



Conference Report

Water Quality Degradation by Hazardous Substances and the Cost of Non-action Stockholm Water Symposium, Stockholm, Sweden, August 24, 2005

The Paris Appeal, an international declaration which focuses on health-related risks of chemical pollution, stressed the importance of managing hazardous substances because of their carcinogenic, mutagenic and reproductive effects. There are increasingly negative impacts of chemicals on human health in terms of allergies in children, breast cancer, decrease of male fertility, and other issues. In addition, while there are about 100,000 chemicals in existence, and 30,000 of them are in the market, adequate data exist only for about 5,000 on the basis of which informed decisions can be made. This is an important concern mainly because the current management practices are inefficient. It is therefore necessary to develop a new system to manage hazardous substances more efficiently than at present.

The costs of non-action with regard to toxic pollutants that affect human health and the environment, both from point and nonpoint sources, have proven to be many times higher than the cost of taking preventive, corrective or remedial actions. Additional studies are needed so that national and appropriate policies can be formulated on this complex issue.

It is important to promote adoption of toxicological standards, including international thresholds, to protect both human health and the environment. Additionally, a more effective monitoring system in terms of frequency, parameters, density and availability of information to the public is required to make informed and timely decisions. It was noted that a more cost-effective assessment of toxic wastes should be developed, since the current systems are inefficient. Information in this overall area should be shared between developed and developing countries. In addition, developed countries have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure developing countries do not suffer because of unscrupulous practices of transboundary movements of chemical and hazardous wastes.