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ICCA and UNEP Join to Promote Safe Management of Chemicals in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya, 3 June 2013 – Safe transport and storage of chemicals, emergency prevention, preparedness as well as responses to chemical accidents will be the focus of a joint project launched today by the International Council of Chemicals Associations (ICCA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The issues will be examined in a two-day workshop that aims to improve chemical safety management in Kenya. The workshop, to be held today and tomorrow at UNEP's headquarters in Nairobi, marks the official launch of the project.

More than 2,300 incidents were recorded in 2010 worldwide involving the transport of dangerous goods by companies by 31 chemicals associations who gather data under Responsible Care, the global chemical industry's voluntary initiative to improve health, safety and environmental performance globally. In the 2000 to 2010 time period, the tonnage of distribution of chemicals has increased by 49% as per reporting of the Responsible Care initiative, which includes data from 40 markets, including developing countries. Although progress has been achieved in reducing the number of accidents in the last decade, the issue remains a concern, especially in many developing countries.

“Warehousing and cross-border road transportation of chemicals are among the key concerns in Africa related to chemicals management,” states Desta Mebratu, Deputy Director of UNEP Regional Office for Africa, “Frequently, the available infrastructure for emergency response is ineffective, and emergency prevention and preparedness skills are often limited. We hope by highlighting best practices in these workshops that we can help change that.”

Kenya is a transit state for the East African Community and central African republics. The Port of Mombasa provides an entry point for chemicals destined for landlocked countries, including Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Likewise, the Port of Tema in Ghana serves the community of landlocked countries in West Africa. There have been frequent accidents involving trucks that carry chemicals and hydrocarbons, many occurring on the Mombasa Malaba Roads. These accidents involve trucks on their way to Rwanda, Burundi, Eastern Congo and Sudan. This becomes an increasingly pressing problem given predictions that estimate growth of 40 per cent in the African chemical industry by 2020 as indicated by the Global Chemicals Outlook, published by UNEP in 2012.

Hubert Mandery, ICCA Council Secretary, explains that “UNEP and ICCA have joined forces to increase support for review of emergency preparedness plans at selected port areas. By holding the workshops and emergency exercise, we aim to raise awareness of chemical safety of transport and storage and ultimately to strengthen sound chemicals management in developing countries.”

Following the official project launch in Kenya in June, and Ghana later this year, the project work will be aimed at sharing best practice and identifying current emergency management practices and plans in the two harbours: Port of Mombasa in Kenya and Port of Tema in Ghana.

Further risk assessment and risk management activities will be based on data gathered to determine the most critical chemical hazards and the quantities of chemicals transported and stored in Kenya and Ghana in large volumes. This will help to confirm the hazard hotspots for further risk assessment in Kenya and Ghana.

The project outcomes will be gathered and shared with the region-through a workshop and a publication. The activities will deepen UNEP's and ICCA's knowledge of the key concerns related to chemicals transport and warehousing in the region to guide the development of further activities in Africa.

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About UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the voice for the environment in the UN system. Established in 1972, UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP is an advocate, educator, catalyst and facilitator promoting the wise use of the planet's natural assets for sustainable development. It works with many partners, UN entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, industries, the media and civil society. UNEP's work involves providing support for: environmental assessment and reporting; legal and institutional strengthening and environmental policy development; sustainable use and management of natural resources; integration of economic development and environmental protection; and promoting public participation in environmental management.

About ICCA

The International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) is the worldwide voice of the chemical industry, a sector with 2010 turnover of more than €2,300 billion (excluding pharmaceuticals). More than 20 million people around the globe are employed directly or indirectly by the chemical industry. ICCA members account for more than 60 per cent of global chemical sales. ICCA focuses on key issues for the chemical industry such as the promotion and coordination of Responsible Care® and safe chemicals management through the Global Product Strategy. Priority advocacy issues include chemicals management, regulatory affairs, and international climate negotiations.

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