

MEDIA INFORMATION

The Environmental Toxin Report 2013 provides information on the progress and challenges in remediating polluted places and their respective sources of environmental toxins:

The ten most polluted places of 2013

CH-Zurich, 5 November 2013 – Independent environmental organization Green Cross Switzerland in cooperation with US-based Blacksmith Institute, USA presents a list of the world's ten most polluted places. These ten sites are spread over eight countries.

The latest environmental toxin report shows that the health effects caused by environmental toxins can be equated to some of the most dangerous illnesses worldwide and even surpass them, threatening millions of lives. The World Health Organization estimates that 20 percent of deaths in developing countries are directly caused by environmental effects. It is also believed that almost one fifth of cancer diseases worldwide are linked to environmental toxins. This conspicuously high percentage of assignable cancer deaths is even higher in developing countries. Pollution problems threaten the health of 200 million people worldwide.

According to Dr. Stephan Robinson, Unit Manager (Water, Legacy) at Green Cross Switzerland, successful remediation efforts in places that ranked in the top-ten list in 2007 show that the fight against environmental pollution in developing countries can lead to significant health improvements and even save the lives of people, especially children. "The results confirm that the elimination of environmental toxins is challenging but not impossible. We need to mobilize the necessary funds and strengthen our commitment in order to act as quickly as possible," says Robinson. "Bright spots like these should prompt governments to drive the funding of similar measures," emphasizes Nathalie Gysi, Executive Director of Green Cross Switzerland.

This year's report features a new top-ten list, from which former places listed in the years 2006 and 2007 (see Environmental Toxin Report 2009: ten best pollution solutions <http://www.greencross.ch/de/news-info/umweltberichte/zehn-beste-sanierungsloesungen.html>) have been eliminated thanks to robust remediation solutions while new places from the ever expanding TSIP data base (Toxic Sites Identification Program) have been added.

The top-ten list in alphabetical order by country. Given the variety in size, population and type of pollution, a ranking would be neither realistic nor feasible.

The ten most polluted places of 2013 are:

- Matanza-Riachuelo, Argentina (VOC volatile organic compounds, especially toluene)
- Hazaribagh, Bangladesh (chrome)
- Agbogbloshie Dumpsite, Ghana (lead, cadmium, mercury)
- Citarum River, Indonesia (chemicals, such as lead, cadmium, chrome and pesticides)
- Kalimantan, Indonesia (cadmium, mercury)
- Niger River Delta, Nigeria (oil)
- Dzershinsk, Russia (chemicals, including sarin, lead and phenols as well as toxic byproducts)
- Norilsk, Russia (heavy metals)
- Kabwe, Zambia (lead)
- Chernobyl, Ukraine (radionuclides)

The Environmental Toxin Report 2013 can be downloaded at www.greencross.ch on 5 November 2013, 9:00 a.m. CET.

Top-ten 2013 criteria

The selection of the ten most dangerously polluted places is based on several key criteria. Firstly, this year's top-ten list aims to re-visit the places that were listed among the most polluted in 2006 and 2007 and that haven't made any significant progress in terms of environmental remediation. These are Dzershinsk and Norilsk, Russia, and Chernobyl, Ukraine, despite in some cases great remediation efforts whose impact will be felt in the coming years. The other places were selected using the Toxic Sites Identification Program, a database that was developed by the Blacksmith Institute in cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and in parts supported by funding from the European Commission, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

The ten most polluted places have pollution problems to which people are openly exposed. Places with pollutants affecting people through direct inhalation, food intake or skin contact were prioritized. They include lead, cadmium, chrome, oil, pesticides, phenols, mercury, sarin, radionuclides and VOCs. Also prioritized were those places where a large part of the population is affected by pollution problems. Finally, each pollutant was assessed based on information about its toxicity, carcinogenicity and potential health hazards. Information from the "worst pollution" lists of the US Environmental Protection Agency, the World Bank and several non-profit and non-governmental organizations were also taken into consideration.

Yearly environmental toxin reports

Since 2007, the yearly environmental toxin reports have been instrumental in increasing public understanding of the health impacts of pollution sources, and in some cases, have even forced cleanup work at these sites. Previous reports have identified the worst toxic threats and the worst pollution problems. And the Environmental Toxin Report 2012 shows that the health impacts of industrial pollutants measured are roughly equal to those of the three major global infectious diseases (AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria).

About the Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross Switzerland

Blacksmith Institute is an international non-profit organization dedicated to solving life-threatening pollution issues in the developing world. It addresses a critical need to identify and clean up the world's worst polluted places. Blacksmith focuses on places where human health, especially that of women and children, is most at risk. Based in New York, Blacksmith works cooperatively in partnerships that include governments, the international community, NGOs and local agencies to design and implement innovative, low-cost solutions to save lives. Since 1999, Blacksmith has completed over 50 projects; Blacksmith is currently engaged in over 40 projects in 20 countries.

Green Cross Switzerland facilitates overcoming consequential damage caused by industrial and military disasters and the clean-up of contaminated sites from the Cold War period. It focuses on improving the quality of life for people affected by chemical, radioactive and other types of contamination, as well as promoting sustainable development in the spirit of co-operation instead of confrontation.

Green Cross International (GCI), founded by Mikhail Gorbachev, is an independent, charitable non-governmental organization that campaigns through high-level lobbying and local projects to overcome the interlinked global challenges of security, poverty reduction and

environmental degradation. Based in Geneva, GCI maintains a growing network of national organizations in more than 30 countries.

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