

The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21

Minerals and metals and their impact on human health and the environment have been considered in a number of venues since the Earth Summit in 1992. Many of these efforts are ongoing and include the following.

- The Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety was established to identify priorities for cooperative action in pursuit of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21.
- The United Nations Environment Programme and other United Nations bodies, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, are active on a variety of initiatives, including negotiations of a global instrument for a prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade and a heavy metals protocol to the ECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.
- The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's risk reduction program has led to pilot projects for five chemicals and, in particular, the voluntary industry action program on lead.
- A technical working group for the 1989 Basel Convention is nearing the completion of two lists of substances that will better define the scope of the convention. Substances that will always or almost always exhibit hazard characteristics will continue to be subject to the Basel ban amendment; those substances that, under normal circumstances, do not exhibit hazard characteristics will be considered to be beyond the scope of the convention.
- Social policy issues related to minerals and metals are being addressed, notably by the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization (ILO). As an example, in 1995, the ILO adopted a Convention and Recommendation