



PO Box 173 Bangalow
NSW 2479 Australia
info@ntn.org.au

www.ntn.org.au

Working globally for a toxic free future

Urgent Action Needed to Stop Growing Health and Environmental Impacts of Chemicals

National Toxics Network (NTN) has welcomed the release of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) first comprehensive assessment of global chemical trends and economic implications in their *Global Chemicals Outlook Synthesis Report*. The report calls on all decision-makers to take urgent action to reduce the growing health and environmental hazards from chemicals.

“Almost all countries are increasing their use of synthetic pesticides and industrial chemicals, including hazardous substances in consumer products like toys and electronic products. The exact number of chemicals in use isn't known, but it's estimated around 144,000,” said Jo Immig, NTN Coordinator.

“The chemical industry plays a significant role in the global economy, around US \$4 trillion, but it comes at an enormous cost to human health and the environment. These costs are particularly felt in emerging economies as chemical production is shifting to those countries,” she said.

“The UNEP report discusses the external costs related to chemical mismanagement and the 'costs of inaction'. It's clear the community and environment are paying the price with big impacts to fisheries, air quality and biodiversity as well escalating rates of chronic diseases linked to chemicals”.

“While the use of chemicals has increased dramatically, regulatory systems to deal with chemical impacts throughout their lifecycle have not. Waste streams are a significant problem with huge increases in e-waste and associated toxic chemicals, as well as a huge load of legacy toxic waste,” she said.

“Australian chemical regulators are way off target for achieving sound chemical management. We're certainly not the clean, green country we think we are. We've got over 38,000 chemicals in use and virtually none of them have been assessed for their impacts to health and the environment. We have over 80 pesticides in common use that are banned in many countries because they're too dangerous. We have huge stockpiles of toxic waste waiting to be safely destroyed,” she said.

Contact: Jo Immig, NTN Coordinator (02) 66871 527 (W)

