



INTRODUCTION

We are happy to provide you with another newsflash of project REN.

Highlights in this issue:

- Consultation meeting with Sida
- INECE/WCO/UNODC workshop in Vietnam
- Successful Co-creation workshop
- Excessive Pesticide use triggers congenital defects
- China tightens screws on scrap imports
- Other news on National Sword 2 in China
- Warnings over children's health as recycled e-waste is coming back as plastic toys
- Australian e-waste ending up in toxic African dump
- Child laborers exposed to toxic chemicals dying before 50, says WHO
- Turkey ratifies Convention on Ship Recycling
- Prohibited chemicals found in rubber and plastic goods
- Attempt to illegally export the ship to Pakistan revealed
- Lebanon customs stops import of illegal pesticides

REN Newsflash, a monthly newsletter, covers REN activities and achievements, highlights of partners' activities and general news on combating illegal transboundary movements of waste and chemicals, and synergies and linkages on chemicals/waste related MEA's.

REN Activities

[Consultation meeting with Sida](#)

On 28 February the REN team met representatives of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) at the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok. During this yearly consultation the last year results, the 2017 work plan and the future of project REN were discussed.

[INECE, UNODC/ WCO CCP workshop in Vietnam](#)

The REN team participated in and supported a successfully organized workshop for Custom officers on 18-20 April 2017 in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

The workshop was focused on the enforcement of illegal e-waste shipments and illegal trade in Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS). The Vietnamese National Ozone Unit explained the rules on trade in ODS.

REN presented the REN project, the Green Customs Initiative and delivered their experience in the specific items.



Partners' Activities

[Successful Co-creation workshop at Swedish Embassy in Bangkok](#)

On 21-22 March 2017 the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok hosted their annual workshop for regional development partner organizations; Co-creation for Transformation – Effective Delivery on SDGs through Enhanced Cross-Sectorial Interaction.

The workshop was opened by an inspiring dialogue between Ambassador Staffan Herrström and Anne-Charlotte Malm, Head of Development Section.

“Every human being should know about their rights. One of Sweden’s roles as a donor is to contribute to enhance the understanding of the linkages between environmental degradation and human rights such as the right to clean water,” said Anne-Charlotte Malm.

“And, linked to natural resource management issues – is the right to freedom of expression at the core as well – women and men who raise awareness around environmental damages and defend their rights to clean water and land are continuously threatened and exposed to enforced disappearance. There is no quick fix to global and regional problems. As the challenges we face in this region are interlinked, we need to collaborate and use our diverse competencies and strengths in various fields,” said Ambassador Herrström.

Read more: <http://scandasia.com/successful-co-creation-workshop-at-swedish-embassy-in-bangkok/>

Activities in Combating Illegal Transboundary Movement and Border Control of Waste and Chemicals

[Excessive Pesticide Use Triggers Congenital](#)

[Defects](#)



Eni Gustina, Director of Family Health at the Ministry of Health, says that illegal mining and excessive use of pesticides trigger congenital malformation for babies from the time the babies are still in wombs. Thus, the condition needs special attention from the government.

In a media briefing in Jakarta on Monday (3/20), Eni said the Ministry of Health had partnered with 19 hospitals that often deal with patients from areas with risk of high environmental pollution and pesticide use.

The Ministry of Health analyzed data collected from the 19 partner hospitals from September 2014 to December 2016. The data showed that there were 494 cases that met the criteria.

Read more:

<http://www.en.netralnews.com/news/currentnews/read/2869/excessive-pesticide-use-triggers-congenital-defects>

[China 'tightens screws' on scrap imports](#)

Asia: Not least because of China's "National Sword 2017" initiative to counter smuggling, prices of all grades of plastic scrap are likely to remain soft over the coming weeks. A number of plastic scrap traders have withdrawn from Chinese ports where customs officials are opening all containers and ordering their return to ports of origin when any irregularity is uncovered.

Over the past three months, prime plastic prices in Asia have remained high under the support of good demand - except in the case of China. After the Chinese New Year holidays, the prime plastics market peaked but then, suddenly, demand began to ebb and prices started to fall. High prime plastic prices had helped to maintain a healthy momentum within China's plastic scrap market. Prices had remained high despite low demand but the trend began to reverse as a direct result of China's announcement of the launch of a one-year 'Customs Law Enforcement Campaign' that took effect in February. The purpose of this initiative is to crack down on the smuggling via the country's porous ports of 'foreign waste' - the Chinese term that encompasses a certain type of plastic scrap.

Read more: <http://www.recyclinginternational.com/recycling-news/10411/plastic-and-rubber/asia/china-039-tightens-screws-039-scrap-imports>

MORE NEWS ON NATIONAL SWORD OPERATION:

Chinese Customs Using X-Ray Machines To Check All Waste Containers

The Recycling Association has warned that high quality standards must be met, after it has emerged that the Chinese Custom's authorities are now using x-ray machines to check every container entering the country.

As part of the Chinese National Sword programme, which is running from 1 March 2017 until 30 November 2017, customs officials have been told to focus on the quality of waste paper and plastics. All containers are being checked using x-ray machines, and where these are not available, then the containers will be opened for examination. All containers will also be weighed to verify their weights

Read more: <http://ciwm-journal.co.uk/chinese-customs-using-x-ray-machines-check-waste-containers/>

Crackdown on waste smuggling

<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/metro/society/Crackdown-on-waste-smuggling/shdaily.shtml>

Dalian Customs seizes 15 suspects and 1,000 tons of imported solid waste

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1038795.shtml>

Customs seize 7,300 tonnes of plastic waste from smugglers in Shandong Province

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/customs-seize-7300-tonnes-plastic-waste-smugglers-shandong-province/>

Warnings over children's health as recycled e-waste comes back as plastic toys

Flame retardants used in plastics in a wide range of electronic products is putting the health of children exposed to them at risk, according to a new report.

Brominated flame-retarding chemicals have been associated with lower mental, psychomotor and IQ development, poorer attention spans and decreases in memory and processing speed, according to the peer-reviewed study by the campaign group CHEM Trust.

"The brain development of future generations is at stake," says Dr Michael Warhurst, CHEM Trust's director. "We need EU regulators to phase out groups of chemicals of concern, rather than slowly restricting one chemical at a time. We cannot continue to gamble with our children's health."

The issue poses questions about recycled products that have been imported from countries with less robust recycling rules, such as China.

In 2014 China generated 3.2bn tonnes of industrial solid waste, of which 2bn tonnes was recycled, recovered, incinerated or reused, according to a study in Nature. But concerns about its waste treatment standards were heightened by the discovery of some of the highest concentrations of PBDE chemicals (a group of brominated flame retardants) ever recorded in the food chain near the country's e-waste recycling plants in the same year.

A trend towards using plastic parts instead of metals in electrical and electronic goods is also causing a headache for the circular economy because so many plastics use toxic flame retardants.

One 2015 study found significant traces of two potentially hormone-altering brominated flame retardants in 43% of 21 children's toys surveyed, including toy robots, hockey sticks and finger skateboards. The substances are often found in the recycled plastics first used in electronic products.

Last month the European commission moved to restrict the use of one such substance, DecaBDE, but also allowed exemptions for spare car parts and aviation, and longer deferral periods for recycled materials containing the substance.

A subsequent European Environmental Bureau report called on the commission to limit the amount of hazardous materials in circulation and ensure the appropriate decontamination of hazardous waste before recovery.

Read more: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/mar/09/plastics-recycling-ewaste-children-toys-health-risks-flame-retardants-circular-economy>

Australian e-waste ending up in toxic African dump, torn apart by children

A computer monitor from St George Bank, destined for recycling in Australia, has been found on a toxic e-waste dump in West Africa, being pulled apart by children as young as five. At Agbogbloshie dump, in Ghana's capital, Accra, children tear apart e-waste from Western nations with their hands, and burn circuit boards over open fires to melt out the precious metals.

Broken or redundant computers are considered hazardous waste and are illegal to ship out of Australia — so the discovery of the bank monitor raises serious questions about the integrity and regulation of Australia's growing e-waste problem.



St George Bank, wholly owned by Westpac, claims gold standard environmental stewardship.

It says it followed the "right processes to ensure the St George Bank monitor was dispatched" to their recycling partner.

Ghanaian environmental reporter, Mike Anane, on assignment for RN's Background Briefing, discovered the broken monitor during a routine visit to check on the health and welfare of children working at Agbogbloshie dump, considered the worst dump in the world.

"Over 500 container loads of electronic waste are coming from these developed countries, including Australia, every single month," said Anane, speaking from Accra.

"Lately there is so much coming from Australia. I see about three container loads of electronic waste coming from Australia every single month.

"It is not just immoral, it is criminal to ship these things here."

Australia is one of the biggest consumers of electronics in the world, buying millions of items a year, which translates into almost 600,000 tonnes of e-waste annually. The St George Bank monitor is part of that growing pile.

Background Briefing showed a video of a 13-year-old boy on the Agbogbloshie dump holding the bank's monitor to Don Quinn, operations manager at WorkVentures, which has the contract for Westpac's 15,000 e-waste items every year.

Read more: <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-10/australian-e-waste-ending-up-in-toxic-african-dump/8339760?pfmredir=sm>

Waste paper market braced for price falls

The recovered paper – or waste paper – sector is bracing itself for a turbulent April with a sharp decline expected in the value of mixed paper on the export market.

Prices are also heading downwards for used cardboard (known as OCC or Old KLS) and other grades could be hit as a consequence.

Market values for used mixed paper, a product which often comes from materials recycling facilities, could fall by 50% or more from the £100+ level seen at the beginning of March 2017, according to recovered paper sector sources.

Waste paper exports are more costly Container prices for shipping waste paper to China and other overseas destinations have risen significantly

Sector experts put the sudden fall in value and a reduced demand down to several factors. These include the fact that Chinese mills have been paying relatively high prices in recent months; weaker selling prices and slower demand for finished new product in China; higher freight charges and container shortages; and more waste paper being available on the internal market in China. Stocks of finished new product in China are also described as “good”.

And, quality of material also remains an issue – recently 103 containers of paper for export were returned from Rotterdam to Ireland. This comes against a background of an ongoing Chinese customs programme “Operation National Sword” which is targeting illegal waste exports to China, although this was not launched to target poor quality waste paper exports.

However, customs checks linked to the National Sword work are said to be slowing the movement of containers and could exacerbate the shipping situation

Read more: <http://www.letsrecycle.com/news/latest-news/market-braces-waste-paper-price-fall/>

Child laborers exposed to toxic chemicals dying before 50, WHO says



Bangladesh tannery workers exposed to formaldehyde, sulphuric acid and more while making products for westerners

Children as young as eight, working in the tanneries of Bangladesh producing leather that is in demand across Europe and the USA, are exposed to toxic chemical cocktails that are likely to shorten their lives, according to a new report.

Approximately 90% of those who live and work in the overcrowded urban slums of Hazaribagh and Kamrangirchar, where hazardous chemicals are discharged into the air, streets and river, die before they reach 50, according to the World Health Organisation.

Their plight spurred the volunteer doctors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to set up clinics in the area to diagnose and treat those who are the victims of their workplace. It is, says a paper published in BMJ Case Reports, “the first time they have intervened in an area for reasons other than natural disasters or war”.

MSF’s intervention was triggered by “the widespread industrial negligence and apathy of owners of tanneries and other hazardous material factories” towards the more than 600,000 largely migrant population who have no access to government-funded healthcare.

MSF set up and ran four main clinics for 5,000 workers in 2015, located in the centre of communities involved in four different manufacturing processes at factories for tanning, plastics recycling, garment-making and metals.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/21/plight-of-child-workers-facing-cocktail-of-toxic-chemicals-exposed-by-report-bangladesh-tanneries>

Turkey ratifies Hong Kong Convention on Ship Recycling

The Turkish Parliament has ratified The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (“the Convention”) on 7 March 2017. Turkey had become a signatory to the Convention on 26 August 2010. The field work which constitutes the foundation of the Convention has been carried out and the Turkish ship recycling facilities have been examined by international organisations. According to information obtained from the Istanbul & Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea Regions Chamber of Shipping, all Turkish ship recycling facilities comply with the standards set out in the Convention. Furthermore, the Turkish Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communication has played an active role in the drafting of the Convention.

The thrust of the Convention is to set standards for ships and ship recycling facilities to ensure they operate in a manner that does not pose any risk to human health, safety and the environment.

The rules stipulated by the Convention address a multitude of issues, such as:

- the handling of environmentally hazardous substances such as asbestos, heavy metals and hydrocarbons, which may be contained in vessels that are sold for scrapping;
- the appropriate construction and operation of vessels in order to ensure safe and sound recycling;

- the standards to be maintained by ship recycling facilities in order to ensure secure working and environmental conditions;
- the establishment of an enforcement mechanism for ship recycling, including certification and reporting obligations.

Pursuant to the Convention, an inventory of existing hazardous materials shall have to be kept for all ships. Hazardous materials which are prohibited on ships and in shipyards of the Convention countries are listed in an appendix to the Convention. Ships will also have to undergo a number of surveys prior to recycling in order to verify the inventory of hazardous materials, based on which ship recycling facilities will procure a “Ship Recycling Plan”, setting out the manner in which each ship will be recycled.

Convention countries will be required to take sufficient steps in order to guarantee that ship recycling facilities comply with the standards stipulated in the Convention, aiming to ensure secure working and environmental conditions.

The Convention will enter into force 24 months after the date on which the following conditions are met:

- Ratification by 15 states,
- Representation by 40 per cent of world merchant shipping (by gross tonnage), and
- A combined maximum annual ship recycling volume not less than 3 per cent of the combined tonnage of the ratifying states.

Turkey was the sixth country to ratify the Convention, following Norway, Congo, France, Belgium and Panama. Denmark has taken first steps towards ratifying the Convention and is expected to do so in spring 2017.

Read more:

<http://www.ersoybilgehan.com/publication-detail/turkey-ratifies-hong-kong-convention-on-ship-recycling/>

Prohibited chemicals found in plastic and rubber goods

The Swedish Chemicals Agency has found prohibited levels of carcinogenic substances in several rubber and plastic goods. The substances, referred to as 'PAHs' were found in, among other things, handles, a hammer and a horse brush.

"The individual products don't comprise any major risk, but the fact that these substances occur in the products entails problems in the long-term for both health and the environment. PAHs may involve health risks if you are exposed to the substances through the mouth, skin and in some cases by breathing them," says Camilla Westlund, inspector at the Swedish Chemicals Agency.

In the enforcement project, the Swedish Chemicals Agency checked rubber or plastic goods which come into contact with the skin or can be inserted in the mouth. The analyses have focused on the content of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) which is a group of substances of which some can cause cancer and damage the genotype. In the project 58 different goods were examined, among other things the handles of bicycles, tools and exercise equipment were checked. PAHs which are prohibited in goods were found in five of the tested products. However, two of these are exempt from the regulation as their sale started before the prohibition in the EU's chemicals legislation REACH started to apply in December 2015.

Read more:

<http://news.cision.com/kemikalieinspektionen/r/prohibited-chemicals-found-in-plastic-and-rubber-goods,c2230820>

Attempt to illegally export the ship to Pakistan revealed

After having been informed by the NGO Shipbreaking Platform and its member organisation Bellona that the TIDE CARRIER (now named HARRIER, aka EIDE CARRIER) had been sold for illegal, dirty and dangerous scrapping to a South Asian beaching facility, the Norwegian environmental authorities arrested the ship on Tuesday 5 April [1]. The vessel is not allowed to leave Norway unless it is to sail to a ship recycling destination in line with international and European hazardous waste laws. According to the

Norwegian Environment Agency, it is the first arrest of a vessel in Norway for the illegal export of hazardous waste.

The Platform had been informed already during the summer of 2015 that the ship was sold for scrap. Having been laid up for many years on the Norwegian west coast the Platform immediately contacted the Norwegian owners Eide Group to make them aware of the laws governing end-of-life ships and that exporting the vessel to a South Asian beaching yard would be in breach of the European Waste Shipment Regulation and the UN Basel Convention. Eide Group denied then that the vessel would be scrapped.

On 22 February 2017 the vessel attempted to leave Norway under a new name, flag and registered owner. Now called TIDE CARRIER, the ship had swapped its flag to that of Comoros and was registered under an anonymous St. Kitts and Nevis based post-box company, Julia Shipping – all solid indications that a cash buyer, a scrap dealer specialised in the trading of end-of-life ships to the South Asian beaching yards, was involved.

The TIDE CARRIER however ran into difficulties as the engine stopped working outside the Norwegian coast of Jaeren. The coastguards were forced to trigger a salvage operation, complicated by way of the weather conditions, to avoid the risk of oil spill and grounding close to one of the most renowned beaches in Norway. The rescue operation included the emergency evacuation of 5 crew members – one of which suffered from a broken shoulder – and the deployment of two tugboats to bring the ship to safety.

Norwegian authorities have since then been trying to trace the owner and insurer of the vessel, given that someone should be held accountable for the costs of the rescue operation incurred by the Norwegian state. While the authorities investigated the

ownership and condition of the vessel, it remained docked in Gismarvik, Norway.

“We immediately informed Norwegian authorities that the ship was most likely sold for scrapping in South Asia and also that there were suspicions that the ship had been used to store hazardous sludge,” says Ingvild Jenssen, Director at the NGO Shipbreaking Platform.

On Monday 4 April the Environment Agency and the Police found evidence that the vessel was under a “break up voyage” insurance from Norway to Gadani, Pakistan. They also found unidentified and excessive amounts of sludge and fuel oils. The previous week, while the vessel was still in the dock, the TIDE CARRIER changed name to HARRIER and changed from Comoros to another popular end-of-life flag: Palau. Consequently, it became clear that the repair contract from Oman which had been provided to the Norwegian authorities as a way to escape checks for the illegal export of the vessel was false. Revelations of the attempt of the ship’s illegal export and subsequent breaking on the Gadani beach resulted in the arrest of the ship.

This is not the first time cash buyers seek to circumvent environmental protection laws by providing fake contracts of repair or further operational use. Recently the Norwegian owned CITY OF TOKYO was allowed to leave the port of Antwerp under the pretense of repair work in Dubai – instead it sailed directly to the infamous beaching yards in Bangladesh. The FPSO NORTH SEA PRODUCER was also illegally exported from the UK to Bangladesh under the pretense of further operational use in Nigeria [2]. Cash buyer GMS used grey- and black listed Paris MoU flags and established anonymous post box companies in both cases.

“The cash buyers of TIDE CARRIER will not only have to pay back the Norwegian authorities for the rescue operation, but will also have to answer for the fake repair documents which were used to let it sail in the first place. Norwegian owner Eide will have to be held responsible for having sold to a cash buyer as this clearly indicates their complicity in the attempt to illegally export the ship and the potentially toxic excess sludges and fuels found on board,” says Ingvild Jenssen.

<http://www.shipbreakingplatform.org/press-release-controversial-tide-carrier-under-arrest-in-norway/>

Customs stop illegal pesticides from entering Lebanon

Lebanese Customs in Tripoli Friday intercepted an illegal shipment of pesticides coming from Turkey, state media said.

Customs officers stopped a boat called “Espero” carrying clothes and illegal pesticides on its way into the port in Tripoli, the National News Agency reported.

The pesticides, which were covered in hay, were being smuggled from Iskenderun.

The boat and pesticides were seized, and the captain taken in for questioning.

A recent crackdown on smugglers and illegal imports came after the Higher Defense Council meeting last week at Baabda Palace, where the council agreed to take stricter measure at all borders.

<https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Apr-07/401027-customs-stop-illegal-pesticides-from-entering-lebanon.ashx>

Compiled and edited by Mr. Huib van Westen and reviewed by Mr Andy Raine.
Information presented under ‘partner activities’ is obtained from external sources. UN Environment and SIDA do not verify its accuracy or endorse this information in any way.

Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Waste (funded by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and implemented by UN Environment)

Contact us at:
United Nations Environment
Asia and Pacific Office
UN Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel: +66 2 288 1874, Fax: +66 2288 3041
Email: vanwesten@un.org

Websites: <http://www.projectren.org>
<http://www.roap.unep.org>