

WORLD INFORMATION TRANSFER, Inc.

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

1. World Information Transfer (WIT) advocates that further attention be given to synthesising the interlinkages between health and environmental degradation. The World Health Organisation's emphasis on triage tends to block environmental linkages. Although UNEP and the World Health Organisation (WHO) are currently working together on a number of initiatives to combat the increasing threat of environmentally linked diseases and also collaborate with UNICEF in the field of children's environmental health, particularly in the context of the WHO-led Healthy Environments for Children Alliance, further integration of programs would enhance their effectiveness. While UNEP and WHO cooperate on programs and policies, for example, the United Nations Ad Hoc Interagency Task Force On Tobacco Control, and WSSD partnerships (i.e., HECA or Healthy Environments for Children Alliance), WIT recommends that WHO increase its work with UNEP on all health issues with environmental components, and we suggest that the initiative come from UNEP. Working in conjunction with UNEP, WHO could develop a more effective overall program in resolving or mitigating health issues that stem from environmental degradation, i.e., not only water borne diseases but also toxic contamination of fresh and salt water, food contamination, waste disposal.
2. Each of us has traces of industrial chemicals and pesticides lodged in our bodies. Toxins like DDT, PCBs, dioxin, furans (even though banned by the Stockholm Convention) and mercury enter our bodies through the foods we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. Every time we drink contaminated water we add to a growing toxic store held in our fatty tissues. Whenever fat deposits are used (pregnancy, weight loss, nursing, etc.) these chemical hormones re-enter the blood stream. Most people around the world already carry levels of endocrine-disrupting chemicals very close to those levels found in animals with disorders specifically linked to endocrine disruption. Dutch researchers have found a correlation between dioxin exposure and suppressed levels of disease-fighting white blood cells in children. The list of examples could regrettably go on. The international processes to manage toxic chemicals, Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), also needs to be more fully integrated into WHO's programmes.
3. World Information Transfer recommends that CSD become the model for multi-stakeholder engagement for the following reasons:
 - a. the term has established parameters (unlike "civil society");
 - b. multi-stakeholder involvement with CSD is predictable based on the agenda of the Commission and thus enables the various stakeholders to plan well ahead of time for their work;
 - c. the process is relatively transparent and equitable; and
 - d. the process, which must continue to include robust stakeholder dialogue sessions, affords balanced engagement in discussion of issues.

PROPOSALS FOR APPROACHES OR SOLUTIONS

4. WIT recommends that WHO increase its work with UNEP on all health issues with environmental components, and we suggest that the initiative come from UNEP. Working in conjunction with UNEP, WHO could develop a more effective overall program in resolving or mitigating health issues that stem from environmental degradation, i.e., not only water borne diseases but also toxic contamination of fresh and salt water, food contamination, waste disposal. In an expanded role for WHO on issues of sustainable development including chemicals management, WIT specifically suggests that WHO adopt the CSD model for engaging NGOs as part of multi-stakeholder engagement.