

ANNEX 21

Recommendations contained in UNCED Agenda 21, Chapter 19 relating to Community Right-to-Know and Chemical Emissions Inventories

UNCED Agenda 21, Chapter 19 is entitled "Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals including prevention of illegal international; traffic in toxic and dangerous products". The following recommendations are abstracted from the full text.

19.8 The broadest possible awareness of chemical risks is a prerequisite for achieving chemical safety. The principle of the right of the community and workers to know those risks should be recognized. However, the right to know the identity of hazardous ingredients should be balanced with industry's right to protect confidential business information. (Industry, as referred to in this chapter, shall be taken to include large industrial enterprises and transnational corporations as well as domestic industries.) The industry initiative on responsible care and product stewardship should be developed and promoted. Industry should apply adequate standards of operation in all countries in order not to damage human health and the environment.

19.16 Industry should provide data for substances used that are produced that are needed specifically for the assessment of potential risks to human health and the environment. Such data should be made available to relevant national competent authorities and international bodies and other interested parties involved in hazard and risk assessment, and to the greatest possible extent to the public also, taking into account legitimate claims of confidentiality.

19.40 Governments and relevant international organizations with the cooperation of industry should:

(b) Improve data bases and information systems on toxic chemicals, such as emission inventory programmes, through provision of training in the use of those systems as well as software, hardware and other facilities.

19.42 Governments and relevant international organizations with the cooperation of industry should cooperate in establishing, strengthening and expanding, as appropriate, the network of designated national authorities for exchange of information on chemicals and establish a technical exchange programme to produce a core of trained personnel within each participating country.

19.49 Governments, through the cooperation of relevant international organizations and industry, where appropriate, should:

(b) Undertake concerted activities to reduce risks for toxic chemicals, taking into account the entire life cycle of the chemicals. These activities could encompass both regulatory and non-regulatory measures, such as the promotion of the use of cleaner products and technologies; emissions inventories; product labelling; use limitations; economic incentives; and the phasing out or banning of toxic chemicals that pose an unreasonable and otherwise unmanageable risk to the environment or human health and those that are toxic, persistent and bio-accumulative and whose use cannot be adequately controlled.

19.50 Industry should be encouraged to:

(c) Adopt, on a voluntary basis, community right-to-know programmes based on international guidelines, including sharing of information on causes of accidental and potential releases and means of preventing them, and reporting on annual routine emissions of toxic chemicals to the environment in the absence of host country requirements.

19.51 Governments, through the cooperation of relevant international organizations and industry, where appropriate, should:

(b) Cooperate in the development of communication guidelines on chemical risks at the national level to promote information exchange with the public and the understanding of risks.

19.60 Governments should:

(a) Direct information campaigns such as programmes providing information about chemical stockpiles, environmentally safer alternatives and emission inventories that could also be a tool for risk reduction to the general public to increase awareness of problems of chemical safety.

19.61 Governments, with the cooperation of international organizations, where appropriate, should:

(c) Consider adoption of community right-to-know or other public information-dissemination programmes, when appropriate, as possible risk reduction tools. Appropriate international organizations, in particular UNEP, OECD, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and other interested parties, should consider the possibility of developing a guidance document on the establishment of such programmes for use by interested Governments. The document should build on existing work on accidents and include new guidance on toxic emission inventories and risk communication. Such guidance should include harmonization requirements, definitions and data elements to promote uniformity and allow sharing of data internationally.