

## Summary of chemicals & wastes events

held at the UN Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals

23 – 27 March 2015, New York

During the week of the 23-27<sup>th</sup> of March 2015, a panel discussion and an informal breakfast dialogue on the subject of “**The Poisoned Poor: Why Safe Management of Chemicals and Wastes Matters for Sustainable Development**” were held on 24 and 25 March 2015 respectively. Both events were jointly organized by the Governments of Sweden and Uruguay, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP).

The events sought to gain support for better integration of sound management of chemicals and waste and pollution into the post 2015 development agenda, including in the format of technically rigorous indicators to monitor and measure progress of the SDGs and the Declaration. The event provided a platform to deliver key messages to the negotiating delegates and other stakeholders about the health and environmental impacts of chemicals and wastes and the broader pollution agenda, their implications for sustainable development, why they must be included in the SDGs, and how the progress is to be measured.

### **Panel discussion**

On 24 March, a panel discussion was held on the topic of “The Poisoned Poor: Why Safe Management of Chemicals and Wastes Matters for Sustainable Development.” High-level panelists discussed a variety of topics related to chemicals, pollution and waste. The panel was moderated by Mr. Pierre Quiblier, Senior Programme Officer, Chemicals Branch, United Nations Environment Programme.

Prior to the panel discussion, **Ms. Tatiana Terekhova**, Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, introduced the issue of the sound management of chemicals and wastes and how it has been integrated into the SDGs and its targets. She highlighted the targets, which are explicitly and implicitly referred to chemicals and wastes. She also pointed out that indicators on chemicals and waste provide an opportunity to address multiple targets and goals. Ms. Terekhova also underlined the importance of an integrated approach to sound chemicals management and expressed the view that one of the main requirements to achieve targets relevant to chemicals and wastes is the full implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and frameworks in the chemicals and wastes cluster.

**H.E. Jan Olsson**, Environment Ambassador, Ministry of Environment, Government of Sweden welcomed participants and presented from a developed country point of view the importance of dealing with chemicals and wastes issues, and the need for strong indicators to measure progress in the SDGs related to chemicals and wastes. He also emphasized that the prevention is less costly in the long-term than remediation and that economic incentives such as taxation provide effective means to discourage socially undesirable behaviors, including unsafe use of hazardous chemicals.

**H. E. Fernando Lugris**, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Uruguay presented a developing country perspective on the topic. He emphasized the importance of the issue as a problem of the South, one of human rights, vulnerable peoples, and of public health. He underscored the importance of receiving technical and financial resources from

the international community to help developing countries address their pollution, chemicals and wastes issues.

**Ms. Tatjana von Steiger**, Minister, Head for Humanitarian and Sustainable Development Affairs, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN focused her presentation on the issue of implementation as it pertains to the sound management of chemical wastes, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach. She provided a more in-depth perspective on the policy and legal regime in the chemicals and wastes cluster, and how the inclusion of chemicals and wastes issues in the SDGs could help with the enhanced implementation of the chemicals and wastes legally binding and voluntary instruments conventions, as well as vice versa. Ms von Steiger also emphasized that UNEP and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions should play an active role in the process of developing set of indicator framework.

**Mr. Jamil Ahmad**, Deputy-Director, New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme focused on UNEP's perspective and importance of dealing with chemicals and wastes issues. He spoke to the importance of achieving environmental sustainability in tandem with economic and human rights goals and emphasized the importance of developing multidimensional indicators that can support the monitoring of multiple, interrelated targets and goals.

Finally, **Mr. Richard Fuller**, President of Blacksmith Institute, Secretariat of the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) presented some on-the-ground examples of what pollution issues look like, how they impact local populations and successes to prevent and clean up pollution problems. Mr. Fuller also presented a feasible way to measure progress against Target 3.9 under the Health SDG as well.

A lively discussion followed surrounding the use of indicators for air pollution, as well as need to engage industry, and enforce the polluter pays principle. Present in the room were representatives from the Missions of Government of Sweden, Somalia, Spain, the Czech Republic, France, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Canada, Madagascar, Japan and Uruguay, as well as UNDP, the International Council of Chemicals Associations (ICCA), and several NGO representatives, including the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, the Global Parliamentary Services, the All Pakistan Women's Association, IGES, Global Ecovillage Network, Women's Environmental Program of Nigeria, ICC, International Presentation Association, Bioregional, Sister of Percy, Gray Panthers, Interplanetary Synthesis NGO.

The All Pakistan's Women's Association raised that point that clean-air standards can be used as metric of measuring pollution in the SDGs as a mechanism to measure overall pollution. Mr. Richard Fuller emphasized the importance of including multiple exposure pathways, including soil and water pollution. The American Council on Chemical Associations commended the discussion and spoke to the importance of sound chemical management to the development of the global economy. A question was raised about the extent to which those responsible for pollution are being held accountable for its remediation and for bearing the costs of prevention.

Ambassador Lugris concluded by restating the importance of seizing the present opportunity to raise the political awareness and will to act to mobilize the public and private sectors to help every country in the world to implement safer practices for the management of chemicals and wastes, with particular emphasis on the poor.

## **Breakfast Event**

On 25 March participants gathered for an informal discussion on pollution, chemicals and wastes issues relative to the SDGs. The topic was the same as the side event: “The Poisoned Poor: Why Safe Management of Chemicals and Wastes Matters for Sustainable Development.” At the breakfast, an informal setting preceded, setting the stage for an intimate and frank discussion on the importance of chemicals and wastes to the SDG agenda and need to capitalize on the existing political process to ensure it is included in a comprehensive manner in the SDGs and their indicators.

The event was moderated by **H.E. Ambassadors Jan Olsson, Sweden and Fernando Lugris, Uruguay**. Representatives attended from the Permanent Missions to the UN / Governments of Belgium, Denmark, France, Kenya, Japan, Sweden, and Switzerland as well as representatives from the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution, UNEP and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

**Ambassador Olsson** welcomed the group and briefly introduced the topic. **Ambassador Lugris** presented what the issues of pollution, chemicals, and wastes meant for developing countries, particularly the impacts on health, economic growth, sustainable development and the environment. He focused on the need for additional resources in low-and-middle-income countries to address pollution, and emphasized the importance of taking advantage of the current political atmosphere to strengthen existing policy and legal regimes for the management and regulation of chemicals, also using the wide network of Basel and Stockholm convention regional centers.

**H.E. Michael Gerber**, Ambassador, Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development and Head of Delegation, Government of Switzerland, then spoke about the existing Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention, the need to ensure their inclusion in the SDGs, and how the two are mutually supportive. **Ms. Kseniya Lovovsky**, Advisor, Environment and Natural Resources Global Practice, World Bank, then spoke about some examples in World Bank experience, including a before and after example of the impacts of pesticide pollution in a community of informal settlers in Albania, and how the situation was mitigated. She also focused on the importance of the issue to the World Bank. Increasingly, the World Bank is collecting data related to the impacts of pollution, and its prevention and remediation, on jobs. She cited an example from China where several factories were built to meet regulatory standards, creating thousands of new jobs.

An animated discussion ensued with GAHP announcing the formation of a Commission on Pollution, to do for chemicals and wastes what the Stern Report did for climate change. France expressed support for the proposed targets and emphasized the need to focus on key indicators that apply to many targets. Individual countries need capacity to develop their own indicators for pollution and other SDG targets. Denmark reminded the room that while some international regulatory structures are in place to produce and manage chemicals in ways that minimize adverse health and environmental impacts, to date only a small percentage of available chemicals are regulated and much work remains to be done.