

The flow of materials is also a flow of chemicals

Lack of information on chemicals in products is an obstacle in achieving a greener economy

This folder summarises the main messages from a side event held 6 May 2010 at the 18th meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD18).

Find out more:

The presentations held at the side-event can be viewed at UNEP's webpage for the project initiated by SAICM: Chemicals in Products (CIP)
<http://www.chem.unep.ch/unepsaicm/cip>

Toxic substances in articles: The need for information.
Nordic Council of Ministers, Report: TemaNord 2008:596
<http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publications/2008-596>

KEMI
Swedish Chemicals Agency
www.kemikalieinspektionen.se


REGERINGSKANSLIET
Ministry of the Environment
Sweden

IGES
Institute for
Global Environmental
Strategies


UNEP



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Summary from CSD18 side event

This folder summarises the main messages from a side event held 6 May 2010 at the 18th meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD18). The event was arranged by the Government of Sweden in collaboration with the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies in Japan (IGES) and UNEP.

The flow of materials is also a flow of chemicals - lack of information on chemicals in products is an obstacle in achieving a greener economy

There is a growing understanding that chemicals in products such as toys, electronics and textiles can be a problem of global significance. Global solutions will be required to achieve sound management of chemicals in products.

This understanding has led to a SAICM* initiated project with the objective of promoting international cooperative action to increase stakeholders' access to information on chemicals in products throughout the life cycle. There are linkages between this emerging issue and the other emerging policy issues, such as electronic waste, lead in paint and nanotechnology.

The topic of the side event at CSD18 was to discuss the current lack of information on chemicals in products as one of the obstacles in achieving a more sustainable management of resources and reduced toxic risks.

* Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was adopted in 2006. Its overall objective is the achievement of sound management of chemicals globally by 2020. Resolutions for cooperative actions on certain emerging policy issues were adopted at SAICM's second international conference on chemicals management (ICCM2) in May 2009.

Main messages

1. Since chemicals are present in all products, the flow of materials in society is also a flow of chemicals. Information on the presence of chemicals in products during the whole life-cycle would make it possible to recycle more material and to a larger extent safely reuse it in other products.
2. The presence of chemicals in recycled material has to be sufficiently known by designers and producers of products, in order to ensure safe reuse. Products should not contain the most hazardous chemicals. Thus, information can be one of the keys to more sustainable production and consumption and lead to a greener economy.
3. Producers and retailers of products need information on chemicals in products to be able to comply with applicable legislation but also to fulfil the expectations of customers and to reduce business risks. The market for products is global. Products are produced in one part of the world, then transported, used and turned into waste - often in other continents.
4. Recycling companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, need more information on chemicals in products. There is a general need for improved communication between producers and actors in the end-of-life sector to achieve improved design and better recycling practices. Motivation and incentives to seek and use information on chemicals in products to improve recycling practices are also needed.
5. International cooperative actions to enhance the availability of information on chemicals in products in the supply chains and to consumers and to the end-of-life sector could be one of the keys to a sustainable development.