

Dallas, 13 June 2000

COUNCIL RESOLUTION 00-10

**Children's Health and the Environment**

THE COUNCIL:

RECOGNIZING that children are not little adults and that there is abundant scientific evidence that children are particularly vulnerable to many environmental hazards in the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat and the environment in which they live, learn, and play;

ACKNOWLEDGING that prevention of exposure is the most effective means of protecting children from environmental threats;

AFFIRMING that parents have a right to know about the presence of potentially harmful substances that may affect the health of their children, and that they play an important role in protecting the health of their children;

NOTING that governments, individuals, communities, industry, and non-governmental environmental and health groups have roles to play in addressing children's health issues;

ENDORSING the ideals affirmed in the 1997 Declaration of the Environmental Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health, as well as Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

ALSO NOTING the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

ENCOURAGED by the record of achievement of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) in health-related issues, including the elimination or reduction of harmful substances such as DDT, chlordane, and PCBs, and by enhancing the public's awareness and understanding of releases of pollutants to the environment;

FURTHER NOTING that Phase II of the North American Regional Action Plan (NARAP) on mercury specifically addresses the concern for women of child bearing age and children's exposure to increasing levels of mercury;

HEREBY:

COMMITTS to working together as partners to develop a cooperative agenda to protect children from environmental threats with the overall objective of reducing human-made pressures on children's health;

DECIDES to focus, as a starting point, on specific health outcomes such as asthma and other respiratory diseases, the effects of lead including lead poisoning, and the effects of exposure to other toxic substances;

AGREES to establish for a period of two years an Expert Advisory Board composed of environment and health experts selected by the Parties to advise the Council on issues concerning children's health and the environment;

DIRECTS the Secretariat of the CEC to work with the Parties to develop a CEC agenda on children's health and the environment in North America by:

- 1) Developing inventories of national, bilateral, and trilateral activities related to children's environmental health. The purpose of this activity would be to take stock of what is currently being done, assess gaps and identify opportunities for further collaboration on children's environmental health under the CEC;
- 2) Convening a government workshop in the fall of 2000 in Mexico, with representation from ministries with responsibilities for environment, health, industry, finance, natural resources and others, as appropriate, in order to share information and expertise on national programs, and in order to develop a CEC agenda for children's health and the environment. As a starting point, this agenda will address asthma (including triggers such as environmental tobacco smoke, indoor pollutants and outdoor air pollutants) and other respiratory diseases, the effects of lead including lead poisoning, and the effects of exposure to other toxic substances;
- 3) Ensuring public and stakeholder consideration and feedback on the CEC agenda;
- 4) Applying the perspective of children's health and the environment to key work areas of CEC to find opportunities to advance the protection of children's health from environmental threats. In particular, opportunities in the following areas will be explored:
  - a) Sound Management of Chemicals: ensure inclusion of a strong children's health focus in the development of the draft NARAP on environmental monitoring and assessment and, where appropriate, identify initiatives that will decrease the impacts on children's health from bioaccumulative, persistent and toxic substances addressed in other NARAPs;

- b) North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Trade and Transportation Corridors Project: ensure that this project, while addressing air quality issues associated with increased transboundary transportation, takes into account the effects on children's respiratory health; and
  - c) Exploring, with the advice of relevant experts (such as the Expert Advisory Board), the feasibility of developing a special feature on children's health and the environment, possibly as part of the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register;
- 5) Initiating activities to increase parents' and the public's awareness and education about environmental threats to children's health and ways of preventing exposure to these threats. As a first step, the CEC Secretariat will work with the Parties, engaging other relevant experts to:
- a) Develop a web page that would provide relevant information and links to other sources on children's health and the environment; and
  - b) Facilitate the exchange of information, scientific techniques, and experiences of jurisdictions in providing smog forecasts/alerts to the public so that they can take action to protect themselves, noting that Environment Canada is hosting a tripartite workshop in November on air quality forecasting; and
- 6) Providing, through the CEC web page, a repository of research initiatives and other relevant scientific information related to children's health and the environment to build synergy between the health and environment research communities in the three countries.

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL:

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