

INTERVENTION HEALTH SECTOR STRATEGY

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Thank you President, let me congratulate you on your election and thank our hosts for their kind hospitality, my name is Peter Orris, I am representing the World Federation of Public Health Associations and observing as well for the World Medical Associations due to the importance to the public's health these professional groups see in controlling exposures to synthetic chemicals.

Prüss-Ustün, Vickers et. al from WHO's Chemicals Group reported in Environmental Health last year, "4.9 million deaths ... and 86 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) ... were attributable to environmental exposure and management of selected chemicals in 2004...<and that>...The global estimates presented in this article undoubtedly underestimate the real burden attributable to chemicals. "

We understand the importance of primary prevention in reducing this burden of disease on our patients. Our organizations, and many others, in the health care sector are committed to sustainable planning for and operation of our patient care institutions. We have been involved in safer substitution of mercury in health care, climate change through reduction in energy demands and greener energy generation, as well as the identification and control of hazardous substances in our work places.

We would therefore support the proposal before the body entitled "Proposed strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management". We note that this strategy has been created by an inclusive process within which both WFPHA and WMA have participated along with other groups representing stakeholders in health care and including WHO and governments foremost amongst them Slovenia.

Due to this involvement of health care providers in the creation of this strategy, it is both consistent with SAICM and practical in applicability. There are, in fact, several initiatives within the strategy that have already begun and have started to produce results.

Health Care Without Harm, the global coalition to achieve a health care sector that promotes the health of people and the environment, reports current activities in the health care sector consistent with this strategy:

In all countries activity to achieve virtual elimination of mercury-based thermometers and sphygmomanometers over the next decade.

Over 10,000 hospitals from five continents through their organizations have joined a new global network of hospitals, health systems and organizations committed to achieving the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Agenda's goals.

A global healthcare waste project assisting seven countries to develop and promote healthcare waste management best practices as examples.

Technology development to create an autoclave for resource poor environments as well as a system to neutralize chemotherapeutic drugs through simple chemical reactions.

Reduction of pharmaceutical wastes

Reduction of toxic chemicals in products through environmentally preferable purchasing

From our point of view, to continue and expand these activities it is important to pass the health care sector strategy.

Further we believe in the importance of a continuing public health role within the SAICM process. From this basis we are concerned about certain provisions within the budget that appear to put at risk WHO's staff contribution to the Secretariat. We would strongly urge that resources be identified to assure WHO's involvement in this important work. Finally, we welcomed WHO's statement in plenary that their important report on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals will appear shortly after the normal review process.