

Summary Report of the Informal Workshop on Stakeholders' Information Needs on Chemicals in Articles/Products

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Background

- The sound management of chemicals is one of the key challenges to 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”.

- Among the detailed objectives that are set out in the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) the one addressing knowledge and information (OPS 15) is directly relevant to the subject of the workshop and states, inter alia:
 - “(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 Global Plan of Action that accompanies the OPS, include three activities of particular relevance:
 - 108. Articles and products containing hazardous substances should all be accompanied by relevant information for users, workplaces and at disposal sites.*
 - 111. For all chemicals in commerce, appropriate information detailing their inherent hazards should be made available to the public at no charge and generated where needed with essential health, safety and environmental information made available. Other information should be available according to a balance between the public's right to know and the need to protect valid confidential business information and legitimate proprietary interests.*
 - 112. Undertake awareness-raising for consumers, in particular by educating them on best practices for chemical use, about the risks that the chemicals they use pose to themselves and their environment and the pathways by which exposures occur.*

The articles and commercial products, such as personal computers, textiles, toys and costume jewellery.

The Workshop Organisation

- The informal workshop on stakeholders' information needs on chemicals in articles/products was held at the International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland from 9 to 12 February 2009. The workshop was jointly organized by
- the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Chemicals Branch with
- the Government of Sweden and also supported by
- the Government of Japan and the
- Nordic Council of Ministers.

Agenda of the Workshop

- The informal workshop carried out its work according to the following agenda:
- Opening and Scene setting
- Describing the problem, challenges and opportunities and priorities, and chemicals (presentation of background study)
 - Synergies between SAICM and the Marrakech process
- The need for better information exchange in the supply chain
- Presentation of different country perspectives (importing versus exporting)
- Challenges in the supply chain
- Presentations of case studies and perspectives of different stakeholders
- Information sharing and existing tools
- Presentations of existing tools, instruments and systems for information sharing
- Communication in the supply chain
- Working group sessions
- Discussions around needs, challenges, linkages and possible approaches forward to address the issues at international level
- Working Group Reports
- Conclusions and Recommendations

The workshop undertook its work in plenary and in working groups.

Attendance

- The workshop was attended by participants from the following countries: Australia, Austria, Bahrain,
- Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Comoros, Congo,
- Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Republic of Guinea,
- Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar,
- Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Peru, Poland,
- Qatar, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sweden,
- Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, United States of America, Uruguay, Republic of Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.


- Also the following intergovernmental organizations and multilateral environmental agreements: Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre for Africa for Training and Technology Transfer, European Chemicals Agency, European Commission, Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Health Organization, United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Institute for Training and Research.


- And also from the following non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academia and research institutes:
- Clean Production Action, Clean Production Centre of Tanzania, Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology, Environmental and Health “Ecotox”,
- Finnish Environment Institute, Indonesia Toxics-Free Network, International Chemical Secretariat,
- International POPs Elimination Network, Tanzania Association of Public Occupational and Environmental
- Health Experts, Toxics Link, WWF Japan,
- AGC Chemicals, ASAHI Glass Co. Ltd., BIAC-3M Company, Clariant Products, Dupont de Nemours International S.A., IKEA, Monica Becker and Associates, Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications, Tefal SAS, United States Council for International Business,
- Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, International Council of Chemical Associations, International Council on Mining and Metals, Japan Chemical Industry Association,
- FMEEnv/UNILAG Centre for Environmental Human Resources Development, Nigeria, University of Massachusetts and University of Toronto.

Conclusions and recommendations from the Workshop

The Workshop *Recognized that:*


- hazardous chemicals in articles/products are transported globally through international trade and have caused adverse impacts and may pose future risks to human health and the environment at different stages of the life cycle of an article/product: during production, use, recycling or disposal
- knowledge and information about chemicals in articles/products is fundamental to the sound management of chemicals throughout the life cycle of articles/products and is an important crosscutting issue involving a broad range of stakeholders with specific information needs
- initiatives have been taken by Governments, industry and others to facilitate information exchange on hazardous substances in articles/products in some areas, but to date no comprehensive global action has been developed


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- there is a global need for awareness-raising on the potential risks associated with chemicals in articles/products and on available alternatives especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition having a low level of awareness
 - subparagraph b (i) of Objective 15 of the Overarching Policy Strategy of SAICM on knowledge and information states *inter alia* 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.
 - information on chemicals in articles/products is a vital element supporting capacity building and other actions in SAICM




The Workshop concluded that:

- current efforts and capacities to provide information about chemicals in articles/products and alternatives are not sufficient for informed decision making to protect human health and the environment throughout the life-cycle of articles/products for effective and efficient information generation and accessibility, cooperative action is needed at all levels (international, regional, sub-regional, national and intersectoral) with the involvement of all relevant sectors
- international cooperation on this issue is essential and urgent action is needed to ensure global harmonization of information flow and access, avoid the creation of a patchwork of information systems and maximize the benefits to all stakeholders
- improved information flow stimulates development of new articles/products and processes through innovation, reduces business risks and has economic benefits

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- *The Workshop finally recommended that:*
 - a working group be established by the ICCM at its second session that responds to the need for information on chemicals in articles/products in the supply chain and throughout the life-cycle with a mandate to review existing information and develop a proposal for an information system or framework of systems and/or actions
 - the working group may be open-ended and be comprised of stakeholder groups on the basis of equitable geographical distribution including a number of countries per region, relevant experts, industry and other actors in the supply chain and non-governmental organizations

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- the working group shall address a range of issues and goals, including
 - which chemicals and articles/products to prioritize;
 - identification of the relevant stakeholders and their specific information needs
 - what information to provide and in what format;
 - appropriate technical and other solutions
 - the working group would take into account the following key elements identified by the workshop:
 - where appropriate, complementary activities of other relevant emerging policy issues
 - work undertaken in international fora, including the Marrakesh process and possibilities for synergies
 - work and activities in other multilateral and international processes that are relevant to information systems such as the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

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- specific challenges and needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, such as capacity building, technical and financial assistance and technology transfer
 - special needs of small and medium sized enterprises and the informal sector
 - the working group make use of the outcome of the workshop when carrying out its tasks
 - the working group incorporate any further guidance that the ICCM may provide at its second session during the intersessional period, the working group conduct its business primarily through electronic means and teleconferences, meeting in person and on the margins of other existing meetings as appropriate
 - the working group may work with the SAICM secretariat to help facilitate the development and use of relevant information, case examples, approaches and tools that might be compiled consistent with its clearinghouse function
 - the working group provide a report on the progress of its work through the SAICM website and to the third session of the ICCM