



# Chemicals and Waste



## MAIN ISSUE

Over 100 million man-made chemicals and chemical formulations are used in every sector, including agriculture, housing, clothing, cosmetics, and food. Most chemicals, when used responsibly, benefit human development. But some are harmful or hazardous and can now be found in all ecosystems on planet Earth. Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury, for example, travel over large distances through air and water currents, and in migratory species.

When used improperly or disposed of unsafely, chemicals pose significant risks for both the environment and human health. Scientists estimate that just about every person carries within their body many chemical contaminants with an unknown impact on their well-being. For example, science has

demonstrated that a mother passes on one-third of these harmful chemicals to her baby in utero and mother's milk.

Due to the global impact on human health and the environment, some of these highly dangerous chemicals are controlled by international law. But despite these legal agreements, the production, use, and disposal of chemicals are rapidly increasing in developing countries and countries in economic transition. These rapid changes increase economic opportunities, but they must be matched by enhanced programs for sound chemicals and waste management. The cost to national economies of human and environmental exposure to harmful chemicals is often unrecognized but can be substantial.

## WHAT WE DO

The GEF works to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition to eliminate the most harmful chemicals. These chemicals are covered by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The GEF also supports the achievement of broader sound management of chemicals and waste through its support to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management – the United Nations’ policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world.

The GEF has developed three key strategic objectives regarding chemicals and waste in GEF-8. These objectives take a systems approach to addressing chemicals and waste. They aim to use GEF resources to unlock private and commercial finance to amplify the impact of GEF-supported work:

1. Create, strengthen, and support the enabling environment and policy coherence to transform the manufacture, use, and sound management of chemicals and to eliminate waste and chemical pollution.
2. Prevent future buildup of hazardous chemicals and waste in the environment.
3. Eliminate hazardous chemicals and waste.



## RESULTS

For the GEF-8 replenishment, donors pledged approximately \$800 million as a commitment to ridding the world of the most harmful chemicals through the GEF's chemicals and waste programming, accounting for 15% of the total replenishment commitment making it the third largest focal area after biodiversity and climate change.

As of June 30, 2022, the GEF has cumulatively programmed \$1.5 billion in projects that support the Stockholm Convention since its adoption in 2001. This GEF investment has leveraged approximately \$7.7 billion in co-financing to bring the total value of the GEF POPs portfolio to over \$9 billion.





## GEF-8 Provides New Opportunities for Implementation of the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions, and the Montreal Protocol

### GEF-8 Chemicals and Waste Focal Area Strategy

The GEF-7 strategy yielded significant advances to managing chemicals and waste in Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. It started addressing chemicals in major supply chains, including textiles; advanced engagement on the gold supply chain and plastics; and significantly engaged the private sector to support implementation of the Conventions. But there is growing recognition of the need to address chemicals more holistically through a sector-based approach. To that end, GEF-8 will target gaps in policy, legislation, finance, technology, and awareness to ensure a healthy people and planet.

**Objective 1** of the strategy (ensure an enabling policy environment to support the transition to cleaner chemistry and eliminate existing waste) will support the development and strengthening of the enabling conditions and environment to phase out hazardous chemicals in supply chains such as fashion and construction.

To that end, the GEF will help countries develop legislation and coherent policies across national institutions and adopt an internationally harmonized approach to classification and labelling. Activities can include engaging the public and private sectors, as well as civil society and others.

**Objective 2** of the strategy (prevent future buildup of hazardous chemicals and waste in the environment) will work to leapfrog green/sustainable alternatives to hazardous chemicals. It will promote design of products and materials that both eliminate use of hazardous chemicals, and reduce/eliminate their emissions into the environment. Among its priorities, it will help industry adopt sustainable and regenerative supply chains.

**Objective 3** of the strategy (elimination of hazardous chemicals and waste) will support elimination of stockpiles of waste/obsolete chemicals and products that contain or emit POPs, chemicals of concern, and mercury, among other toxic materials. At the same time, it will promote environmentally sound waste management, green technologies, and capacity building to identify and remediate contaminated sites, among other priorities.



### **GEF-8 Integrated Programs**

Eleven integrated programs (IPs) form part of the GEF-8 Programming Directions and strongly complement the GEF-8 chemicals and waste strategy. The IPs cover a wide array of thematic areas of direct relevance to the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and the Montreal Protocol. In this way, they provide countries with additional opportunities to address the key underlying drivers of chemicals and waste in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

GEF-8 will work more closely with the private sector to address chemicals used, or emitted, from one or more supply chains, including fashion, especially textiles; electronics; certain classes of plastics; and building materials. These efforts will target major economic sectors such as tourism, health care, industrial production and manufacturing, mining and agriculture. Key IPs include Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution; Sustainable Cities; Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes; Green and Blue Islands; Food Systems; and Net-Zero Nature-Positive Accelerator.





The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a family of funds dedicated to confronting biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and strains on land and ocean health. Its grants, blended financing, and policy support helps developing countries address their biggest environmental priorities and adhere to international environmental conventions. Over the past three decades, the GEF has provided more than \$22 billion and mobilized \$120 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 national and regional projects.