

Comité consultatif d'experts sur la santé des enfants et l'environnement en Amérique du Nord
Consejo Consultivo de Expertos sobre Salud Infantil y Medio Ambiente en América del Norte
Expert Advisory Board on Children's Health and the Environment in North America

28 February 2003

ADVICE TO COUNCIL: 03-02

Implementation of the Cooperative Agenda for Children's Health and the Environment in North America

The Expert Advisory Board on Children's Health and the Environment in North America (hereinafter referred to as the 'Expert Advisory Board' or the 'Board') of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

IN ACCORDANCE with its mandate to advise Council on matters pertaining to children's health and the environment,

COGNIZANT of the importance of advancing the protection of children from environmental threats to their health and the benefits of collaboration among the three North American nations, and with particular attention to the need to reduce the inequalities among the countries,

RECOGNIZING with appreciation the important step made by the Council in June 2002 with the adoption of the *Cooperative Agenda for Children's Health and the Environment in North America*,

HAVING met in Alexandria, Virginia, USA on 7 February 2003 to review progress to date in implementation of the *Cooperative Agenda*,

NOTING with appreciation the significant progress that is being made,

HEREBY makes the following observations and recommendations for consideration by the Council:

With appreciation for the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC) Working Group's invitation to the Chair of the Expert Advisory Board to participate in the recent meeting of SMOC (Cuernavaca, October 2002), the Board recommends this practice of including a children's health and environment representative in SMOC meetings and discussions be continued and formalized;

Regarding SMOC's proposed project on biomonitoring of birth mothers for blood levels of persistent toxic chemicals and metals, the Board supports this important step forward and encourages the Council to consider ways of linking this initiative to the proposed longitudinal cohort studies of children's exposures and health outcomes by including an additional project phase that would follow the neurodevelopment and health of children born to participating women;

The Board applauds the Council for directing the Secretariat to develop a special feature report on children's health as part of the *Taking Stock* report series on pollutant release and transfer register (PRTR) data, and looks forward to the release of that document;

Impressed with the progress made by the CEC and its partners in the development of a framework for North American indicators of children's health and the environment, the Board recommends that Council fully support this initiative by providing the necessary data and information to the Secretariat, and by committing sufficient resources to the project. Successful implementation of the indicators project will represent a fulfillment of an important CEC goal, as well as commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Board encourages the Council, with the support of the Secretariat, to pursue means of further capitalizing on the strategic alliances with PAHO, IJC and WHO that have been established by sharing the North American framework, results and lessons learned with other countries of the Americas and worldwide;

The Board supports the CEC's work to address the topic of risk assessment as it pertains to environmental risks to the health of children through the recent workshop in Oaxaca (19-21 February), recognizing the existing challenges and opportunities for advancement in this area, as well as the potential benefits of trilateral collaboration. The Board continues to be concerned that issues of precaution and transparency be a full part of discussions in this area.

Recognizing the power of economic information in promoting change, the Board eagerly awaits the results of the first report on the costs of asthma and other respiratory diseases in the North American countries, and supports the continuation of this work on other children's health illnesses;

Building on the US National Children's Study by undertaking coordinated studies in Canada and the US would increase the power of the US initiative and address important research and knowledge gaps in the three countries. The Board encourages all three countries to take the necessary steps to make such coordinated studies a reality.

Regarding the preparations for the trilateral workshop on lead in consumer products to be held in the latter part of 2003, the Board would welcome the opportunity to have this event in conjunction with its next session. The Board encourages Council to direct the Secretariat and the CEH Team to include organizations and experts outside of government in the planning and implementation of this event.