

## ***Opening of the second International Environment House IEH 2 on 4 June 2004 in Geneva***

# **Centre for international environment policy**

The second International Environment House is to be inaugurated in Geneva on Friday, 4 June 2004, which is International Environment Day. The house came into being on the initiative of the Swiss Confederation, of the Canton of Geneva and of the City of Geneva, and is supplementary to the first Environment House IEH 1, which has been in existence for five years. The second house is primarily intended to accommodate non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the area of the environment.

Over the past decade, there has been a marked increase in the importance and influence of NGOs. As a result of positive experience with the first Environment House and the need for space for NGOs, the Swiss Confederation and the Geneva authorities decided to increase their support for co-operation between governmental organisations and NGOs, and the resultant synergies.

## **Synergies through networking**

**The International Environmental House is unique.** It provides organisational and geographical links between processes and organisations that are active in the environmental field and related areas. This “clustering” is intended to promote coherence and synergies in the international environmental system (International Environment Governance) and is demanded by the international community.

**Solutions to global problems originate in the Environment House.** Since its inauguration in 1999, the first International Environment House has accommodated about 500 people working for numerous organisations and programmes. For instance, it houses the European Regional Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the secretariats of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste, of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). The secretariats of the PIC and POPs conventions are currently provisionally located in Geneva. Switzerland is applying to be the permanent headquarters of those two institutions and would like to set up a real competence centre for chemicals (chemical cluster) in Geneva (see examples in the box). The secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), the headquarters of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and other UN programmes also reside in the Environment House.

**Geneva Environment Network.** The Geneva Environment Network (GEN) was founded in 1999 and promotes co-operation between organisations and programmes accommodated in the Environment House. Over 42 governmental organisations active in the area of the environment, and NGOs in Geneva and the surrounding region are affiliated to the GEN. The headquarters of the Geneva Environment Network are also in the International Environment House.

## **Information**

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**Geneva Chemical Cluster: examples of networking in the Environment House**

- **Reduction of pesticide stockpiles in Africa.** The networking and resultant synergies in the Environment House simplify the practical implementation of “African Stockpile Projects”. This programme was initiated by various organisations and partners within and outside the UN and has the objective of treating an estimated 50,000 tonnes of expired pesticides in Africa, in stages over the next 12 to 15 years.
- **Chemical workshops in Eastern Europe and in South America.** On the initiative of the Geneva Environment Network (GEN), chemical workshops were held in Montevideo last winter and in Riga this spring. The aim of these events was to show countries from those regions the advantages of co-ordinated implementation of the conventions on waste and chemicals (the Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel conventions) and to convince them of the importance of rapid ratification of these conventions.
- **National programmes for the management of chemicals and waste.** The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) also benefits from the proximity of environmental organisations. UNITAR works with the Basel Convention and other organisations to help countries produce an “integrated national programme for the management of chemicals and waste”.