



United Nations Environment Programme

Distr.: General
31 August 2006

English only

Lead and Cadmium Working Group

First meeting

Geneva, 18–22 September 2006

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration and finalization of the draft reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium

Issues of relevance arising from the draft reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium

Note by the secretariat

1. The present note summarizes the process followed in preparing and considering the first drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) pursuant to Governing Council decision 23/9 III and describes how the Lead and Cadmium Working Group might proceed in its consideration and finalization of the revised draft reviews of 18 August 2006.

I. Background

2. As a follow-up to decision 23/9 III, in which the Governing Council requested the Executive Director of UNEP to undertake a review of scientific information to inform future discussions on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium, Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector were invited by UNEP, through a letter dated 16 May 2005 and a follow-up letter dated 28 February 2006, to submit relevant information on lead and cadmium.

3. In response to that invitation, 40 Governments, 5 intergovernmental organizations and 2 non-governmental organizations submitted information for the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium (figures correct as of 18 August 2006). All the submissions received are available on the Lead and Cadmium Activities web page, which was established especially for that purpose, at http://www.chem.unep.ch/Pb_and_Cd/. A hard-copy compilation of all the submissions will be available to the Working Group during its meeting. For reports and articles protected by copyright laws, the applicable copyright rules were observed.

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

4. Based on the information submitted and additional publications, articles and reports of relevance to lead and cadmium identified through a search of scientific literature or publicly available on the websites of various Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, UNEP initiated the drafting of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium.
5. The first drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium were circulated for comments to all members of the Working Group on 24 May 2006. They were sent by e-mail to members with e-mail access and mailed to those without. The drafts were accompanied by a note explaining how the draft reviews had been prepared and the types of comment and input that were being sought from Working Group members. They were also sent to Governments and relevant organizations, even where the Government or organization had not nominated any member to the Working Group. The deadline for providing comments was 30 June 2006.
6. The first drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium are publicly available on and can be downloaded from the Lead and Cadmium Activities web page.

II. Comments on the first drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium

7. As of 18 August 2006, 14 Governments, 4 intergovernmental organizations and 3 non-governmental organizations had provided comments on the first drafts of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium. All the comments received are available on the Lead and Cadmium Activities web page. A list of the comments received is available as document UNEP(DTIE)/Pb&Cd/WG.1/INF/3. A hard-copy compilation of all the comments will be available to the Working Group during its meeting.
8. The revised drafts of 18 August 2006 of the reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium have been circulated to Working Group members and meeting participants in advance of the first meeting of the Working Group (see document UNEP(DTIE)/Pb&Cd/WG.1/4), for consideration and finalization at the meeting. Working Group members and meeting participants have been invited to submit, if possible, written comments in advance of the meeting to facilitate the secretariat's preparations for the meeting.

A. Handling of the comments received

9. Every effort has been made to incorporate the comments and suggestions made by Working Group members and others into the revised drafts of 18 August 2006. Because financial resources were limited, however, insufficient time and personnel resources were available to analyse and incorporate all new information and prepare text to describe issues that were not covered in the first drafts. Similarly, substantial reordering and rewriting of the report have not been possible at the present stage.
10. The comments received were handled along the following lines:
 - (a) Additional national information supplementing information already reflected in the review, such as data about the concentration of the metal in soils, presented in the annex to each review, and overviews of existing and future national actions, including legislation, relevant to lead and cadmium, presented in a separate appendix to each review, was incorporated to the extent possible. Additional national information supplementing other tables or text was also included to the extent possible; however, information that was not in a format that could be easily incorporated was given lower priority. Also, where national information was provided in order to illustrate a particular point, additional information about that point provided by other countries was not necessarily incorporated in detail;
 - (b) Editorial comments and comments that helped improve the readability of a paragraph or section were incorporated to the extent possible;
 - (c) Comments identifying errors in presentation of cited literature or incorrect data from national submissions were incorporated to the extent possible, and where specific text revisions were proposed these were largely used;
 - (d) Comments of a substantive nature discussing the views and conclusions expressed by the authors in the cited literature were generally not included. However, an attempt was made to clarify the draft text in cases where comments pointed out that the text could give rise to misinterpretations;

(e) Comments identifying newer or additional reviews or publications on an aspect already covered, requiring substantial time to analyse and summarize the additional information, were incorporated to the extent that available time and resources permitted;

(f) Comments calling for the inclusion of new information on issues not covered in the first draft, requiring substantial time to analyse and summarize the new information, were given lower priority. However, an attempt was made to identify those issues in the text in order to draw the Working Group's attention to them.

B. Identification of the changes made to the draft reviews

11. Any changes made to the first drafts of the scientific reviews have been tracked. Although the versions of the documents showing the tracked changes have not been made available to the Working Group members and others, they have been kept for internal purposes in case any further consultation is needed.

III. Issues for consideration by the Working Group

12. The Working Group may wish to consider the issues set out below, in order to finalize the draft reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium.

A. Text of the reviews

13. The Working Group may wish to consider the revised drafts and determine whether any additional changes are necessary.

14. To facilitate the discussion of the Working Group, Governments or organizations that have suggestions for the inclusion of specific text to supplement the current draft text are encouraged to develop draft textual proposals and forward them to UNEP, if possible in advance of the meeting, to facilitate the preparations for the discussion. Such proposals should summarize the essence of the issue, in no more than two pages, making reference to more comprehensive presentations of the issue if necessary, and should preferably be in an easily readable style adhering as closely as possible to the style of presentation already used in the chapters where the proposed text is to be inserted.

15. The finalized reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium will be relatively comprehensive summary documents covering a range of issues relevant to lead and cadmium and are intended to be useful to those involved in the safe management and use of lead and cadmium. However, the length of the documents limits their usefulness as documents for consideration by the Governing Council. To facilitate the Governing Council's discussions, technical summaries of the key findings of each review, including the 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, might be developed by the Working Group for inclusion in the finalized reviews.

B. Use of the reviews

16. The Working Group may also wish to consider the usefulness of the full versions of the draft reviews of scientific information on lead and cadmium and make suggestions on how they could best be used (for example, with regard to target groups, format, distribution and languages).

C. Review process during the Working Group meeting

17. In view of the substantial quantity of work facing the Working Group and the limited time available to it during the meeting, a possible way forward in organizing the Working Group's consideration of the draft reviews might be to establish drafting groups at the outset of the meeting to review any comments that are pending consideration or new comments and textual proposals brought to the Working Group during the meeting.