



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

联合国环境规划署



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Subject: Information about an Informal Workshop on Stakeholders' Information Needs on Chemicals in Articles/Products to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 December 2008; and events planned to take place back-to-back with the workshop.

Dear Sir/Madam,

UNEP is jointly with the Government of Sweden organizing an Informal Workshop on Stakeholders' Information Needs on Chemicals in Articles/Products to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 December 2008. The workshop is also supported by the Government of Japan. The Government of Thailand is kindly assisting with the local arrangements.

The sound management of chemicals is one of the key challenges in achieving sustainable development. This is recognized by the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) that has as its overall objective *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.*

There has recently been a growing interest and understanding of the release of and potential exposure to potentially harmful chemicals contained in articles and commercial products, such as personal computers, textiles and toys. The need for better communication throughout the product chain has been identified and the overall aim of this initiative is to facilitate informed decision making in relation to chemicals contained in products. The initiative does hence also have important linkages to the Marrakesh process on sustainable consumption and production.

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Among the detailed objectives that are set in the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) the one addressing knowledge and information (OPS 15) is directly relevant to the subject of the workshop:

“(b) To ensure, for all stakeholders:

(i) That information on chemicals throughout their life cycle, including, where appropriate, **chemicals in products**, is available, accessible, user friendly, adequate and appropriate to the needs of all stakeholders. Appropriate types of information include their effects on human health and the environment, their intrinsic properties, their potential uses, their protective measures and regulation.”

The immediate objective of the workshop is to take the first concrete steps towards achieving this OPS objective and preparing for possible discussions at the 2nd session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2) to be held in May 2009. The aim is to discuss and identify possible ways for addressing the issue at the international level. Hence, the workshop is not intended to discuss in detail the scope, types of products or chemicals that would be addressed, nor is it intended to come to any agreement on any future process. The intent is to convey the outcome of the workshop to ICCM2 for consideration in its discussions on emerging issues.

Due to financial and space limitations there are, unfortunately, only a limited number of places available. Representatives from around 35% of developing countries/countries with economies in transition in each SAICM region can receive funding for their participation. In addition, there will also be some places available for self-funded participants. The regional SAICM Focal Points have been requested to coordinate both the funded and self-funded participation from their respective region.

This letter is to inform you of the workshop and to kindly request that you, in case your government is interested in attending, **urgently, and not later than 6 October**, provide the name and details of the representative you propose to attend, to your SAICM Regional Focal Point **using the attached registration form**. Note that this procedure is required for both funded and self-funded participants. Representatives should preferably have expertise in international and national management of chemicals and policy development, and if possible also in the field of product safety. For the contact details, please see the attached list of regional SAICM Focal Points.

After Regional SAICM Focal Points have submitted their respective recommendations for participating funded and self-funded Governments, UNEP will send these participants letters to confirm their participation and, if applicable, funding support.

The Workshop will be held in English only.

I also have the pleasure to inform you that there will be back-to-back events with the workshop:

- a) A seminar to present and discuss the results of the “Study of the possible effects on human health and the environment in Africa of the trade of products containing lead, cadmium and mercury” will take place on 1 December (pm).

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b) For participants from the Asia-Pacific region only, the “Inception meeting of the Asian Mercury Storage Project Advisory Committee” will be held on 1 December (am).

More information about these events is provided in the attached information Notes, as well as through links on the web site established for the Workshop (http://www.chem.unep.ch/unepsaicm/cheminprod_dec08/default.htm).

Through an initiative by the US Government it is also being considered to convene on 5 and 6 December a “Workshop on Managing Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFCs) and Transitioning to Safer Alternatives”. Information about this will be provided through the Articles Workshop website if and when it is decided that the PFC Workshop will take place.

Please note that, for funded participants, travel will be arranged to enable their attendance to the Articles Workshop as well as to the back-to-back meetings.

I look forward to the initial productive and fruitful discussions on this important emerging issue of making information on chemicals in articles and commercial products available to all stakeholders and to see this important initiative being further developed at ICCM2.

Yours sincerely,



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