

**STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION ON STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE CHEMICALS AND WASTE
MANAGEMENT IN THE 18TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

(NEW YORK, 13 MAY 2010)

Chairperson,

We would like to thank the panelists for their interesting presentations.

South Africa would like to associate itself with the views of G77 and China.

South Africa has taken a number of actions to promote environmental sound management of chemicals and waste, including the signing and ratification of the Stockholm Convention, and accession to the Rotterdam and Basel Conventions as well as the Montreal Protocol. As chemicals and waste management requires a multi-stakeholder approach, in an effort towards aligning fragmentation, we have established a National Multi-stakeholder Committee for Chemicals Management to facilitate co-ordination in respect of implementation of the MEAs. Our involvement in the African Stockpiles Programme (ASP) as well as collaborating with other countries in the region has heightened the strength of the partnerships we have between government and key stakeholders, which include industry and civil society.

On July 1st 2009, we promulgated a national waste legislation that adopts the waste management hierarchy which focuses on waste avoidance and where waste generation cannot be avoided, the waste must be reused, recycled or recovered and disposal should be considered as a last option. The benefits of reusing, recycling and recovering waste do not lie solely in diversion of waste away from disposal, the benefits are also manifested by the reduction of the amount of virgin resources that need to be harvested and processed for the manufacture of new products and the creation of job opportunities for communities.

There are still major challenges that remain unresolved, and are as follows:

- a) The limited capacity to do comprehensive risk assessment; more so as the possible impact on human and environmental health of most hazardous chemicals is not understood in the developing world.
- b) The implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of classification and labelling of chemicals would fast track the environmental sound management of chemicals. We believe it is crucial that information is made available to all users of chemicals, communities and policy makers to improve knowledge and awareness of the risks posed by chemicals.
- c) Notwithstanding the development of a few facilities in South Africa to dispose of hazardous waste in an environmentally sound manner, the demand for treatment facilities remains a huge challenge.
- d) South African joins other countries that have called for a stop in the illegal trafficking of chemicals and hazardous waste. In particular, the transboundary movement of e-waste and near end of life goods has become a major problem that needs urgent attention.

To address these challenges, there is a greater need for technology transfer, transfer of technical expertise, financial support and capacity building to enable countries, especially developing countries to make informed decisions as early as possible in life cycle management of hazardous chemicals and waste. Existing funding streams for chemicals management need to be significantly increased to facilitate life cycle management to meet the internationally agreed goals on environmental sound hazardous chemicals and waste management.

It is also important to institute take-back options for e-waste and for other products that result in the generation of waste in line with extended producer responsibility principles. This will advance the polluter pays principle which gives the responsibility of dealing with waste management to industry.

I thank you.