

UNEP Chemicals-NGO Roundtable
Center for International Environmental Law
July 12, 2006

Featuring:

- Maged Younes, Head, UNEP Chemicals Branch
- David Ogden, Executive Coordinator, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants Secretariat

Glenn Wiser welcomed all of the participants to CIEL and introduced Maged Younes (MY) and David Ogden (DO). Mr. Younes became director of UNEP Chemicals in February 2006 and holds advanced degrees in biochemistry and physiological chemistry. Previously, he worked at WHO in the Division of Sustainable Development. Mr. Ogden is the Executive Director of the Stockholm Convention Secretariat, which he joined in 1997. He previously worked for the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Maged Younes – UNEP Chemicals

MY is working with a dedicated staff that is moving the chemicals agenda forward. He mentioned that he knew the NGOs were fully aware of the importance of treating chemicals issues on the international stage, given the global consequences of chemicals in terms of the environment and human health. He mentioned the work of UNEP Chemicals in 4 different areas:

1. SAICM

One of the main priorities for UNEP Chemicals at present is SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management). UNEP is focusing on the following:

- SAICM Secretariat, which UNEP provides jointly with the WHO;
- Set up of Regional Conferences to discuss regional strategies for implementing SAICM, the first one being held in Africa;
- Quick Start Program, which raises funds for specific SAICM projects;
- Trust Fund, which presently has between \$5 - \$7 million to implement projects at the request of governments and NGOs. Although UNEP has an advisory role in reviewing the projects, the funds are not to be used by UNEP directly, but on the ground, on the country level.

In general, SAICM can be considered a big umbrella under which would fall various incremental activities to improve chemicals management on the regional, sub-regional and country levels. There will be a plan in place by September of this year to elaborate a short term strategy from 2008 – 2011, and a longer term plan for 2011 – 2020, the deadline of the present SAICM mandate.

2. Technical Work

- industrial chemicals and by-products with an emphasis on the POPs (see the Stockholm Convention)
- pesticides, with an emphasis on DDT

3. Mercury and other heavy metals, in particular, lead and cadmium

The work on Mercury is a follow up to the global assessment which was done first in 2003 and then in 2005. The U.S. among others, including Canada, has earmarked funding to establish Mercury partnerships, in order to mitigate the effects of mercury on the country level. The NGOs in the U.S. are key in this kind of work, as they can share their experiences and eventually take the lead on proposing potential projects for funding.

In terms of lead and cadmium, it has not yet been determined that either of these would fall into the same category as mercury in terms of global transport. In fact, the evidence is not there. However, lead and cadmium are global problems, because there are problems with these 2 throughout the world, and lessons can be learned on how to mitigate their effects. There will be an expert meeting in September, but it is too early to say what the conclusions will be.

4. Capacity Building and Information Exchange

UNEP Chemicals will concentrate on building infrastructure in countries, rather than simply holding training sessions or workshops. For the results to be long-lasting, the efforts must be concentrated on the ground, on the local level.

Questions for Maged Younes

- **Kristin Schafer (Pesticide Action Network)** asked about the perception that WHO seemed to be backing away from alternatives to DDT in the treatment of malaria.
- **Glenn Wiser (CIEL)** mentioned that at Stockholm COP2 in Geneva someone from USAID confirmed that they would be advocating controlled use of DDT to combat malaria.

MY: Neither WHO nor USAID have a lack of commitment, but the fact remains that present alternatives to DDT for treating malaria have been largely ineffective (mosquitoes have developed a resistance to them). The Stockholm Convention does have an exception for emergency situations, such as was the case recently in Africa, when the use of DDT is permitted.

Nevertheless, an alternative method, IVM (Integrated Vector Management), is the preferred method of choice for environmentally sound chemicals management and should become more and more prevalent as progress is made on the research and development front.

- **Kathy Burns (Sciencecorps)** asked whether there is a useful role for NGOs providing support to developing countries to move them in a more progressive direction.

MY: NGOs should alert UNEP to issues they consider important and they should strengthen the dialogue. UNEP will be promoting reaching out to NGOs not just for information sharing, but to partner with them for implementation on the ground. He stressed the importance of working with partnerships between civil society and governments within the countries.

- **Michael Gregory (IPEN)** mentioned that the Stockholm Convention emphasizes elimination and prevention and that there is a concern that SAICM might weaken Stockholm's goals.

MY: The Stockholm Convention stands as is and SAICM can neither modify nor override any of its tenets. SAICM does not preclude the addition of any new POPs. SAICM should not be seen as an excuse to avoid developing more legally binding instruments, but rather as an opportunity to promote more cooperation on the ground in solving potential problems.

- **Dan Magraw (CIEL)** asked:
 - if during discussions of lead and cadmium the issue of trade had come up;
 - how MY sees the relations between IFCS and SAICM; and,
 - what the potential roles of FAO and ILO could be.

MY:

- *the problem of lead and cadmium is global in terms of trade and SAICM will focus on the illegal traffic of chemicals at a conference on lead and cadmium in Prague in November.*
- *there are several possibilities concerning the IFCS – SAICM relationship, but nothing has been decided:*
 - *IFCS could focus on the science (with a role similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and SAICM on the implementation;*
 - *there could be a merging of the 2 secretariats; in some way SAICM could be considered an evolution of the IFCS, but still has much to learn from them;*
 - *IFCS could disappear, but this would not be likely.*
- *Up until now, the FAO and ILO have not been very forward looking; they are on the SAICM review committee but have not been very active and need to do more.*

Hilary French (UNEP/Worldwatch) explained that UNEP and ILO collaborated on a Trade Union Assembly hosted at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi in February of this year that addressed labor and environment issues, including those related to chemicals. Here in North America, Cornell's School of Labor Relations convened a related meeting last April in New York, and may host a regional trade union assembly on labor and environment issues next spring.

- **Pep Fuller (CIEL Advisor)** hopes that:
 - the IFCS concept of involving various types of stakeholders at all different levels can be kept regardless of what happens between the 2 structures.
 - in terms of funding NGOs can structure projects on a multi-year basis, in order to tap into the Gates Foundation, for example (which already has a project on malaria). When we talk about the "judicial use of DDT", we forget that most developing countries do not have the resources for controlled use.
 - on the subject of lead, the 12 year-old OECD declaration can be revisited, even if it does not really have a compliance component.
 - with the ILO, we will look at accelerating the labeling for PIC and POPs.

MY: Agreed to all of the above!

To conclude, MY reiterated the need for UNEP Chemicals to concentrate on building infrastructure on the country level, and on involving both industry and NGOs to make it work.

David Ogden – Stockholm Convention and the POPs

DO reminded the participants that 10 years ago at the Manila POPs meeting, the governments couldn't agree and it took ICCA and Greenpeace to come up with a proposal that broke the deadlock.

Stockholm has entered into force in 128 countries, including India and China but excluding the U.S. and Russia. There have been 2 meetings of the Conference of the Parties (Uruguay in 2005 and Geneva in 2006) and there is an infrastructure in place. The workload is considerable as there will be 15-16 international meetings organized before the third Conference of the Parties in May, 2007 in Dakar.

DO mentioned the main areas of work of the Stockholm Convention:

1. DDT which is on a 2-year cycle of review

2. Best environmental practices for unintentional POPs production

Up until now, the needs of developing countries were not considered in best environmental practices, which mainly considered OECD country scenarios and not, for example, the problems of secondary aluminum production in Senegal. There will be a meeting to expand the concept on 4 – 9 December in Beijing.

3. Listing new chemicals

- The entire process takes from 4 – 6 years, with the next POPs Review Committee to be held 6-10 November in Geneva.
- 5 chemicals have passed the initial screening process and are at the risk profile stage; they may be up for consideration at the COP in May of 2009;
- Another 5 chemicals have just been suggested by countries to be considered for the first stage (initial screening) – and may also have completed the other steps in time to be considered for addition at the May 2009 COP.

4. Effectiveness evaluation of the Stockholm Convention

The above-mentioned exercise is designed to determine if the environment is better protected after 4 years of the POPs Convention. Obviously there are many gaps in the data, but the global monitoring network is being developed and the first guidelines are due to be developed by May, 2008. A working group will meet in October 2006 and early 2007 to discuss.

5. Non-Compliance Procedures

The set of non-compliance procedures are to be developed not as punitive measures but rather as opportunities to highlight which countries/regions need assistance in complying with the Stockholm Convention. The second meeting of the open-ended ad hoc working group to develop these procedures will be held from 25-27 April 2007 in Dakar, Senegal, the week before the third COP.

In fact the Stockholm Convention is working with CIEL on a project to review best practices of national legislation for implementation of the Stockholm Convention.

With regard to the upcoming meeting of the **COP of the Rotterdam Convention**, to take place in Geneva in October 2006, DO briefly mentioned that they will focus on noncompliance procedures, asbestos, and synergies. GW added that financial resources will also be an important issue to be considered by the COP.

Synergies

The last topic discussed was promoting synergies among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. DO and MY commented that the discussions on how to work together administratively were ongoing but that UNEP Chemicals and the different conventions were already coming up with concrete suggestions on how to cooperate programmatically, especially as they are all located together geographically in Geneva, thus facilitating communications.

- **Dan Magraw (CIEL)** mentioned that in synergy work there was a risk of synergies diluting resources, especially since the level and type of scientific expertise required was not necessarily the same for all 3 conventions. He asked what the timeline of such a plan would be.

DO and MY responded that the President of the Stockholm Convention COP2 (Nik Kiddle of New Zealand) would prepare in consultation with the Presidents and Secretariats of the Basel and Rotterdam Conventions an elements paper on promoting cooperation among the three secretariats that he plans to submit to the next meetings of the Rotterdam and Basel COPs to be held in October and November 2006 respectively. The President will complete his report following those meetings and submit it to a joint ad hoc working group composed of Party representatives of the three conventions, provided the Basel and Rotterdam COPs agree to the process. The group would meet sometime in 2007 and provide recommendations on enhancing cooperation among the secretariats to the next meetings that follow of the COPs of each convention.

Both Glenn Wiser and Tess Cieux thanked Mr. Younes, Mr. Ogden and the attendees for their participation. A report of the meeting will be circulated to all for comments once it has been sent to David and Maged for their approval.

Participants List:

Glenn Wiser	CIEL
Tess Cieux	UNEP
Hilary French	UNEP/Worldwatch
James Rochow	Trust for LPP
Robert Simon	ACC/ICCA
Daniel Magraw	CIEL
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