

Planet's leading chemicals and waste treaties launch reform of global environmental governance

Bali, Indonesia, 25 February 2010

25 February 2010, Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. Parties to the three leading United Nations treaties aimed at protecting human health and the environment from the potentially harmful effects of hazardous chemicals and wastes have adopted a ground breaking framework for the achievement of coordination and cooperation at all levels between the legally separate instruments. The framework is expected to provide Parties, the secretariats and key partner organizations with a mechanism that will strengthen the impact of the work of the three conventions at all levels.

The major reform in the environmental governance of chemicals and wastes was reached in a series of simultaneously staged meetings of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on 22 to 24 February 2010, in Bali, Indonesia. The meetings, which involved more than 500 delegates from more than one hundred forty governments, international and nongovernmental organizations, concluded with an agreement being reached on the opening day of the 11th Special Session of the Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (Governing Council / Global Forum).

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions are the world's three leading treaties promoting the sound management of hazardous chemicals and wastes. Calls for increased synergies amongst these three conventions were made some years ago as governments realized that insufficient cooperation and coordination at the global, regional and national levels were hindering the achievement of the sound management of chemicals throughout their full life cycle: from their production, use and trade, to their disposal.

The synergies process constitutes a unique development in the world of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. It reflects a strong collective commitment to evolve towards a common vision for change: capitalizing on commonalities, while fully respecting the legal autonomy of each convention; strengthening existing mechanisms, while at the same time making them more efficient; fostering a regional approach towards the implementation of activities as well as enhancing national and regional capacities required for Parties to develop a more sustainable approach towards the full implementation of the three conventions.

“Synergies’ is not a single goal that we will achieve and then are done with; synergies require our continued commitment to the process of coordination and cooperation to ensure tangible and sustainable results,” said Donald Cooper, Executive Secretary of the Stockholm Convention and Co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

“We have learned from this process is that it is indeed possible to break away from business as usual in the context of the international governance process. Our work has shown that we can do much more through cooperation and collaboration in ways that we did not think

were possible before,” said Katharina Kummer Peiry, Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention.

The UNEP Governing Council / Global Forum is the largest global gathering of environmental leaders to be staged in 2010. The reform of the international system of environmental governance will be taken up by the Governing Council/Global Forum during its deliberations on 26 February 2010.

Additional

The United Nations Body Burden Forum launched *Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes* in support of the chemicals and wastes conventions synergies process.

“Through this campaign we must ensure that information about dangerous and even deadly substances reaches the people that need it, so they can take steps not to poison themselves” said Peter Kenmore, Co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), speaking at the United Nations Body Burden Forum late Wednesday.

The *Safe Planet Campaign* was endorsed by celebrities from around the globe, including Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, Czech Zoologist Miroslav Bobek, and actors Ed Begley Jr. and Bryan Cranston. Begley and Cranston issued statements that they had agreed “to undergo a medical test that will reveal [their] own chemical ‘body burden’, a snap shot of our exposure to hazardous chemicals and wastes” during the event.

“Many chemicals once made for good purposes are turning up in places they were never meant to go. Dangerous pesticides that have already been banned but remain in international trade, harmful metals such as lead and mercury, and many more, place our health at risk” said Cranston, in a prepared statement read out at the Forum.

“I believe that the Safe Planet Campaign will bring concrete solutions to the challenge of chemicals and waste management to every corner of the planet,” said Dr. Miroslav Bobek, the director of the Prague Zoo.

The two Hollywood actors and directors were joined in pledging to release publicly the results of their chemical body burden by Russian scientist Dr. Olga Speranskaya and Ms. Yuyun Ismawati of Indonesia, recipients of the Goldman Environment Prize 2009 for Europe and Islands and Island States, respectively; Dr. Peter Kenmore, Co-Executive Director of the Rotterdam Convention (FAO), and Jeremy Wates, secretary to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

Messages of support released at the United Nations Body Burden Forum, 24 Feb. 2010, Bali, Indonesia

Ed Begley, Jr., actor and activist (Hollywood, California USA)



"Last year, American researchers released the most comprehensive study of human exposure to environmental chemicals ever conducted on our planet."

"Two thousand four hundred U.S. citizens participated in the sampling of America's chemical 'body burden', a snapshot of our exposure to hazardous chemicals and toxic wastes."

"The harmful chemicals found in our bodies are among the most dangerous known to life on the planet: dioxins, mercury, DDT, and a host of other toxic pollutants that travel far and bury deep in our bodies."

"Among the more than 200 harmful chemicals researchers found in the American population, many are produced unintentionally as by-products of our unsustainable way of life."

"Others have been banned from trade and commerce, or severely restricted, under three global U.N. agreements - the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions - but continue to find their way onto markets around the globe."

"These harmful substances do not belong in us."

"We can stop the hazardous chemicals and wastes flowing into our lives with awareness and action."

“To tackle the growing toxic threat, I support *Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes*.”

“I have agreed to undergo a medical test that will reveal my own chemical body burden. When the results are in, I will make them public.”

“Please join me and the **Safe Planet Campaign** to keep the planet safe from hazardous chemicals and wastes.”

Miroslav Bobek, Ph.D., zoologist, children's author and director of Prague Zoo (Prague, Czech Republic)



“Our duty is to take responsibility for all that we do. Among all else, we also must care for chemicals, which place an increasing burden on the environment.”

“Prague Zoo joins the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in this campaign to raise awareness of the global problem of hazardous chemicals and wastes. Together we are exploring ways to manage soundly electronic waste collected by our Zoo, to show the way to safely recycle electronic products and at the same moment to raise money to support protection of gorillas in the wild.”

“This is why I support *Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes*.

I believe that the Safe Planet Campaign will bring concrete solutions to the challenge of chemicals and waste management to every corner of the planet.

We can act today to make this a Safe Planet for all living creatures.”

Yuyun Ismawati, environmental engineer and civic activist (Bali, Indonesia)



"In our modern world and lifestyle, we have become more and more dependent on modern hi-tech equipments, gadgets and home appliances. Some of them are good quality and are long lasting but many are not and many products have built in obsolescence. Most of these hi-tech consumer products contain a cocktail of chemicals. Without knowing the contents of chemicals substances and its implications to our family's health, we might make a wrong decision about which products to buy."

"As soon as the products, equipment and electronics no longer serve their purposes, they become waste. With the waste, the chemicals they contain remain. They continue to exist in our homes, blood and bodies although we are no longer use the equipment. Most of the waste will end up in landfills, which then host a more complex and toxic legacy for the next generations."

"Recycling is a positive step, but it will not remove the toxic chemicals from the waste. Toxics removal at the source, green design and clean technologies are options that manufacturers must make available to consumers, to empower all of us to make the right, safe and environmentally sound choice for ourselves, our families and our communities."

"I agree to participate in Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes."

"I have agreed to undergo a medical test that will reveal my own chemical "body burden". When the results are in, I will make them public, to raise awareness of the global problem of hazardous chemicals and wastes."

"Let's make this a Safe Planet for all living beings."

Ryuichi Sakamoto, musician and composer



Message to Safe Planet

“Some years ago, I imagined my youngest son at my age and wondered what the world would be like then. It was a very frightening vision. I felt I needed to take more responsibility as a citizen of this world and future generations, and do something that could make a difference. I decided to devote more time to environmental concerns and focused on being useful to the world; turning “ego into eco.”

“I began by launching a project called “Zero Landmines,” in which we made an effort to get rid of the remaining hazardous weapons buried in the earth. Later on, I started another project called “more trees,” which aims to protect existing forests and plant new ones; a natural way of balancing human carbon emissions.”

“As I got ready to begin my new world tour, I realized as a musician, I could do even more. I performed my music around the world using sustainable and ecologically sound methods. I launched a tour that leaves no carbon footprint. Green electricity is used at each performance and all carbon dioxide emissions are offset throughout the tour.”

“The global threats to the environment are vast and everyone needs to take part in reducing these threats. I am proud to support *Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes*. Chemicals place a great burden on the environment and we all need to contribute whatever we can individually and collectively for a better, safer planet to sustain life while we still can.”

Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes

Honorary Co-Chairpersons

Nao Badu

Chairman and CEO, National Economic and Fiscal Commission (Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea)

Stine Lise Hattestad Bratsberg

Oslo, Norway

Supporters

Miroslav Bobek

Zoologist (Prague, Czech Republic)

Ed Begley, Jr.

Actor and activist (Hollywood, California)

Santiago Cárdenas Arroyo

Painter (Bogotá, Columbia)

Bryan Cranston

Actor and director (Los Angeles, California)

Yuyun Ismawati

Environmental engineer (Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia)

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Musician and composer (Tokyo, Japan)

Olga Speranskaya

Scientist and community organizer (Moscow, Russia)

Jeremy Wates

Farmer (West Cork, Ireland)

Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes global public awareness and outreach campaign of the Joint Services of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions was featured at the United Nations Body Burden Forum, on Wednesday, 24 February 2010/

The United Nations Body Burden Forum presented announcements by well-known public figures from the Arts, Culture, Sciences and World of Sports who have pledged to undergo

bio-monitoring testing to reveal their chemical body burden. Human bio-monitoring is a method of assessing the toxic chemical burden increasingly borne by the life of the planet.

“The detection of 212 separate chemical substances including many persistent organic pollutants that are banned or strictly controlled by our conventions, in a survey of 2,400 randomly selected members of the American population, illustrates the threat we face,” said Dr. Fatoumata Ouane, a UNEP senior scientist working for the Stockholm Convention. “Seventy-five of these chemicals were measured for the first time. Many are POPs that are travelers without passports and do not respect international borders.”¹

Stine Lise Hattestad Bratsberg, Norwegian Olympic Gold Medalist, and Dr. Nao Badu, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the National Economic and Fiscal Commission, Papua New Guinea serve as Honorary Co-Chairs of the Safe Planet: the United Nations Campaign for Responsibility on Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes.

Further information on the simultaneous extraordinary conferences of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants can be found on the conferences website: <http://excops.unep.ch/> and by contacting SafePlanet@unep.org.

Contact

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Fourth National Exposure Report* (December 2009).