



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Fifth International World Chemicals Conference (Bonn, 25-29 September 2023)
High-level segment on 28 and 29 September 2023 hosted by Germany
- Information from the German delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the German delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 16 March 2023.

**Fifth World Chemicals Conference
(Bonn, 25-29 September 2023)**

**High-level segment on 28 and 29 September 2023
hosted by Germany**

- Information from the German delegation -

From 25 to 29 September 2023, Germany will host the fifth session of the World Chemicals Conference (ICCM5) in the World Conference Center in Bonn, with a high-level segment on 28 and 29 September. Formal invitations will be sent to ministers soon.

Why do we need to take action?

Every year global pollution, including chemical pollution, creates an enormous burden of illness and causes premature deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that in 2019, 4.2 million premature deaths were caused by air pollution¹; while the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution reported that this figure had reached as much as 9 million that same year². According to the World Bank, in 2019 lead pollution alone was responsible for at least 2.5 million deaths worldwide³. Lead concentrations in the blood of roughly 1 in 3 children worldwide are too high which, among other things, impairs their intellectual development.⁴ World Bank figures indicate that global economic losses incurred by lead poisoning equate to 4 to 7.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These figures are just a few examples illustrating why UNEP now refers to pollution as the third planetary crisis, together with climate change and biodiversity loss.

¹ Fact sheet WHO: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)

² Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP), Update publ. 18 May 2022 - *Lancet Planetary Health* May 2019

³ Presentation World Bank: G7 Workshop ‘Lead as a major threat for human health and the environment – an integrated approach strengthening cooperation toward solutions’, 9/10 November 2022, Berlin

⁴ Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP), Update published on 18 May 2022 - *Lancet Planetary Health* May 2019

5th World Chemicals Conference: the place to deliver

The 5th World Chemicals Conference in Bonn in September is the last opportunity we currently have to reconfigure international chemicals and waste policy so as to effectively protect human health and the environment. During the high-level segment, we aim to create the basis for a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution with a high-level declaration.

We are striving to secure the adoption of this resolution in the UNGA as early as next year, 2024, with a view to making the safe use of chemicals across all sectors a permanent fixture on the UNGA agenda for addressing this third planetary crisis. In doing so, we are also pursuing the European Union goal of strengthening cross-sector cooperation over the long term.

What are the next steps?

Future implementation is crucial for these efforts to succeed. All countries need to establish institutional control regimes for the safe production and use of chemicals throughout the entire life cycle. This measure is also in the interests of the European Union as owing to the globalisation of production and trade in chemicals and products manufactured from them, increasing relocation of production to non-OECD countries and long-distance transportation of harmful substances, it is not possible to protect human health and the environment solely through measures within the EU.

Data from the World Bank shows that due to lack of capacities, countries with lower levels of development are most severely affected by damage from inappropriate management of chemicals. At the same time, many of these countries do not yet have a national chemicals regime.

These countries therefore need support with building capacities. Up to now, funding has been provided through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening for the Chemicals Cluster⁵.

⁵ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/special-programme>

The Global Chemicals Outlook 2019 showed that funding provided so far for capacity building was insufficient to achieve the goal of minimising the adverse impacts of chemicals on people and the environment by 2020. The issue of financing for the future implementation of the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 and capacity building in developing countries thus remains unresolved and requires concerted efforts from all countries. Germany is the largest donor of the GEF to the tune of EUR 700 million.

Call to action

Germany is calling on its EU partners to play an active role in building capacities and providing additional forms of support for the 5th World Chemicals Conference, so as to help make the conference the turning point the world needs with regard to the sustainable management of chemicals and waste.

To achieve this, we need your participation at the highest political level, as well as broad-based delegations representing different sectors and stakeholders and concrete and substantial technical, intellectual, financial, political and/or partnership-based support for the future instrument to ensure 'sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020', including interfaces with climate and biodiversity protection.

We also encourage you to mobilise and empower other countries, partners and stakeholders, particularly those outside the environment sector, to get involved and help make this conference a success.