

“We cannot afford to miss out on the links of chemicals and wastes to poverty, health, biodiversity, climate change, gender and development”

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development: an opportunity for enhanced coherence

The objectives of sustainable development – improving people’s health, ending poverty, and protecting the planet – cannot be obtained without also achieving sound chemicals management. Sound management of chemicals throughout their lifecycle is essential not only to avoid significant risks to human health and ecosystems along with their associated economic costs, but also to maximize the full benefits of their contribution to human well-being and achieve sustainable development objectives.

The 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets include several targets directly related to chemicals and wastes (3.9, 6.3 and 12.4). In addition to the direct links, sound chemicals management is also central to achieve many of the other SDGs, as suggested below¹. The SDGs can therefore provide a holistic and integrated framework for enhanced coherence and a cross-sectoral approach to sound chemicals management.

¹ Adapted from: UNDP, *Chemicals and Waste Management for Sustainable Development*, April 2015 (http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/chemicals_management/chemicals-and-waste-management-for-sustainable-development/)



SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

When chemicals are mismanaged, the poorest communities face the highest risk due to their occupations, living conditions and limited access to uncontaminated food and water.

SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

The sound use and application of fertilizers and pesticides can boost the productivity of agricultural lands on which poor communities depend. However, when poorly managed, agricultural chemicals can pose significant risks to human health, cause pollution and land degradation, impacting livelihoods in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries.

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Chemical products such as medicines, insecticides, repellants and larvicides help prevent millions of deaths each year. At the same time, 4.9 million deaths (8.3% of the global total) and 86 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years (5.7% of the global total) are attributable to pollution (WHO, 2004).

SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

When hazardous chemicals are applied in products and in productive sectors, their use as well as the dumping of products that contain them, can result in the release of hazardous chemicals, cause pollution that severely impacts water quality.

SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Sound management of chemicals and wastes plays a critical role in holistic cleaner production approaches that introduce environmentally sound technologies and use of less or non-harmful chemicals. Sustainable industrialization and sound chemicals management can boost innovation, open up opportunities to new markets and value chains, and increase employment opportunities.

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Sound management of chemicals and wastes is key to helping cities become more sustainable, through the use of less harmful products and construction materials, improved waste

management practices and services, and greening industry to reduce emissions that impact air and water quality.

SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

By redesigning products and production processes, phasing out toxic materials, minimizing waste generation and optimizing resource use through recycling and reuse, sound management of chemicals and wastes plays a key role in enabling countries to decouple growth from resource use and pollution.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Sound management of chemicals and wastes presents several opportunities for GHG emission reductions, through resource recovery and recycling, waste to energy processes, optimizing waste transportation, use of newer, more-efficient transformers and condensers to replace those containing PCBs, and composting, among many others.

SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Run-off and releases from sectors such as mining, agriculture and industry can cause nutrient pollution and contamination of the oceans’ food chain. Improving the management and disposal of wastes and reducing the release of harmful chemicals is an important intervention in protecting the world’s oceans, seas and marine resources.

SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Production, use and handling of chemicals and waste, if not properly managed, can cause severe environmental degradation, contamination of water, soil, air, flora and fauna and disrupt ecosystems.



The **Environment Management Group (EMG)** is a United Nations System-wide coordination body. It furthers inter-agency cooperation in support of the implementation of the international environmental and human settlement agenda. Its Membership consists of the specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations, including the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. It is chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and supported by a secretariat provided by UNEP.

In response to calls for enhanced cooperation in the UN system to implement chemicals-related agreements and instruments, the EMG established in 2014 an *ad hoc* and time-limited **Issue Management Group (IMG) on the Sound Management of Chemicals** to raise the priority given to chemicals management in the broader UN system, promote integration of chemicals management issues in the context of economic and social development planning, and ensure additional synergies between UN organizations in supporting countries in activities to achieve the 2020 goal on chemicals and waste management.

In 2015, the IMG published the report “*United Nations and the Sound management of Chemicals: Coordinating delivery for member states and sustainable development*” which signals the importance of sound chemicals management to the broader sustainable development agenda, showcases what has already been accomplished, and indicates how the UN system can further assist Member States in achieving sound chemicals management in the context of sustainable development.

The report is available at www.unemg.org



United Nations and Sound Chemicals Management

Coordinating delivery for Member States and sustainable development

More than 30 UN and related agencies

More than 30 international and regional agreements

Supporting sound chemicals and waste management as a key element of sustainable development

Creating linkages across sectors

Chemicals are a major part of our daily lives, are used in a wide variety of products, and play an important role in the world economy. Sound chemicals management has an impact on areas such as pollution and emissions control, clean drinking water, improving livelihoods and work conditions, economic efficiency, sustainable agriculture, and protection of natural resources and species; it can also yield significant benefits in terms of economic development (including the need to transition to a green economy), poverty reduction, human health, and environmental quality.

Support from the UN System and beyond

More than 30 UN and Related Agencies Active in Sound Chemicals and Waste Management

A wide variety of 32 UN and related agencies are actively involved in the efforts to strengthen sound chemicals management across a diverse range of sectors, both directly and indirectly. Many act as hosts for or contribute to assist implementation of the agreements and initiatives listed below, and many of them also are active working at the country level to support governments and relevant stakeholders to implement international commitments and national priorities. The broad spectrum of UN and other agencies involved shows that chemicals and waste management is a cross-cutting topic that requires multi-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder participation to be efficient, coherent and effective.

The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC)

The **IOMC** was established in 1995 and currently consists of 9 organizations: **FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, WHO, World Bank, and OECD**. The objective of the IOMC is to strengthen international cooperation in the field of chemicals and to increase the effectiveness of the organisations' international chemicals programmes. It promotes coordination of policies and activities, pursued jointly or separately, to achieve the sound management of chemicals in relation to human health and the environment.

www.iomc.info



“The members of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) have been working collectively since January 2014 to raise the priority given to chemicals management in the UN system, promote integration of chemicals management issues in the broader context of economic and social development planning, and ensure additional synergies between the UN organizations in supporting countries in activities to achieve the 2020 goal.”

Achim Steiner
Chair of the Environment Management Group (EMG)

While being multi-sectoral, sound chemicals management is also “multi-level”: activities take place not only at the international level, but at regional, national, and sub-national levels as well. Many UN-organizations work at multiple levels, highlighting the need for synergies at all levels.

Environment, Energy, and Transport	Health and Sanitation	Agriculture and Labour	Development and Trade	Training and Research	Convention Secretariats and UN Coordination/Operations	Funding Mechanisms
UNEP UNECE UNESCAP UNECLAC UNECA UNESCWA IMO IAEA UNODC OCHA UPU	WHO UNICEF UNRWA ICRC	FAO ILO	UNIDO UNDP UNCTAD WTO World Bank OECD APEC	UNITAR UNICRI UNU	BRS Secretariat DSD DPKO/DFS UNOPS CBD Secretariat OPCW	GEF



More than 30 Key International Agreements addressing chemicals and wastes concerns

A wide and diverse range of international and regional processes, agreements, and initiatives, many of which are found or housed within the UN system, have been developed across multiple sectors to address specific chemicals and wastes concerns.

Year of entry into force where applicable	Key international processes, agreements, and initiatives for chemicals and waste management
1956	United Nations Recommendations on the Transports of Dangerous Goods*
1968	European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR)
1980	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)
1983	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)
1983	UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP)
1989	Montreal Protocol
1990	United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
1992	Basel Convention
1992	Regional Agreement on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes*
1993	ILO C170
1995	Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC)
1996	UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
1997	ILO C174
1997	Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
1997	UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context
1998	Bamako Convention
2000	OPRC-HNS Protocol*
2000	UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents
2001	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
2001	Waigani Convention
2002	Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)*
2004	Rotterdam Convention
2004	Stockholm Convention
2006	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)*
2007	International Health Regulations (IHR)
2008	European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN)
2009	Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships*
2009	UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
2013	Minamata Convention*
2013	International Code of Conduct**

* Adopted

** Approved by the FAO Conference in 2013 and recognized by the WHO Executive Board in 2014

Effective implementation of the chemicals-related multilateral agreements and strengthening chemicals management at all levels requires strong institutional mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between sectors. Finding ways to engage the collective capacity of the UN and related organisations in enhancing coherent management responses to sound chemicals management is therefore of crucial importance.



UN Photo/C McIlwaine

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