

Brief background and status of the Chemicals in Products project

– UNEP/DTIE/Chemicals Branch, July 2011

The use of chemicals in products is ubiquitous: it would be difficult to find products, any products, manufactured today which do not contain chemicals. These chemicals are normally a part of the product design and enhance the product functionality or performance. Sometimes however, they are present in the products from the fabrication process or as impurities. Most are benign, but many are of concern due to known or suspected risks. The international trade in products containing these chemicals results in their global distribution along with any associated health and environmental impacts. From toys and furniture to electronic equipment and automobiles, addressing the problems and challenges posed by these chemicals in products (CiP) requires action on many levels, involving many partners.

Informed decision-making requires sufficient and reliable information on chemicals in products, which many public and private sector organizations have recognized the critical need for. As a step in addressing this need, in May 2009 the second session of the International Conference of Chemicals Management (ICCM2) recognized CiP as a priority emerging chemicals-policy issue, and adopted a resolution agreeing to implement a project on Chemicals in Products (CiP). The Conference invited UNEP to lead and facilitate the project. UNEP will report on the project implementation, its outcomes and recommendations for cooperative actions to the SAICM Open-Ended Working Group (in late 2011) and to ICCM3 (in mid 2012).

UNEP undertook in 2009 broad stakeholder consultations (including *inter alia* business and industry, public interest groups and governments) to prioritize actions under the CiP project. As well a global study was undertaken of stakeholder information needs, existing information systems and gaps, and also analyzing drivers and lessons learned from current chemicals in product information exchange. The results of these discussions and research were to identify priority sectors for a first round of in-depth study; textiles, electronics, toys and construction materials were identified as the four top priority sectors. Case studies in the four priority sectors were carried out to determine existing efforts in chemicals in products information exchange, as well as stakeholder uses and needs and associated gaps for this information. A consultation meeting among the research teams of the different sectors, business sector representatives and other stakeholders and including numerous holders of chemicals in product information took place during the course of these studies.

The results of the CiP project studies and discussions, also summarized in a synthesis report, were considered by a wide range of stakeholders at a Workshop in March 2011: this key event suggested the development of a non-legally binding framework to facilitate the information exchange among stakeholders and identified elements to include in the recommendations, including identification of the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders throughout the life cycle of articles, definition of what chemicals information would be exchanged, and how to build on current best practices in chemicals in product information exchange for cooperative actions. A first draft of the recommendations will be considered by the OEWG after which final recommendations will be developed for consideration by ICCM3.

Current CiP project activities include awareness raising and outreach to identified stakeholders which would be critical for implementing future cooperative actions, including demonstration/pilot projects.

The results of the extensive discussions on CiP information needs, uses and gaps, the sector case studies and the global study of the project, the synthesis of findings of the project (as of early 2011) and (soon) the recommendations to be considered at ICCM3 can be found on the project web site: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/unepsaicm/cip/default.htm>