144th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
8 January 2019
10:00 a.m. to 1:00p.m and 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Agenda Item: 7

Agenda Item 7: Consideration of resolutions adopted at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly

Status of Implementation: UNEP/E.A.3/9 "Eliminating Exposure to Lead Paint and Promoting the Environmentally Sound Management of Lead Acid Batteries"

A. Mandate

The Assembly requested the Executive Director to:

- Assist countries in eliminating the use of lead paint, under the leadership of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint and the World Health Organization, in particular by providing tools and capacity-building for developing national legislation and regulations, and to work regionally, where appropriate.
- Continue to assist countries, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in their efforts to strengthen and enhance the national, subregional and regional implementation of environmentally sound management of waste, including by providing further capacity-building with respect to waste lead-acid batteries to implement regulatory frameworks and programmes for recycling, and better track and trace shipments, in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Basel Convention.

UN Environment's work on **lead** is linked to its over-all implementation plan "**towards a pollution-free planet"**. It contributed to the achievement of UN Environment's programme of work project "Addressing risks of exposure from lead and cadmium" (2016-2017) and now is a core output of the project under development "Accelerating the implementation of the chemicals and waste Multilateral Environmental Agreements and achieving the targets of related Sustainable Development Goals for improved human health and a clean environment" (2018-2019).

B. Background

Lead is a multisystem toxicant for which no safe level of exposure has been identified. Exposure can cause chronic and debilitating health impacts in all age groups, but lead is particularly harmful to young children. This is because the developing nervous system can be damaged by lead, resulting in reduced cognitive abilities, poor educational attainment, attention deficit disorder and antisocial behaviour. In adults, lead exposure can cause hypertension, renal impairment and damage to the reproductive organs.

Lead paint is paint to which one or more lead compounds have been added, e.g. as pigments, driers or as anti-corrosives. Lead paint used in homes, schools and playgrounds is an important source of exposure to lead for children. Intact lead paint is safe, however as it ages, the paint starts to decay, fragmenting into flakes and dust that contaminate the environment. Paint flakes and dust are readily swallowed by young children who typically play on the ground and frequently put their hands to their mouths.

The manufacturing and recycling of lead-acid batteries is practised globally in both regulated industries and unregulated informal establishments. Lead recycling is an important source of environmental contamination and human exposure. The main pathways of exposure to lead from recycling used lead-acid batteries arise from environmental emissions. These occur at various stages in the recycling process. Lead particles and fumes emitted into the air can be inhaled and can be deposited onto soil, water bodies and other surfaces. Used acid with high concentrations of lead is often dumped on land or released in waterways. Lead can enter the food chain through crops growing on contaminated areas and consuming lead particles, and from fish and shellfish living in lead-contaminated water.

C. Progress of Implementation of UNEA 3 Resolution 9

a. Lead in Paint: Progress is being made in the following areas:

Partnership: The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead in Paint (Lead Paint Alliance), a voluntary partnership formed by UN Environment and the World Health Organization to prevent exposure to lead, continues to promote the phase-out of paints containing lead. The Lead Paint Alliance currently has 90 partners. It is guided by an Advisory Group currently chaired by the United States of America through the Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and consisting of Government representatives from Colombia, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova, Thailand, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), the Health and Environmental Alliance (HEAL), the International Paint and Print Ink Council (IPPIC), AkzoNobel, Boysen Paints and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Knowledge: The Update on the Global Status of Lead Limits in Paint was published in September 2018 and is available at:
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26481/Lead_Status_201809.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The publication reveals that, as of 30 September 2018, four additional countries (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kazakhstan) had enacted lead paint laws, making a total of 71 out of 194 countries or 36.5 % of all countries having legally binding controls to limit the production, import and sale of lead paints. Many countries were actively supported by the Lead Paint Alliance in drafting lead paint laws. By region, the number of countries with lead paint laws with percentages in relation to the number of countries in each region is as follows: African region, 6 countries (11.1%); Asia-Pacific, 8 countries (20.2%); West-Asia, 3 countries (27.3 %); Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 countries (33 %); Europe, 41 countries (74.1%); and North America, 2 countries (100 %).

Implementation: The Lead Paint Alliance has set a standard of 90 ppm total lead in paint and has actively provided tools to assist countries legislate and implement legislation on lead paint. To support countries to develop, adopt and implement laws to regulate or eliminate lead paint, the Alliance has elaborated and made available to Governments a guidance entitled "Model Law and Guidance to Regulate Lead Paint" in all six UN languages. The Model Law provides guidance on how to develop national lead paint laws and is available at:
https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/publication/model-law-and-guidance-regulating-lead-paint-enarchfrrusp

Significant financial support will be provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to support implementation of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (Strategic Approach) project that has a large lead in paint component. The project, which is expected to start in January 2019, will provide assistance to 40 additional countries in the development of lead paint laws, in line with the Strategic Approach 2020 goal of lead paint elimination. More information about the project is available at:
https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/emerging-issues/global-alliance-eliminate-lead-paint-8

Infrastructure: The paint industry is looking into innovative solutions for lead free paint manufacturing and paint reformulation. Increasingly, paint producers are publicly stating that it is possible to eliminate lead additives in *all* types of paint. The future Strategic Approach-GEF project will engage the National Cleaner Production Centres and the paint industry (at least 30 small and medium enterprises) in paint reformulation using alternatives to lead additives in paint.

Awareness: The Lead Paint Alliance developed a communication strategy that includes, among others, a resource package for heightened awareness on the elimination of lead paint, which was launched in October 2018 during the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. An edition of the bi-annual Alliance newsletter was disseminated in September 2018 and is available at:
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26376/lpa_news_201809.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Leadership: The US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), Chair of the Lead Paint Alliance, continues to be the leader in engaging governments, industry, civil society and academia to achieve the

goal of eliminating lead paint. The US EPA has provided some financial resources to support the work of the Alliance.

b. Waste Lead- Acid Batteries: Progress is being made in the following areas

Partnership: UN Environment is working with industry and civil society partners - the International Lead Association and Pure Earth/Blacksmith Institute - to provide technical assistance and capacity-building on the environmentally sound management of waste lead acid batteries in low and middle-income countries.

Knowledge: Trade and market analyses of used lead acid batteries is available for Asia and for Latin America and the Caribbean. A needs assessment survey was conducted among the Strategic Approach focal points in those regions, which confirmed the need for technical assistance on the environmentally sound management of waste lead acid batteries. Although the issue was not extensively discussed, at its eleventh meeting in September 2018, the Basel Convention Open-Ended Working Group had reference to the UNEA 3 resolution on waste lead acid batteries and it is likely that, at the fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (Geneva, April-May 2019), Parties to the Convention will discuss the possibility of an update of the Technical Guidelines for the environmentally Sound Management of Waste Lead Acid Batteries.

Implementation: The Government of Japan provided funding to support some of the work on waste lead acid batteries while other partners provided in-kind support through capacity-building activities on the same issue in developing countries. A project proposal to enhance understanding of lead poisoning and of the use of best effective practices and measures to control exposure, focusing on waste lead acid batteries, is under development. A joint BRS[1]-UN Environment project concept aimed at capacity-building activities in four countries on the environmentally sound management of waste lead acid batteries is available. The project entitled "Strengthening capacities of Parties to the Basel Convention and UN Environment Member States for the environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes, including prevention and minimization with a focus on WLAB" will address the collection of waste lead acid batteries and the issue of remediation of contaminated sites.

Infrastructure: UN Environment has joined the Global Battery Alliance in an effort to exchange knowledge and best practices on alternatives to lead acid batteries, while promoting the environmentally sound recycling of waste lead acid batteries. The Global Battery Alliance is promoting the concept of a circular economy for lead-acid batteries and its alternatives such as lithium ion, nickel-metal hydride, nickel-cadmium and nickel-zinc.

Awareness: UN Environment is working with WHO to increase awareness on how to prevent lead exposure from waste lead acid batteries. WHO published the document "Recycling of used lead-acid batteries: health considerations", which will be of assistance in capacity-building activities.

Leadership: The Government of Japan is providing leadership in the environmentally sound management of waste lead acid batteries and has supported related activities at UN Environment Chemicals and Health Branch, including the International Environmental Technology Centre in Osaka, Japan.

[1] BRS – refers to the multilateral environmental agreements of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions