-cycle so that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.”⁴ The SAICM addresses both agricultural and industrial chemicals; covers all stages of the chemical life-cycle of manufacture, use and disposal; and includes chemicals in products and in wastes.

We, (*Name of organization*), a civil society organization, join in this global effort to work for a future where exposure to toxic chemicals is no longer a source of harm.

We agree with the SAICM:

- On the need to take action to “prevent the adverse effects of chemicals on the health of children, pregnant women, fertile populations, the elderly, the poor, workers and other vulnerable groups and susceptible environments.”⁵
- On the need to “apply the precautionary approach”⁶ and “give priority consideration to the application of preventive measures such as pollution prevention.”⁷
- On the need to address the “lack of capacity for managing chemicals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, dependency on pesticides in agriculture, exposure of workers to harmful chemicals and concern about the long-term effects of chemicals on both human health and the environment.”⁸
- With the commitment to “promote and support the development and implementation of, and further innovation in, environmentally sound and safer alternatives, including cleaner production, informed substitution of chemicals of particular concern and non-chemical alternatives.”⁹
- On the need to promote “adequate transfer of cleaner and safer technology”¹⁰ and with a call to make available both “existing and new sources of financial support.”¹¹
- On the need to promote “capacity-building, education and training and information exchange on sound management of chemicals for all stakeholders.”¹²
- That “the sound management of chemicals is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and disease, the improvement of human health and the environment and the elevation and maintenance of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development.”¹³
- With the commitment to “promote and support meaningful and active participation by all sectors of civil society, particularly women, workers and indigenous communities, in regulatory and other decision-making processes that relate to chemical safety.”¹⁴
- With the commitment to facilitate access to “information and knowledge on chemicals throughout their life cycle, including the risks that they pose to human health and the environment.”¹⁵

We commit ourselves and call upon all stakeholders including governments, non governmental organizations, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations and others to work together to implement SAICM policies, and to reform domestic chemicals assessment and management laws, policies and practices to achieve the 2020 goal in all countries.

The NGO/CSO Global Common Statement on SAICM was developed by representatives of six NGO networks at a Planning Meeting held in Toronto, Canada, January 23-25, 2008 to launch a Global SAICM Outreach Campaign. These networks were: Health Care Without Harm (HCWH); the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN); International Society of Doctors for the Environment, (ISDE); Pesticides Action Network International (PAN); Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF); and the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA). It was agreed at the meeting that this statement would be presented for consideration and adoption to NGOs and CSOs in all regions of the world as part of a global campaign to secure more than one thousand NGO endorsements of this statement in at least 80 countries covering all regions of the world.

Notes:

1 The *Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management* (SAICM) comprises three core texts: *The Dubai Declaration*, which expresses the commitment to SAICM by Ministers, heads of delegation and representatives of civil society and the private sector; *The Overarching Policy Strategy*, which sets out the scope of SAICM, the needs it addresses and objectives; and *A Global Plan of Action*, which sets out proposed work areas and activities for implementation of the Strategic Approach. These texts can be found in all UN languages at:

<http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/SAICM%20texts/SAICM%20documents.htm>

2 SAICM Dubai Declaration paragraph 7

3 SAICM Dubai Declaration paragraph 5

4 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 13

5 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 7 (c)

6 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 14 (e)

7 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 14 (f)

8 SAICM Dubai Declaration paragraph 6

9 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 14 (j)

10 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 10 (b)

11 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 19

12 SAICM Global Plan of Action, Executive Summary, paragraph 8 (i)

13 SAICM Dubai Declaration paragraph 1

14 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 16 (g)

15 SAICM Dubai Declaration paragraph 21