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SAICM International Chemical Status Report Released
*Coalition of NGOs Call for More Action to Protect Health and Environment
from Dangerous Chemicals*

Berkeley, CA 2009 - A global coalition of health and environmental organizations have surveyed progress around the world in protecting human health and the environment from dangerous chemicals, such as DDT, dioxins and PCBs. The group has released its findings in "[Citizens' Report: Global Outreach Campaign on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management \(SAICM\)](#)." The report is available online at www.ipen.org/campaign.

The report documents progress on a 2006 international agreement, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), agreed to by 150 governments, corporations, and non-governmental organizations. who pledged 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."

According to the SAICM report, there has been progress on protecting people and the environment from chemicals, "but the pace has been slow and uneven, and it does not appear that the global community is yet on track to achieve SAICM's 2020 objective." The report states that public awareness of chemical safety issues remains low, and there are gaps in protecting the public from chemicals. Among the more important are:

- Weak involvement of the public in the development of chemicals management strategies at the national level, including NGOs, women's and children's advocacy groups, indigenous communities, trade unions, and grassroots social organizations;
- Insufficient information on chemical safety issues, including insufficient labeling and a lack of information about potentially hazardous chemicals in products, such as computers and cleaning products;
- Insufficient research and promotion of alternatives to chemical pesticides in agriculture and healthcare;

- Inadequate waste management, incineration of municipal, industrial, and medical waste, uncontrolled open burning of waste, and low implementation of zero waste approaches;
- Slow clean-up of contaminated sites and obsolete pesticides, and continued accumulation of toxic waste;
- Lack of sufficient legislation to require producers and importers to improve the safety of their products; poor enforcement of existing regulations; poorly regulated emissions of toxic chemicals by industry;
- Insufficient commitment of governments to basic principles such as:
 - the precautionary principle, which requires manufacturers of new substances to prove they are safe;
 - the polluter pays principle, which requires polluters to pay the cost of cleaning up hazardous sites;
 - no data, no market, whereby chemical producers must show data documenting the safety of their products if they want to sell them; and
 - the public right to know about the dangers of chemicals in products, industry, and agriculture.

The report was produced by the SAICM Global Outreach Campaign, which brings together six international networks with hundreds of members around the world:

- Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), www.hcwh.org
- International Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Elimination Network (IPEN), www.ipen.org
- International Society of Doctors for the Environment, (ISDE), www.isde.org
- Pesticide Action Network International (PAN), www.pan-international.org
- Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), www.wecf.eu
- World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), www.wfpha.org

The SAICM Global Outreach Campaign deals with the vast uncontrolled experiment with chemicals that the world has been engaged in for the last half century. The huge increase in new chemicals since the Second World War has created a situation where even unborn children and indigenous people in the Arctic – who live thousands of miles from where the chemicals are used -- carry body burdens of dozens of chemicals, most of which have never been tested for safety. Of those which have been tested, few have been tested in combination with other chemicals, combinations we encounter every day. Numerous health problems have been linked to many of these chemicals, including cancer, endocrine and immune system disruption, hormonal disruption, reproductive disorders, neurological and behavior disorders, Parkinson's disease, birth defects and respiratory illnesses.

The SAICM Global Outreach Campaign has brought together hundreds of concerned citizens, scientists, physicians, engineers, trade unions, and health and disability groups from around the world to raise awareness of this uncontrolled experiment with chemicals, and to develop more prudent policies for managing the chemicals common in our modern lives. For more information on the campaign see www.ipen.org/campaign.

The report is being released on the eve of the first international meeting to consider progress on implementation of SAICM since it was finalized in 2006. Participants in the Strategic Approach – governments, corporations, and NGOs – will meet in Geneva from May 11-15 to review progress and plan for future action.

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