



2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability

For Prelims: 2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability, [SAICM](#), [UNEP](#), [Stockholm Convention](#), [Lead Poisoning](#), [Fukushima nuclear power plant](#), [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

For Mains: SAICM Beyond 2020, Need for Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change** participated in the virtual '**High Level Dialogue on Human Health and Environment**' convened under the **2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability**- Just Transition Towards a Pollution-free Planet.

- The summit aims to foster a **shared global understanding of critical issues in [chemical](#) and [waste management](#)** while providing crucial political direction.

What is the 2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability?

- The 2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability is a high-level event that aims to provide political guidance and momentum on key international issues and priorities regarding **sound management of chemicals and waste**.
 - It was organized by the **German Federal Ministry for the Nature, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection (BMU)**.
 - It also aimed to garner support and ensure a high level of ambition of the '**SAICM Beyond 2020**' during the upcoming **5th meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5)**.
 - The **First Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability** highlighted the **need for a science-policy interface (SPI) on chemicals and wastes**.

What is SAICM Beyond 2020?

- The **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)**, adopted in **2006**, is a policy framework to promote chemical safety worldwide.
 - The initial objective was to achieve **"the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that by the year 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health."**
 - The scope of SAICM is nearly unlimited, **it includes both toxic chemicals and hazardous industrial activities**. However, **SAICM imposes no binding obligations on countries**.
- As the **mandate of SAICM ended in 2020** and the goal of a sustainable chemicals management has not been achieved, the parties agreed on developing a follow up process - **SAICM Beyond 2020** - which was supposed to be adopted in 2020 at ICCM 5.
 - Since in-person meetings have been suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 5th

session of the ICCM5, **organized by [UNEP](#) under the presidency of the government of Germany**, will take place from **25 to 29 September 2023 at the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), Germany.**

Why is Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Important?

▪ About:

- **Chemicals** are essential for various sectors of the economy, such as [agriculture](#), **industry**, **health**, and **consumer goods**. However, they also pose significant risks to human health and environment if not managed properly.
- A **WHO 2021 Report** estimated that **2 million lives and 53 million disability-adjusted life-years** were lost in 2019 due to exposures to selected chemicals.
 - Nearly half of deaths attributable to chemical exposures in 2019 were due to [lead exposure and resulting cardiovascular diseases](#).

▪ Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste is Crucial for:

- **Human Health Protection:** Proper management helps **minimize exposure to hazardous chemicals**, reducing the risk of acute and chronic health problems.
 - It prevents the **contamination of air, water, and soil** with harmful chemicals that can harm human health through **ingestion, inhalation, or skin contact**.
- **Environmental Conservation:** The release of certain waste products, such as greenhouse gases, can **contribute to climate change**, making **proper [waste management](#)** essential for mitigating environmental impacts.
- **Resource Efficiency:** Proper waste management **allows for the recovery and [recycling of valuable materials](#)**, conserving natural resources and reducing the need for resource extraction.
 - Recycling and proper waste disposal can lead to **energy savings compared to the production of new materials** from raw resources.
- **Economic Benefits:** The waste management and recycling industries **create jobs and stimulate economic growth**.
 - Proper chemical management also **reduces the cost of treating health problems** caused by hazardous substances.
- **Global Cooperation:** Chemicals and waste can cross borders, necessitating **international cooperation to address global challenges effectively**.
 - For instance, the recent **waste water release of the [Fukushima nuclear power plant \(with traces of tritium\)](#)** raised concerns across the globe.
 - There is a need for collaborative efforts to promote **shared responsibility for the management of chemicals and waste** on a global scale.
 - The [Stockholm Convention](#) serves as a prominent example.
- **Long-Term Sustainability:** Responsible management ensures a **cleaner and safer environment for future generations** by reducing pollution and minimizing the impact of chemicals and waste on ecosystems.
 - It is also crucial for achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and protecting the planet and its people.

Note:

- The **Stockholm Convention** is a global treaty aimed at **safeguarding human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs)**, which are long-lasting, widespread chemicals that pose risks to both people and wildlife.
 - India **ratified the convention in 2006**, which allows it to maintain a **default "opt-out" status**, meaning that amendments to convention Annexes do not apply to India unless it **explicitly deposits a ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession instrument** with the UN depositary.
- Other Conventions Related to Chemicals are: [Basel Convention \(on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal\)](#), [Minamata Convention \(mercury\)](#), [Rotterdam Convention](#) (on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following can be found as pollutants in the drinking water in some parts of India? (2013)

1. Arsenic
2. Sorbitol
3. Fluoride
4. Formaldehyde
5. Uranium

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 3 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: c