

## Don't set your waste on fire

*Current day's waste amounts make traditional waste burning a local and global health problem. The burning emits chemicals that are extremely poisonous and build up in nature and in our bodies. The [insert relevant agency/ministry] promotes safer practices for waste handling, and work to improve waste collection and recycling to clean the country and avoid waste burning.*

### Fumes from waste burning harms our health

We all know that we should not let our children play in the smoke from a fire, because the fumes are unhealthy. But did you know that besides the dark and ill-smelling smoke, the burning emits some of the most poisonous chemicals we know of in the world?

### Toxic chemicals travel far

It has been estimated that from the whole country, only a few hundred grams of the poisonous chemicals are emitted, but this is enough to alert the government and make it push for lower emissions. You might think that these chemicals only affect people that can see and smell the smoke, but its effects have a far longer range. The toxic chemicals – they are called uPOPs and mercury – are invisible and can be carried with wind and water over national and global distances. They do not break down, so they build up in nature over time, and in the bodies of us and our children through our foods and breathing, where they can do harm.

### We are already affected

Global surveys have shown that in most countries worldwide, breast milk has unsafe concentrations of uPOPs. The concentrations are higher than average in Africa, probably because of widespread burning of waste, which is the biggest uPOPs source in the continent. This means that both ourselves and our children – the most vulnerable – are already affected by these chemicals. The box shows how chemicals emitted from waste burning can affect our health.

#### Health risks from waste burning

- Cancer
- Respiratory diseases
- Disturbance of the immune system
- Reproductive effects
- Poor intelligence and nervous system
- Mutations to our genes
- Hypersensitivity
- Skin irritation
- Eye damages
- Liver damages
- Irregular heartbeat
- Headaches

### More waste prompts proper handling

From time immemorial we have burned our waste to warm us, cook our food and just to get rid of it. Today we however produce more and more waste, and with man-made materials that are less compatible with nature. Piling up waste at the roadside or at abandoned sites looks ugly and scare away the tourists. Burning it is even worse as explained above. So, we need responsible handling of our waste all over the country. The key words here are effective waste collection, sorting of the waste by all citizens and recycling of useful materials, and environmentally safe disposal of the waste we cannot make good use of. The government works to gradually improve the waste collection and treatment system in the country over the next years.

## Recycle valuable materials

You may have heard the slogan “reduce, reuse, recycle” and this is our vision for waste handling from now on: **Reduce** the waste amounts by smarter products design and less packaging, **reuse** your bags, clothes and products in the family or hand on to others, and sort the valuable materials – see which in the box – from your waste and deliver them to buy back centres or recyclers, from where they are processed for **recycling** into new products and materials. With improved products and materials design, most of the waste may be recyclable in the future; some even talk about a future “zero waste society”.

## Clean the country – we cannot do it without you

The [insert relevant agency/ministry] works with the municipalities, recyclers, industry, NGOs and all willing citizens to promote safer practices for waste collection and handling. We all want a clean country and healthy citizens. Please help us, we cannot do it without you!

## The chemicals conventions

The [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants \(POPs\)](#) requires countries (Parties) to reduce or, if possible, eliminate open waste burning, or if burning is unavoidable, to improve burning conditions to minimize the formation of poisonous chemicals nicknamed uPOPs. It also regulates the manufacturing and trade very hazardous chemicals such as certain pesticides, brominated flame retardants, fluorinated substances and PCB. The [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#) requires countries (Parties) to treat waste with mercury in a way that does not cause dispersion into the environment, including avoiding open burning of waste containing mercury. It also regulates the production of mercury and manufacture and trade of mercury-containing products as well as the emissions and releases of mercury to the environment from industrial processes and gold mining. Other global chemicals conventions regulate the export of certain hazardous chemicals (Rotterdam Convention) and the export of hazardous waste (Basel Convention).

### Recycle! Valuables, not waste:

- Plastic bottles and other hard plastics
- Glass bottles and jars
- Metals (cans, wire and other)
- Paper and cardboard
- Textiles (if they cannot be reused anymore)
- Electronics and electric appliances
- Sorted vegetable and fruit waste (for composting to good soil)