

## Press Release No. 46/2011

**Press Relations Officer:** Martin Ittershagen

**Deputy Press Relations Officer:** Stephan Gabriel Haufe

**PR-staff:** Fotini Mavromati, Martin Stallmann,

Marc Rathmann; Office: Doreen Redlich, Uwe Weber

**Telephone:** +49 340/2103 -2122, -6625, -2318, -2250, -2507, -2667, -2637

**Address:** Umweltbundesamt, Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau

**Email:** [pressestelle@uba.de](mailto:pressestelle@uba.de)

**Internet:** [www.umweltbundesamt.de](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de), [www.fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de](http://www.fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt](http://www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt)



# Federal Environment Agency in favour of international chemicals strategy

## Export sustainable solutions, not risks

**The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) wants to make chemicals safer on an international scale and has proposed adoption of a global chemicals strategy. “The production and use of chemicals in a globalised world has long ceased to be a national matter. The strain they place on mankind and the environment is not contained within national borders either. Therefore, we need to extend international chemicals management and establish high-quality standards for sustainable management of chemicals applicable to all states”, said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth at the international Sustainable Chemistry conference in Berlin on 6 October 2011. The UBA president applauded the “Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management” (SAICM) launched by the international community. The objective of the strategy must be to gradually limit the volumes of energy, raw and auxiliary materials required in ever more chemical processes and products, he said, adding that pollution of air, soil and water must also be kept to an absolute minimum, and chemical waste must be reduced.**

UBA also recommends banning the use of especially problematic chemicals completely in certain applications. Flasbarth alluded to current international negotiations whose goal is to continue restriction of the use of the toxic heavy metal mercury. Substance regulation has triggered positive innovations in the past. Says Flasbarth, “The effect of a European ban on the use of short-chain chlorinated paraffins (used as a coolant in metalworking) has been to introduce many processes in metalworking that now do completely without cooling lubricants. Smart state regulation thus helps to make innovation processes marketable.” The UBA President also made a positive assessment of the ban on persistent organic pollutants. Thanks to the Stockholm Convention an international ban on the use of highly toxic pesticides such as chlordane or DDT and other persistent organic substances has been put into effect.

“Sustainable solutions are not only the result of international regulation, for industry can also collaborate successfully,” said Flasbarth. A prime example is so-called chemical leasing, whereby

a chemical supplier makes money not by selling as large amounts of chemicals as possible but instead leases them, say, a solvent used in circuit board manufacturing. The supplier takes back the chemical for treatment and possibly offers it for reuse.

Chemical use is only the purchase of the rights to a chemical's function and its appropriate, environmentally safe disposal. Under the chemical leasing business model suppliers make a profit on their know-how. This relieves strain on the environment as there is greater incentive to use fewer chemicals and, as a result, chemical wastes and emissions are significantly reduced. Another example is in the area of hospital hygiene, since specialised suppliers are much more efficient in the use of disinfectants.

Flasbarth encouraged the industrialised states, which dispose of great innovation potential, to begin assisting emerging and developing countries in sustainable management of chemicals. He says, "Just the mass production in the emerging and developing countries required to meet our demand for clothing and shoes causes considerable problems for the global and local environment. We prosperous countries must make greater efforts to ensure that we export sustainable solutions instead of risks through our chemical products and processes."

**More information on the conference "Sustainable Chemistry - a challenge for International Chemicals Management", sponsored by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in Berlin on 6 - 7 October 2011:**

<http://www.sustainablechemistry2011.com/>

**For more information about sustainable chemicals management see here:**

[http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/chemikalien-e/nachhaltige\\_chemie/index.htm](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/chemikalien-e/nachhaltige_chemie/index.htm)

**UBA guide "Guide on sustainable chemicals - A decision tool for substance manufacturers, formulators and end users of chemicals":** <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4169.html>

**UBA guide Umweltstandards in der Textil- und Schuhbranche [Environmental Standards in Textile and Shoe Manufacturing ] (in German):** <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4128.html>

**International Year of Chemistry 2011:** [http://www.unesco.de/chemiejahr\\_2011.html](http://www.unesco.de/chemiejahr_2011.html)

Dessau-Roßlau, 06.10.2011