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The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and its possible relevance to lead or cadmium

Note by the secretariat

1. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a recently adopted policy framework for international action to advance the sound management of chemicals. As it does not set out any specific reduction measures relating to lead and cadmium, SAICM is not described in chapter 8 of the reviews of scientific information on lead and on cadmium under discussion by the Working Group on Lead and Cadmium at its first meeting. As the adoption of SAICM represents, however, an expressed commitment from Governments to promote the sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste as a priority in national, regional and international policy frameworks, including strategies for sustainable development, development assistance and poverty reduction, a description of SAICM and its possible relevance to lead and cadmium is provided in the present document.

I. Background

2. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management is a policy framework for international action to advance the sound management of chemicals, adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its first session, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 4–6 February 2006. It reaffirms the commitment expressed in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, adopted in Johannesburg in 2002, that by 2020 chemicals should be used and produced in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

3. The Strategic Approach comprises three core texts, which can be accessed in full on the webpage of the SAICM secretariat at <http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/>. The texts are as follows:

(a) The Dubai Declaration, which expresses the commitment to SAICM by ministers, heads of delegation and representatives of civil society and the private sector present at the first session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management;

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(b) The Overarching Policy Strategy, which sets out the scope of SAICM, the needs it addresses and the objectives it promotes, as well as its underlying principles and financial and institutional arrangements;

(c) A Global Plan of Action, which sets out proposed work areas and activities for implementation of the Strategic Approach.

4. The Conference adopted the Overarching Policy Strategy which, together with the Dubai Declaration, constitutes a firm commitment to SAICM and its implementation. The Conference recommended the use and further development of the Global Plan of Action as a working tool and guidance document. In addition, it adopted four resolutions, among other things on implementation arrangements and on a Quick Start Programme for mobilization of additional national and international financial resources, to accelerate the strengthening of capabilities and capacities for the implementation of the Strategic Approach objectives.

5. The overall objective of the Strategic Approach is to achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. The objective will be achieved, among other ways, through the implementation of activities set out in the Global Plan of Action.

II. Possible relevance to lead and cadmium

6. Section 4 of the Overarching Policy Strategy sets out specific objectives within each of five priority areas, namely: risk reduction; knowledge and information; governance; capacity-building and technical cooperation; and illegal international traffic.

7. Part A of section 4 of the Strategy, on risk reduction, identifies the following groups of chemicals that might be prioritized for assessment and related studies:

- (a) Persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances (PBTs);
- (b) Very persistent and very bioaccumulative substances;
- (c) Chemicals that are carcinogens or mutagens or that adversely affect, inter alia, the reproductive, endocrine, immune, or nervous systems;
- (d) Persistent organic pollutants (POPs);
- (e) Mercury and other chemicals of global concern;
- (f) Chemicals produced or used in high volumes;
- (g) Chemicals subject to wide dispersive uses; and
- (h) Other chemicals of concern at the national level.

8. Lead and cadmium are not explicitly mentioned in the Overarching Policy Strategy, however, they may have relevance especially to groups (e) and (h).

9. The Global Plan of Action has been structured into work areas and associated activities that may be undertaken voluntarily by stakeholders in order to pursue the commitments and objectives expressed in the Dubai Declaration and the Overarching Policy Strategy. The Global Plan of Action should be regarded as a guidance document to be reviewed, as appropriate, and the activities should be considered and implemented, as appropriate, by stakeholders during the implementation of the Strategic Approach, according to their applicability.

10. The executive summary in the Global Plan of Action indicates that, in general, priority should be given to activities which:

- (a) Focus on narrowing the gap between developed countries on the one hand and developing countries and countries with economies in transition on the other in their capacities for the sound management of chemicals;
- (b) Facilitate the implementation of existing agreements and work areas;
- (c) Target issues not currently addressed in existing agreements and work areas;

- (d) Ensure that, by 2020:
- (i) Chemicals or chemical uses that pose an unreasonable and otherwise unmanageable risk to human health and the environment¹ based on a science-based risk assessment and taking into account the costs and benefits as well as the availability of safer substitutes and their efficacy are no longer produced or used for such uses;
 - (ii) The risks from unintended releases of chemicals that pose an unreasonable and otherwise unmanageable risk to human health and the environment based on a science-based risk assessment and taking into account the costs and benefits are minimized;
 - (iii) Target chemicals that pose unreasonable and unmanageable risks;
 - (iv) Promote the generation of adequate science-based knowledge on health and environmental risks of chemicals and make it available to all stakeholders.
11. The Global Plan of Action recognizes lead and cadmium specifically in the following activities:
- (a) Activity 49: Eliminate lead in gasoline;
 - (b) Activity 57: Promote reduction of the risks posed to human health and the environment, especially by lead, mercury and cadmium, by sound environmental management, including a thorough review of relevant studies such as the UNEP global assessment of mercury and its compounds;
 - (c) Activity 60: Consider the review of scientific information, focusing especially on long-range environmental transport, to inform future discussions on the need for global action in relation to lead and cadmium, to be presented to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session in 2007 (based on UNEP Governing Council decision 23/9);
 - (d) Activity 156: Undertake research into alternative additives to lead in gasoline;
 - (e) Activity 157: Undertake research into alternatives for other lead-based products;
 - (f) Activity 244: Develop capacity to identify alternatives to lead in gasoline, establish the necessary infrastructure for analysing gasoline and upgrade the infrastructure needed to introduce unleaded gasoline.
12. The Overarching Policy Strategy suggests that implementation of the Strategic Approach could begin with an enabling phase to build necessary capacity, as appropriate, to develop, with relevant stakeholder participation, a national Strategic Approach implementation plan, taking into consideration, as appropriate, existing elements such as legislation, national profiles, action plans, stakeholder initiatives and gaps, priorities, needs and circumstances. It also suggests that Strategic Approach regional implementation plans may be developed, as appropriate, in a similar fashion and that subsequent implementation phases should focus on implementing specific action plans. Furthermore, in parallel, it encourages intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions and private actors to support those activities and to consider the development of their own action plans as appropriate. In addition, it indicates that partnerships among stakeholders should be pursued in support of implementation.
13. The Overarching Policy Strategy recognizes that the extent to which developing countries, particularly least developed countries and small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition can make progress towards reaching the 2020 goal depends, in part, on the availability of financial resources provided by the private sector and bilateral, multilateral and global agencies or donors. A Quick Start Programme for mobilization of additional national and international financial resources was established to accelerate the strengthening of capabilities and capacities for the implementation of the Strategic Approach objectives.

¹ Groups of chemicals that might be prioritized for assessment and related studies include those listed in paragraph 7 of the present document.

14. The Quick Start Programme should mobilize resources for initial enabling activities of national priority in keeping with the objectives and work areas set out in section IV of the Overarching Policy Strategy, and in particular for the following strategic priorities:

(a) Development or updating of national chemical profiles and the identification of capacity needs for sound chemicals management;

(b) Development and strengthening of national chemicals management institutions, plans, programmes and activities to implement the Strategic Approach, building on work conducted to implement international chemicals-related agreements and initiatives;

(c) Undertaking analysis, interagency coordination and public participation activities directed at enabling the implementation of the Strategic Approach by integrating – i.e., mainstreaming – the sound management of chemicals in national strategies, and thereby informing development assistance cooperation priorities.

15. A Trust Fund Implementation Committee has been established to appraise and approve project proposals submitted for funding under the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund. Although it remains to be seen what projects will receive funding under the Programme, it may be assumed that projects addressing mercury could be compatible with the objectives and strategic priorities of the Programme. With regard to projects addressing lead and cadmium, there may be possibilities, especially if these chemicals were found to be of global concern or of priority concern at the national level.
