

The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond

The Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on the role of the health sector in the sound management of chemicals;¹

Recalling resolution WHA59.15 (2006), in which the Health Assembly welcomed the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4–6 February 2006) with its overall objective 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”, as inspired by paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002);

Reaffirming its commitment to the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled “The future we want”,²

Further recalling paragraph 213 of the outcome document “The future we want”, which states that “[w]e reaffirm our aim to achieve, by 2020, the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous waste in ways that lead to minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, as set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation”;

Recalling also, paragraph 214 of “The future we want”, which calls for “the effective implementation and strengthening of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management as part of a robust, coherent, effective and efficient system for the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle”;

Noting the limited time remaining to make progress toward the 2020 goal, and the urgent need for practical action and technical cooperation within the health sector, as well as with other sectors;

Acknowledging that chemicals contribute significantly to the global economy, living standards and health but that unsound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle contributes

¹ Document A69/19.

² United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/288, Annex.

significantly to the global burden of disease, and that much of this burden is borne by developing countries;

Noting that annually 12.6 million deaths (22.7% of all deaths) and 596 million disability-adjusted life years (21.8% of all disease burden in disability-adjusted life years) are thought to be linked to modifiable environmental factors, including chemical exposures, and that in 2012 1.3 million deaths (2.3% of all deaths) and 43 million disability-adjusted life years (1.6% of all disease burden in disability-adjusted life years) were attributable to exposures to a number of selected chemicals;¹ noting also that, among these, addressing lead exposure would prevent 9.8% of intellectual disability, 4% of ischaemic heart disease and 4.6% of stroke in the population; and that unintentional poisonings killed an estimated 193 000 people in 2012, 85% in developing countries where such poisonings are strongly associated with excessive exposure to, and inappropriate use of, toxic chemicals; and recognizing that due to the complex nature of the issue, disease burden information is only available for a very small number of chemical exposures and that people are exposed to many more chemicals in their daily lives;

Concerned about acute, chronic and combined adverse effects that can result from exposure to chemicals and waste, and that the risks are often unequally distributed and can be more significant for some vulnerable populations, especially women, children, and, through them, future generations;

Underlining the need to address the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health to improve health outcomes and achieve sustainable development;

Underscoring the importance of protecting health and reducing health inequities, including by the reduction of adverse health impacts from chemicals and waste, by adopting health-in-all policies and whole-of-government approaches, as appropriate;

Recalling WHO's longstanding recognition of the importance of sound chemicals management for human health, the key role of WHO in providing leadership on the human health aspects of the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle, and the necessity of health sector participation in, and contribution to, these efforts as set out in resolution WHA59.15 (2006) on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; resolution WHA63.25 (2010) on improvement of health through safe and environmentally sound waste management; resolution WHA63.26 on improvement of health through sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals; resolution WHA67.11 (2014) on public health impacts of exposure to mercury and mercury compounds; and resolution WHA68.8 (2015) on health and the environment: addressing the health impact of air pollution;

Recalling further the health-related outcomes of the second, third and fourth sessions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, which drew attention to the need for greater involvement of the health sector and resulted in the adoption of a strategy for strengthening engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach,² which details the key roles and responsibilities of the health sector in sound chemicals management;

¹ Prüss-Ustün A, et al. Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the environmental burden of disease. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016 (http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/preventing-disease/en/, accessed 19 May 2016).

² See document SAICM/ICCM.3/24, Annex V for the strategy, and Annex I for resolution SAICM/ICCM.3/III/4.

Recalling also paragraph 1 of International Conference on Chemicals Management resolution IV/1, adopted by the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, which endorsed the overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal as a voluntary tool that will assist in the prioritization of efforts for the sound management of chemicals and waste as a contribution to the overall implementation of the Strategic Approach, and mindful of the invitation in paragraph 5 to “the organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and of the United Nations Environment Management Group that have not already done so to issue, where possible by 1 July 2016, a declaration signalling their commitment to promote the importance of the sound management of chemicals and waste both within and outside their organizations, including the actions planned within their own mandates to meet the 2020 goal”;

Acknowledging with appreciation WHO’s extensive activities in this regard, including, but not limited to, supporting countries to implement the International Health Regulations (2005) in relation to chemical incidents, the establishment in 2013 of the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network, participation in the development of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals Toolbox for Decision Making in Chemicals Management, joint leadership of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, and engagement with relevant chemicals- and waste-related multilateral environmental agreements;

Also acknowledging initiatives undertaken at the national and regional levels, and through other bodies of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, and the important contribution that these initiatives make to protecting health from hazardous chemicals and waste;

Recalling the relevant chemicals- and waste-related multilateral agreements, including, inter alia, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2004), the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (2004, revised 2008), the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1989) and the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013);

Concerned that, despite these efforts, more progress has to be made towards minimizing the significant adverse effects on human health that may be associated with chemicals and waste, and recognizing that there is an urgent need to address existing gaps between the capacities of different countries;

Recognizing the need for enhanced cooperation aimed at strengthening the capacities of developing countries for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes and promoting adequate transfer of cleaner and safer technology to those countries;

Emphasizing the importance of bringing into force the Minamata Convention on Mercury as soon as possible;

Welcoming the outcome of WHO’s survey of the priorities of the health sector towards achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management,¹ which builds on the Strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach;

Recognizing paragraph 1 of the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management (2006), which states 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

¹ Document SAICM/ICCM.4/INF/11.

health and the environment and the elevation and maintenance of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development”;

Welcoming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 3, target 3.9 (to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination by 2030), and further recognizing Goal 12, target 12.4 (to achieve, by 2020, the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks), as well as other goals and targets relevant to health aspects of chemicals and waste management, such as Goal 6, target 6.3, on the improvement of water quality;

Convinced that the achievement of sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle requires a multisectoral approach within which the health sector has a critical role in achieving the 2020 goal and in setting priorities for chemicals and waste for the post-2020 period;

Stressing the responsibility of industry to make available to stakeholders such data and information on health and environmental effects of chemicals as are needed safely to use chemicals and the products made from them;

Welcoming the integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and wastes developed by UNEP,¹ which is applicable to the Strategic Approach and underscores that the three components of an integrated approach, namely mainstreaming, industry involvement and dedicated external financing, are mutually reinforcing and are all important for the financing of the sound management of chemicals and waste at all levels;

Aware that strengthening of health systems and appropriately trained health workforce is a key factor for facilitating the health sector to more effectively contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste;

Aware also of the need to strengthen the role of the health sector so as to ensure its contribution to multisectoral efforts to meet the 2020 goal and beyond, and that this would be facilitated by the development of a road map outlining concrete actions for the health sector,

1. URGES Member States:²

- (1) to engage proactively, including by strengthening the role of the health sector, in actions to soundly manage chemicals and waste at the national, regional and international levels in order to minimize the risk of adverse health impacts of chemicals throughout their life cycle;
- (2) to develop and strengthen, as appropriate, multisectoral cooperation at the national, regional and international levels in order to minimize and prevent significant adverse impacts of chemicals and waste on health, including within the health sector itself;
- (3) to take account of the Strategic Approach’s overall orientation and guidance towards the 2020 goal, including the health sector priorities, as well as the strategy for strengthening

¹ Sound management of chemicals: UNEP’s contribution to the achievement of the 2020 goal (<http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/Portals/9/Mainstreaming/Sound%20Management%20of%20Chemicals/SoundManagementofChemicals.pdf>, accessed 19 May 2016).

²And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

engagement of the health sector, and consider Emerging Policy Issues and Other Issues of Concern,¹ and to take immediate action where possible and where appropriate to accelerate progress towards the 2020 goal;

(4) to encourage all relevant stakeholders of the health sector to participate in the Strategic Approach and to ensure appropriate linkages with their national and regional Strategic Approach focal points, and to participate in the reports on progress for the Strategic Approach;

(5) to strengthen individual, institutional and networking capacities at the national and regional levels to ensure successful implementation of the Strategic Approach;

(6) to encourage health sector participation in the intersessional process established through the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including in the third meeting of the Open Ended Working Group;

(7) to continue and, where feasible, increase support, including financial or in-kind scientific and logistic support to the WHO Secretariat's regional and global efforts on chemicals safety and waste management, as appropriate;

(8) to pursue additional initiatives aimed at mobilizing national and, as appropriate, international resources, including for the health sector, for the sound management of chemicals and waste;

(9) to strengthen international cooperation to address health impacts of chemicals and waste, including through facilitating transfer of expertise, technologies and scientific data to implement the Strategic Approach, as well as exchanging good practices;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to develop, in consultation with Member States,² bodies of the United Nations system, and other relevant stakeholders, a road map for the health sector at the national, regional and international levels towards achieving the 2020 goal and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the overall orientation and guidance of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, and the intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 established through the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, and building on WHO's existing relevant work, as well as the strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach, and with particular emphasis on the following areas:

(a) health sector participation in and support for the establishment and strengthening of relevant national legislative and regulatory frameworks;

¹ **Emerging policy issues:** lead in paint, chemicals in products, hazardous substances within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products, nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants; **Other issues of concern:** Perfluorinated chemicals and the transition to safer alternatives, and highly hazardous pesticides (http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=452&Itemid=685, accessed 20 May 2016).

²And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

- (b) supporting the establishment or strengthening of national, regional or international coordinating mechanisms, as appropriate for multisectoral cooperation, and in particular enhancing engagement of all relevant health sector stakeholders;
 - (c) strengthening communication and access to relevant, understandable and up-to-date information to increase interest in and awareness of the importance to health of the sound management of chemicals and waste, particularly for vulnerable populations, especially women, children, and through them, future generations;
 - (d) participating in bilateral, regional or international efforts to share knowledge and best practices for the sound management of chemicals, including the WHO Chemicals Risk Assessment Network;
 - (e) participating actively in ongoing work on the Strategic Approach's Emerging Policy Issues and Other Issues of Concern, as well as the intersessional process established through the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020;
 - (f) encouraging implementation of the strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach, including the review of the health sector's own role to the extent that it is a user of chemicals and a producer of hazardous waste;
 - (g) mainstreaming gender as a component in all policies, strategies and plans for the sound management of chemicals and waste, considering gender differences in exposure to and health effects of toxic chemicals, while ensuring participation of women as agents of change in policy and decision making; and
 - (h) strengthening efforts on implementation of the updated health sector priorities;
- (2) to build on and enhance implementation of actions pursuant to resolution WHA63.25 on improvement of health through safe and environmentally sound waste management, and to develop a report on the impacts of waste on health, the current work of WHO in this area, and possible further actions that the health sector, including WHO, could take to protect health;
 - (3) to continue to exercise and enhance the leading role of WHO in the Strategic Approach to foster the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle with the objective of minimizing and, where possible, preventing significant adverse effects on health;
 - (4) to support the strengthening of capacities at all levels for the production, availability and analysis of quality, accessible, timely, reliable and appropriately disaggregated data for the adequate measurement of progress towards Goal 3, target 3.9, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to improve, where appropriate, evidence-based data;
 - (5) to continue current efforts to engage the health sector in chemicals management and make progress in chemical safety in particular in the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005);

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- (6) to support Member States by providing technical support, including at the regional and country levels, for strengthening the role of the health sector towards meeting the 2020 goal, including by enhancing capacities at individual, institutional and networking levels and by dissemination of evidence-based best practices;
- (7) to support Member States to strengthen coordination for the health sector in responding to existing international efforts and, in so doing, avoid duplication;
- (8) to set aside adequate resources and personnel for the work of the Secretariat, in line with the Programme budget 2016–2017 and the Twelfth General Programme of Work, 2014–2019, and taking into account the recent call at the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the invitation conveyed at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly on support for the Strategic Approach; and to work in collaboration with the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to find means to increase that secretariat's capacity to support activities related to the health sector;
- (9) to present to the Seventieth World Health Assembly:
- (a) a road map outlining concrete actions to enhance health sector engagement towards meeting the 2020 goal and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as requested in operative subparagraph 2(1) above; and
 - (b) a progress report on the preparation of the report requested in operative subparagraph 2(2) above;
- (10) to update the road map according to the outcome of the intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Eighth plenary meeting, 28 May 2016
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