



United Nations Environment Programme

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Lead and Cadmium Working Group

First meeting

Geneva, 18–22 September 2006

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

Organization of work

Role of the working group

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its twenty-third session, in February 2005, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) continued its discussions relating to chemicals management and adopted decision 23/9, an omnibus decision on chemicals management, which, among other things, reiterated the call made by the Governing Council in 2003 for Governments, the private sector and international organizations to take immediate action to reduce the risks to human health and the environment posed on a global scale by mercury in products and production processes. In decision 23/9 III, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director of UNEP to undertake a review of scientific information on lead and cadmium, focusing especially on long-range environmental transport, to inform future discussions of the Governing Council on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium. It also requested the Executive Director to report on implementation of the decision as it relates to lead and cadmium to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session, in February 2007.
2. Governing Council decision 23/9 III does not give further details with regard to the topics to be covered in the reviews or the issues to be considered. As the method followed in developing the 2002 UNEP Global Mercury Assessment report proved to be successful, ensuring a transparent process and broad ownership of the Assessment's results and recommendations, UNEP is using a similar method to undertake the reviews of the scientific information on lead and cadmium.
3. As part of the implementation of Governing Council decision 23/9 III, UNEP established the Lead and Cadmium Working Group to assist it in undertaking the reviews and invited Governments, through UNEP official contact points, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, originally in a letter of 16 May 2005 and also through subsequent contacts and correspondence, to submit information relevant to the reviews and to nominate members to the Working Group.

* UNEP(DTIE)/Pb&Cd/WG.1/1.

4. In order to contribute to the development and finalization of the reviews, the Working Group will:

(a) Review and provide written comments prior to the first meeting of the Working Group with regard to substantive and technical input on the first drafts of the scientific reviews on lead and cadmium, which were circulated by mail or electronic mail to members of the Working Group;

(b) Consider and finalize, during the meeting of the Working Group in September 2006, the revised drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium circulated in advance of the meeting;

(c) Prepare, on the basis of the information in the scientific reviews, and especially information on long-range environmental transport, technical summaries of the key findings of each review, including identification of possible gaps in the information available and possible conclusions regarding whether there is sufficient evidence of any significant adverse impacts on health and the environment of global concern arising from the release of lead and cadmium into the environment. The technical summaries may, among other things, identify any gaps in the information base available; the properties of lead and cadmium which may be of global relevance; the human populations and ecosystems that might be most at risk from the adverse effects of lead and cadmium; the sources that are the main contributors to emissions or releases of lead and cadmium into the environment; and the magnitude of the threat of lead and cadmium to human populations and ecosystems.

5. The draft reviews that have been circulated for comments cover the same topics as those covered by the Global Mercury Assessment, but focus especially on the issue of long-range environmental transport and do not provide possible options for addressing any significant global adverse impacts of lead and cadmium. Unlike Governing Council decision 21/5, which called for the development of the global mercury assessment, Governing Council decision 23/9 III does not call for options to address any significant global adverse impacts to be provided to support future discussions of the Governing Council on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium.

6. The technical summaries prepared by the Working Group will form the basis for the UNEP report on the implementation of Governing Council decision 23/9 III as it relates to lead and cadmium. The reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium will be provided to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session, to be held in February 2007, as background information in English only.
