



BASEL CONVENTION
the world environmental
agreement on wastes



UNEP

Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood

Rationale

1. The theme of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention is Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood.
2. The Basel Convention was originally adopted to protect human health and the environment against the serious effects of mismanagement of hazardous and other wastes, in response to scandals involving uncontrolled waste dumping in Africa and elsewhere in the 1980s.
3. Harmful and potentially fatal exposure to hazardous and other wastes occurs following breaches of the two pillars of the Convention; a. through the illicit transport and dumping of hazardous and other wastes, b. through the improper management of hazardous and other wastes.
4. The protection of human health and livelihood is therefore at the core of the Basel Convention and the work carried out within its framework over the past two decades. This assertion is as true today as it was at the time of the negotiation of the Convention. While nobody would actively contest this, waste management today is not generally considered a priority topic at the national or international levels, and thus does not receive the political and financial support it clearly merits. By highlighting the contribution made under the Basel Convention to human health and livelihood, the High-Level Segment of COP 9 should firmly place the issue on the national and international agendas, and secure commitment for mainstreaming waste management into all relevant policies.
5. At the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed on eight measurable goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The MDGs provide a high-level framework for the improvement of livelihoods and life worldwide.
6. Environmentally sound waste management, and adherence to the Basel Convention, is an essential component for the protection of human health and livelihood, and the achievement of the following MDGs in particular: MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women, MDG 5: Improve maternal health, MDG 4: Reduce child mortality, MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability, MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development.
7. The aim of the theme of "Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood" is thus not to advocate or launch new activities under the Basel Convention, but to establish the close link of the Convention with the MDGs,

Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. *Principle 1 Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972*

by highlighting how environmentally sound waste management contributes in concrete ways to the sustainable development.

Did you know?

According to UN Water, more than 40 per cent of the world's population live without improved sanitation. Reducing half the proportion of people without access to improved sanitation by 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goal targets. Inadequate sanitation is a highly important issue around the world, as the mismanagement of waste leads to extensive health problems amongst communities and also threatens the ecological balance of the environment. The management of solid wastes, the collection and management of industrial waste products and the management of hazardous wastes are essential elements for consideration in improved sanitation (UN Water, Press Release January 1, 2008)

8. The theme of Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood was chosen to reaffirm the undeniable interdependence between the environmentally sound waste management of hazardous and other wastes and the achievement of sustainable development, especially for those who need it the most.
9. The Basel Convention must be understood as a key instrument in the attainment of global environmental sustainability. By highlighting the contribution made under the Basel Convention to human health and livelihood, the high-level segment of COP9 should raise the profile of the issue at all levels.

"Many countries have proved that rapid and large-scale progress towards the MDGs is possible. It takes place where strong government leadership, good policies that support private investment and productivity growth, and sound strategies for scaling up public investments are reinforced by adequate financial and technical support from the international community."

Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations.
Secretary-General's Remarks at the General Assembly Thematic Debate on the Millennium Development Goals, 1 April 2008

In 2007, WHO data showed that 13 million deaths worldwide could be prevented every year by making environments healthier. In some countries, more than one third of the disease burden could be prevented through environmental improvements.

In 23 countries worldwide, more than 10% of deaths are due to just two environmental risk factors: unsafe water, including poor sanitation and hygiene; and indoor air pollution due to solid fuel use for cooking. Around the world, children under five are the main victims and make up 74% of deaths due to diarrhoeal disease and lower respiratory infections.

Low income countries suffer the most from environmental health factors, losing about 20 times more healthy years of life per person per year than high income countries. However, the data show that no country is immune from the environmental impact on health. Even in countries with better environmental conditions, almost one sixth of the disease burden could be prevented.

Source: WHO press release "New country-by-country data show in detail the impact of environmental factors on health" 13 June 2007

The High-level Forum Discussion on Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood, Thursday 26 June 2008

Format

1. A discussion Forum will take place on the first day of the Basel Convention COP9 high-level segment on 26 June 2008 in Plenary.
2. A person of high international renown will be invited to give a keynote address on the interlinkage between waste management and human health and livelihood.
3. Following the key-note address, eminent speakers from Government, civil society and industry will make a ten-minute presentation on how their activities contribute to the achievement of the relevant MDG, in relation to the theme, in concrete terms. Speakers are invited based on their personal experience or involvement in making a significant contribution to the achievement of each of the MDGs through environmentally sound waste management.
4. A group discussion will follow.
5. The Forum will be chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP.

Expected outcome

1. The main outcome of the High-Level Segment should be a short "Bali Commitment on Human Health and Livelihood" establishing the theme of the Conference as a vector for sustainable development via the attainment of the relevant MDGs. The Bali Commitment should specifically enshrine the commitment to raise the profile of implementation of the Basel Convention at all levels contributes, and to mainstream environmentally sound waste management into all relevant national and international policies.
2. Another outcome could be a Summary of the Forum discussions presented by the Executive Director of UNEP.
3. The Bali Commitment and the Summary of the Forum discussions could provide a political tool for introducing the issue of environmentally sound waste management into the international health and development agendas, e.g. the next UNEP Governing Council, the forthcoming WHO-UNEP Conference on Health and Environment in Libreville and the OECD Ministerial Conference on Development in Accra.

Linkage between the Forum and the Bali Commitment

1. While the Forum speakers will highlight the contribution to achieving each MDG through concrete examples, the Bali Commitment should coach such contribution in policy terms. The aim of the Forum is therefore to highlight the message of "Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood" as a vector for sustainable development via the attainment of the relevant MDGs.

Some key hazardous substances and their effects on health

Arsenic

Used as an alloy in lead shot and electrical circuits, as a pesticide, and as a preservative for wood. Highly toxic and carcinogenic.

Asbestos

Once widely employed in construction primarily for insulation. Still used in gaskets, brakes, roofing and other materials. When inhaled can cause lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Cadmium

Used in batteries, pigments, metal coatings, and plastics. Exposure risks include workplace activities, cigarette smoke and contaminated foods. Damages the lungs, causes kidney disease, and irritates the digestive tract.

Chromium

Combines easily with other metals to form alloys such as stainless steel. Used as a rust-resistant coating on other metals, a pigment in paint, and in wood preservatives and liquids for tanning hides.

Clinical wastes

Hospitals must dispose of large quantities of syringes, medication baffles and other materials that can be infectious and spread pathogens and harmful micro-organisms.

Cyanide

A poison that in large doses can cause paralysis, convulsions and respiratory arrest. Chronic exposure to low doses can cause fatigue and weakness. Compressed hydrogen cyanide gas is used to exterminate rodents and insects on ships and to kill insects on trees.

Lead

Used in the production of batteries, ammunition, paints, metal products such as solder and pipes, and devices to shield X-rays. If ingested or inhaled can harm the nervous system, kidneys, and reproductive system.

Mercury

Used to produce chlorine gas, caustic soda, thermometers, dental fillings, and batteries. Exposure occurs through contaminated air, water and food and through dental and medical treatments. High levels may damage the brain, kidneys, and developing foetuses.

PCBs

Compounds used in industry as heat exchange fluids, in electric transformers and capacitors, and as additives in paint, carbonless copy paper, sealants and plastics. Pose risks to nervous systems, reproductive systems, immune systems, and livers.

POPs

Persistent organic pollutants are a class of chemicals and pesticides that persist for many years in the environment, are transported great distances from their point of release, bioaccumulate (thus threatening humans and animals at the top of the food chain), and cause a range of health effects.

Strong acids & alkalis

Highly corrosive liquids used in industry that can corrode metals and destroy tissues of living organisms.

Programme

The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Basel Convention, Bali, Indonesia

High-level Segment: World Forum on Waste Management
for Human Health and Livelihood

26 June 2008 – Room Nusantara (1st floor)

Morning Session

10.00 – Key-note address and opening ceremony

10.30 – Moderator's introduction to theme and Millennium Development Goals

10.45 – Moderator's introduction of the speakers and proceedings of the day

11.00 – Speakers' interventions

12.00 – Discussion open to the floor

Lunch break at 13.00

Afternoon Session

15.00 – Summary of morning session by moderator

15.30 – Speakers' interventions

16.30 – Discussion open to the floor

17.15 – Wrap up by moderator and conclusions



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