



a toxics-free future

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Lead Paint Elimination Resolution Adopted at International Conference

(Nairobi, Kenya) An international conference whose goal is to minimize harm to human health and environment from chemical exposure by 2020 has called on all governments, civil society and the private sector to provide technical and financial assistance to eliminate lead paint in all countries.

Although lead in paint has been banned in most highly industrial countries for more than 40 years, recent testing by IPEN and others found that household paints with high levels of lead are still sold in many developing countries despite the fact that safer, cost-effective alternatives to the lead additives are widely available.

“When the evidence of harm is so clear and has been available for so long, why not eliminate lead from all paints immediately to protect human health?” said Dr Maria Neira, Director, Public Health and the Environment, World Health Organization (WHO), during the high level dialogue at the Third International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM3).

“Industry must take further responsibility for its products,” said Per Nylykke, Director of International Affairs, Danish Ministry of Environment, during the same dialogue; asking why the private sector couldn’t just eliminate lead in paint through their own self-governance mechanisms.

“Elimination of lead in paint by 2020 is an achievable goal and one by which the international process to realize sound chemicals management should be evaluated,” said Manny Calonzo, IPEN co-chair.

The resolution passed at ICCM3 called on governments and stakeholders to support the following:

- Awareness-raising on the human health hazards related to exposure to lead from paints, especially to children under six years of age and other vulnerable populations.
- Promotion of international third party certification of paints to help consumers recognize paints containing lead.
- Promotion of national regulatory frameworks to stop the manufacture, import, export, sale and use of lead paints and products coated with lead paints.
- Encouragement to companies to substitute lead compounds added to paint with safer alternatives.

Other measures in the resolution include building capacities to assess residential and occupational risks of lead exposure and to implement education on the mitigation of lead poisoning; programs to reduce exposure in and around housing, childcare facilities, schools and other places where lead paint has been used in the past; and support for an International Lead Poisoning Day of Action.

The resolution noted that lead is a toxic metal whose widespread use has caused environmental contamination and extensive public health problems in many parts of the world; that lead can have profound and permanent adverse health effects on children; and that there is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe. It was further noted that lead paints have been identified as a significant source of childhood lead exposure.

Sara Brosché, IPEN Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project Director, confirms that exposure to lead from paint leads to irreversible brain damage in children as well as life-long reductions in intelligence, learning ability and school performance. Lead house paints age and deteriorate over time. Lead from the paint enters the household dust that accumulates on floors, window ledges and other surfaces and then gets onto children's hands. Young children normally put their hands in their mouths and thereby ingest the lead in the dust.

ICCM is a tri-annual meeting of governments from all regions, international agencies, representatives of civil society and the public sector convened to develop and oversee programs aimed at the sound management of chemicals in all countries.

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IPEN is a leading global organization working to establish and implement safe chemicals policies and practices to protect human health and the environment whose mission is a toxics-free future for all. IPEN helps build the capacity of its member organizations to implement on-the-ground activities, learn from each other's work, and work at the international level to set priorities and achieve new policies.