



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 15 No. 1 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Monday, 17 February 1997

SECOND SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY: 10-14 FEBRUARY 1997

The Second Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (FORUM II) was held from 10 - 14 February 1997 in Ottawa, Canada. The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) is a new mechanism for cooperation among governments for promotion of environmentally sound management of chemicals. IFCS seeks to provide policy guidance, develop coordinated and integrated strategies and foster an understanding of the issues. Delegates to FORUM II made recommendations on five Programme Areas: expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks; strengthening national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals; harmonization of classification and labeling of chemicals; information exchange on toxic chemicals and chemical risks; and establishment of risk reduction programmes, including the disposal of obsolete chemicals and pesticide risk reduction; and pollution release and transfer registers (PRTRs).

FORUM II also made recommendations on emerging issues such as endocrine disrupting substances and established an *ad hoc* working group on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Delegates reached agreement on a number of actions regarding the structure and function of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. They established a Forum Standing Committee as a mechanism that would better respond to new developments and give advice in preparing for future meetings. They also agreed to a full review of IFCS terms of reference, a general policy for operating languages, and provisional criteria for meetings to be held under IFCS auspices. FORUM II also held a thematic session "In Partnership for Global Chemical Safety," sponsored by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and provided an exhibit on Internet resources related to chemical safety with displays from governments, industry and NGOs. A briefing on endocrine disrupting chemicals was also sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IFCS

In 1989, the UN General Assembly agreed to convene the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to elaborate strategies and measures to halt and reverse

the effects of environmental degradation. The General Assembly listed nine issues considered to be among those of major concern in maintaining the quality of the Earth's environment and especially in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. One of these was environmentally sound management of wastes, particularly hazardous wastes, and of toxic chemicals, as well as prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes.

During the UNCED preparatory process, the Preparatory Committee noted that collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Intergovernmental Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) should be the nucleus for international cooperation on environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and that all efforts should be made to strengthen this programme. The Committee also invited UNEP, ILO and WHO to report on ongoing work carried out through appropriate expert meetings concerning possible proposals for an intergovernmental mechanism for risk

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assessment and management of chemicals.

This invitation resulted in a meeting of government-designated experts in London in December 1991, which made recommendations for increased coordination among UN bodies and other international organizations involved in chemical risk assessment and management. That meeting called for the taking of appropriate measures to enhance the role of IPCS and establish an intergovernmental forum on chemical risk assessment and management. The purpose of the forum would be to provide policy guidance, develop strategies in a coordinated manner, provide the required political support and foster understanding of the issues.

When UNCED convened in Rio de Janeiro from 3-14 June 1992, delegates recognized that the use of chemicals is essential to meet social and economic goals, while also acknowledging that a great deal remains to be done to ensure the sound management of chemicals. Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by UNCED, addresses the use of chemicals in several chapters, including Chapters 6 (protecting and promoting human health conditions), 9 (protection of the atmosphere), 14 (promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development), 17 (protection of the oceans), 18 (protection of freshwater resources), and 20 (environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes). Most of the chemical problems addressed in these chapters are caused by mismanagement of chemicals.

To ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals, Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 contains an international strategy for action on chemical safety. Chapter 19 names six major areas for this work: 1) expanding and accelerating the international assessment of chemical risks; 2) harmonization of classification and labeling of chemicals; 3) information exchange on toxic chemicals and chemical risks; 4) establishment of risk reduction programmes; 5) strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals; and 6) prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes. In order to further consider the recommendations of the London meeting, Agenda 21 invited the WHO, ILO and UNEP to convene an intergovernmental meeting within one year, which could constitute the first meeting of the intergovernmental forum.

In response, the International Conference on Chemical Safety was convened in Stockholm, Sweden, from 25-29 April 1994, (IPCS/ICCS/94.8) and attended by representatives from 114 countries, UN organizations and NGOs. The Conference decided to establish an Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), adopted Terms of Reference for the Forum, and took steps to provide for administrative and financial arrangements. The Conference also adopted a resolution containing detailed recommendations on priorities for action in implementing the Agenda 21 Programme Areas for promotion of sound management of chemicals. The priorities for action — both immediate and long-term — are the responsibility of governments, but several pertain to work through which international bodies may develop effective tools for governmental use.

In establishing the IFCS, governments stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation in the area of chemical safety and initiated a new mechanism for cooperation among governments for the promotion of chemical risk assessment and the environmentally sound management of chemicals. The IFCS is a non-institutional arrangement whereby representatives of governments meet to consider issues, provide advice and make recommendations to governments, international organizations, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations involved in chemical safety. The Forum, according to its terms of reference, shall provide clear and consistent advice for cost-effective, integrated risk assessment and management of chemicals and improve delineation and mutual understanding of roles, initiatives and activities both within and

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEFIC	European Chemical Industry Council
CG/HCCS	Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
EHC	Environmental Health Criteria
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FORUM II	Second Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
GCPF	Global Crop Protection Federation
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GINC	Global Information Network on Chemicals
ICCA	International Council of Chemical Associations
ICEM	International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mining and General Workers Union
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICME	International Council on Metals in the Environment
ICOH	International Commission on Occupational Health
IFCS	Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
ILO	International Labour Organization
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
IPCS	Intergovernmental Programme on Chemical Safety
ISG	Intersessional Group
IUF	International Union of Foodworkers
IUPAC	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
IUTOX	International Union Of Toxicology
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIC	prior informed consent
POPs	persistent organic pollutants
PRTRs	pollution release and transfer registers
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNSCETDG	UN Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

among governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) having responsibility for chemical safety. IGOs and NGOs participate without voting rights.

The terms of reference also establish an Intersessional Group (ISG), composed of IFCS Officers and government participants. The ISG may make recommendations to the IFCS, study special problems, and advise on the implementation of strategies and programmes. The first meeting of the ISG (ISG-1) was held in Bruges, Belgium, in March 1995. At ISG-1, participants recommended an inventory of programmes, activities and projects related to chemical safety being carried out by IGOs, as well as an inventory of bilaterally supported initiatives in chemical management. The second meeting (ISG-2), held from 5-8 March 1996 in Canberra, Australia, established an *Ad Hoc* Working Group for the Agenda of FORUM II and made a number of recommendations under each Programme Area.

The IFCS has played a role in a number of meetings, recommendations and decisions that have advanced the

international dialogue on chemicals, particularly POPs. The May 1995 meeting of the UNEP Governing Council adopted a decision on POPs, which invited the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), working with IPCS and IFCS, to initiate an expeditious assessment process, initially beginning with a short-list of twelve POPs. UNEP also sponsored an IOMC *ad hoc* Working Group on POPs on 28 October 1995.

At the UNEP Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt a Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (Washington, DC, 23 October - 3 November 1995), governments adopted a Global Programme of Action that recognized the importance of controlling releases of POPs and specified actions that should be taken on POPs. In accordance with the Global Programme of Action, the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (18 April-3 May 1996, New York) recognized the intention of the governments to take action to develop an international legally-binding instrument on POPs.

Based on these decisions, the IFCS formed an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on POPs, which met in an open forum on 9 March and 21-22 June 1996, and held a meeting of experts in Manila from 17-19 June 1996. The group developed recommendations and information on international action, including an international legal mechanism on POPs, for consideration by the 1997 sessions of the UNEP Governing Council and the World Health Assembly.

The nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council met in Nairobi from 27 January to 7 February 1997 to determine, *inter alia*, UNEP's programme of work for the 1998 - 1999 biennium. The Governing Council adopted four decisions concerning chemicals, including a decision to take international action to protect human health and the environment through measures that will reduce and/or eliminate emissions and discharges of POPs, including the development of an international legally-binding instrument.

REPORT OF FORUM II

The Second Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (FORUM II) was opened on Monday, 10 February 1997, by Roy Hickman, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee, who welcomed participants to Ottawa and FORUM II. Assistant Deputy Minister Anthony Clark, on behalf of Sergio Marchi, Canada's Minister of Environment, praised the Forum as the spearhead of international efforts to control damaging chemical substances. He noted Canada's support for national efforts to determine risks, global harmonization of labelling for dangerous chemicals and the establishment of a global legally-binding agreement on POPs. He also highlighted the threat of endocrine disrupting chemicals and said the world needs a call to action.

IFCS President Gunnar Bengtsson (Sweden) provided an overview of the threats and challenges that prompted UNCED, described how chemical safety is addressed by Agenda 21 and outlined the linkages between IFCS Programme Areas. He urged participants to bear in mind that they, rather than IFCS itself, are responsible for implementation and that the IFCS instead will make recommendations, start processes, facilitate coordination and provide overarching leadership. He noted that FORUM II must clearly state its goals in order to receive the full support of all participants, and must solicit the support necessary to implement them at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, to be held in June 1997. He also presented IFCS's first Award of Merit to Dr. Rune Lönngren, who was recognized for his contributions to international activities on sound chemical management.

The President also outlined the preparations for FORUM II, the election of officers and ISG members and the pre-meetings and regional meetings.

Jim Willis, UNEP, reported on the results of the nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council related to the work of the IFCS. On the development of an international legally-binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, the Governing Council confirmed the mandate of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and further invited the INC to continue its work with an aim to conclude the negotiations this year. The Executive Director of UNEP, in close collaboration with the IOMC, was invited to develop a report outlining options for enhanced coherence and efficiency among international activities related to chemicals, including the instrument on the PIC procedure under development and a likely future agreement on POPs, with a view to submitting this report to the twentieth session of the Governing Council and forwarding the report to IFCS for its consideration.

On further measures to reduce the risks from a limited number of hazardous chemicals, the Governing Council endorsed the recommendations contained in an expert group report (UNEP/PIC/EG/1/3) concerning unwanted stocks of pesticides and other chemicals, capacity-building and inadequate information. It also invited governments, international organizations and IFCS to review this report and consider taking action to implement its recommendations and to report on these actions to the twentieth session of the Governing Council.

On international action to protect human health and the environment through measures that will reduce and/or eliminate emissions and discharges of POPs, including the development of an international legally-binding instrument, the Executive Director was asked to prepare for and convene together with the WHO and other relevant international organizations, an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC). Its mandate will be to prepare an international legally-binding instrument for implementing international action initially beginning with the twelve specified POPs and to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the IFCS *Ad Hoc* Working Group on POPs. This INC is requested to begin its work by early 1998 with a view to adopting and signing the instrument preferably by the year 2000.

PROCEDURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

FORUM II considered a number of procedural and administrative issues on 10 February. Participants had before them an IFCS Secretariat document regarding proposed structure and procedural changes to the terms of reference (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.07w/Rev.1). Participants also had before them a "Thought Starter" on procedural and administrative matters prepared by Australia (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.13B). Regarding officers, participants agreed that: the office of Rapporteur should be replaced by a fourth Vice President; the Bureau should request support from the past president; and the President and Vice President should be elected at the commencement of each IFCS session and take office at the end of that session. English, French and Spanish were proposed as working languages of the Forum.

FORUM II accepted the Secretariat's proposed delineation of regional roles and responsibilities for officers and ISG members (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.06w). A number of countries, including CHINA, MOROCCO and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported the use of all six UN languages and expressed concern about reducing translation for budgetary reasons. CANADA and MEXICO proposed that regional groups should further discuss the issue and consider alternative funding sources. Delegates agreed to the proposal.

On 14 February, delegates accepted the final report, which notes that IFCS meetings will have, as a mandatory requirement, the following in the six official UN languages: simultaneous interpretation; the final report; working document sections on issues for consideration and action required of the Forum; and the agenda. If desirable, the Secretariat will endeavor to find countries/organizations who would be able to accomplish the task of translating the full working documents into all languages. ISG meetings will have, as mandatory requirements, the following in all six languages: final reports; working document chapters on issues for consideration and action required of the Forum; and working documents. The host country will endeavor to provide simultaneous interpretation into as many languages as possible. For the working documents, the stipulations are the same as for Forum meetings. For standing committees, the working language will normally be English, but additions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Teleconferences and working documents will be in English. The reports of the meetings and of teleconferences will be translated in the six UN official languages.

Participants also considered a proposal for an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Terms of Reference (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.08w/Rev.1); and a proposal for continuing the *Ad Hoc* Working Group for the Agenda (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.22w/Rev.1). GERMANY, FRANCE, SWEDEN and the US supported the establishment of a group to address the agenda but noted that the group should be a standing committee rather than an *ad hoc* group. Participants accepted the proposal and formed a drafting group to revise the proposal.

On 12 February, the President presented the revised proposal containing the terms of reference for a continued *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Agenda. Delegates accepted the proposal that changes the name of group to the Forum Standing Committee, with a membership of 20 participants. Other amendments in the revised proposal note: that members may, subject to prior discussion with the President, be accompanied at meetings by co-workers, where their expertise is specifically required, and that the effectiveness of the work should be reviewed by the group and presented for consideration at FORUM III. The Standing Committee will also initiate the review of the IFCS terms of reference and will keep IFCS participants regularly informed on their work. Various means will be considered including the issuing of a news bulletin, as well as posting information on the Internet.

On 14 February, delegates agreed that the Forum Standing Committee will have the following composition: the IFCS President and four Vice Presidents; one representative from the IOMC (OECD), Africa (Nigeria), Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic) and the Americas (Brazil); two representatives from Asia (Syria and Thailand); and three representatives from the Western European and others group (Australia, Germany and the US). Four NGOs will also participate: public interest (WWF); science (IUPAC); industry (International Council Of Chemical Associations (ICCA)); and labor unions (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mining and General Workers Union).

Regarding the election of officers and ISG Members, the Nominating Committee announced that Canada would serve as the next IFCS President. Representatives from the following countries were also nominated as officers: Mali (Africa); Argentina (the Americas); the Republic of Korea (Asia); Hungary (Eastern Europe); and Canada (Western European and others). The Nominating Committee also proposed the following ISG members: Angola, Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco and Niger (Africa); Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago (the Americas); India, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Syria and Thailand (Asia); Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, and the Slovak Republic (Eastern Europe); and Australia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland,

the UK and the US (Western European and others). These nominations were accepted.

THEMATIC SESSION ON PARTNERSHIP

On 10 February, Roy Hickman (Canada) opened the thematic session "In Partnership for Global Chemical Safety". John Buccini (Canada) presented a status report on POPs (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.04B), noting that agreement about sufficient scientific evidence to begin international work on POPs was important. He acknowledged the participation formula of the IFCS and the work of UNEP. While the terms of reference for the Working Group on POPs have been fully met and this group's work could be completed within the next few months, it is possible that more will need to be done in order to keep the momentum going until the INC is convened.

Robert Visser, OECD, reported on lead risk reduction and the work of the OECD (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.05B). He described information gathering efforts, action plans and workshops and noted that last year's OECD Ministerial Declaration committed to a number of lead reduction measures that would be undertaken in partnership with industry, international organizations and NGOs.

Junshi Miyamoto, IUPAC, addressed the issue of science in global sustainable development in the 21st century (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.07B). He highlighted how science could help improve the welfare of mankind, as well as the preservation of nature, in many areas such as new high efficient production technologies, climate change modeling, food production and medical advances. He noted that international cooperation is essential to global sustainable development and so the scientific community should collaborate with all those concerned.

Jack Weinberg, Greenpeace, speaking on community involvement, noted the success of the full and equal participation of governments, IGOs and NGOs in the IFCS POPs Working Group. He also expressed concern about the international presence and capacity problems of public interest NGOs, and suggested that in order to ensure the success of POPs negotiations, capacity building must be taken seriously.

Reg Green, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mining and General Workers Union (ICEM), addressed the issue of trade unions and partnership (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.01B). He stressed that while partnership was crucial to the success of dealing with chemical safety, not all stakeholders adhered to this belief. Trade unions represent workers more than management or other NGOs and therefore have an important role to play.

Simon de Bree and Mike Boyce, ICCA, presented a status report on "Responsible Care", the trademark name for the chemical industry's voluntary, global initiative on environmental, health and safety performance (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.02B). They stated that Responsible Care was an outstanding model for chemical management and a complement to appropriate legislation. Public expectations of the chemicals industry have increased and Responsible Care is a paradigm of commitment to meeting those expectations. Examples include work on chemical transportation emergencies, product specific codes of conduct and emission reductions for certain substances. The future programme includes the extension of environmental, health and safety performance reporting, the establishment of verification processes and the promotion and implementation of product stewardship. The ICCA asked IFCS to consider Responsible Care as a model for voluntary measures in the implementation of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21.

PROGRAMME AREA A — EXPANDING AND ACCELERATING INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF CHEMICAL RISKS

On Wednesday, 12 February 1997, Peter Toft, WHO, presented an IPCS/OECD working document on expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.11w/Rev.1). The document outlines ten priorities for action and notes that while significant progress has been made since FORUM-I and that the target of assessing 200 chemicals would be met in 1997, the second target of 300 additional chemicals by the year 2000 will prove more difficult due to the budget constraints of governments. Other highlighted issues include data, targets, coordination, assessments, methodology, information and guidelines.

Thomas Jacob, ICCA, presented a Thought Starter on international chemical risk assessment prepared by the ICCA (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.14B). It was noted that much information and research comes from industry. Several issues were highlighted, including concern about the progress towards 500 assessments by 2000 and the risk assessment documents to be used. Rainer Koch, EUROPEAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL (CEPIC), continued by emphasizing that coordination and cooperation between stakeholders should be strengthened to avoid duplication of work, and that the IFCS and IOMC are the instruments to coordinate this process and should take a leading role.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TOXICOLOGY (IUTOX) and INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PURE AND APPLIED CHEMISTRY (IUPAC) drew attention to the problem of animal experimentation. They noted that present data is often based on animal studies and that while there is progress on alternatives, further restrictions on animal studies would be a serious obstacle to assessing the risks of toxic chemicals and new medicines. ICEM reminded the meeting that there is not universal acceptance of risk assessment techniques, while the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON METALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT (ICME) reported the results of a workshop on risk assessment methodology that was held in November 1996, the objective of which was to identify key issues and develop a common way forward for risk assessment of metals. IUPAC suggested that upgrading national reports to international peer reviewed reports would be a good use of resources.

JAPAN and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA expressed support for the activities of the IPCS and OECD in this field, and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted the establishment of a national laboratory for risk assessment. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted that because environmental research is expensive, combined efforts are essential. He proposed establishing a competent group of experts to examine this issue. SWEDEN, the US and JAPAN noted that work targets for chemical risk assessment beyond the year 2000 was necessary. The US also suggested that there should be recommendations regarding the situation of developing countries, data methodology and data generation. The UK noted that these assessments should be done in a comprehensive manner. COSTA RICA, speaking on behalf of the Americas Group, noted their submission of a written text on this Programme Area, which suggested that animal use should be reduced, developing country experts should participate in the expert groups, research should be done on chemicals that are used only in those countries, and more training and provision of equipment and data should be given to developing countries.

On Thursday, 13 February, Peter Toft, WHO, presented an amended document on Expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.11w/Rev.2). The revised document recommended, *inter alia*, that: FORUM II continue the evaluation of 500 chemicals by the year 2000;

governments, industry and NGOs should intensify efforts to develop a common basis for the generation and interpretation of high quality data on the effects of chemicals and share this work widely; IPCS/OECD should make proposals relating to the assessment of chemicals beyond 2000; and IOMC partners should take into account the special needs of developing countries when selecting, testing and assessing chemicals. Several participants proposed amendments: CEPIC and FRANCE noted that the review of chemical effects should include fate and exposure of chemicals and SLOVAKIA suggested that the workplace and ambient air should be included in areas for the development of guidelines for exposure. PANAMA noted that capacity of health systems should be included. Several participants, such as COSTA RICA, MOROCCO, BRAZIL and the US, reinforced the need to involve developing countries in these activities. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed that countries with economies in transition should be included as well. On 14 February, the recommendations for Programme Area A, as contained in the report of the meeting, were accepted as amended.

PROGRAMME AREA B — HARMONIZATION OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS

On Tuesday, 11 February 1997, the IFCS considered Programme Area B on the harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals. Delegates had before them the following documents: Progress made toward a Globally Harmonized System for the classification and labelling of chemicals (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.12w/Rev.1); a Thought Starter on an International Instrument for a Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, prepared by the UK (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.15B); and a progress report on the ongoing technical work, sponsored by IOMC Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification (Information Document 2).

Jennifer Silk, US Occupational Safety and Health Administration, introduced the document on progress made toward a globally harmonized system, sponsored by the IOMC Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (CG/HCCS). The document presents issues for consideration and action requested by FORUM II. The IFCS may wish to: indicate a clear preference for a binding or non-binding instrument, understanding that the CG/HCCS will pursue work only on the selected option; recommend the establishment of strong national coordination of national activities devoted to the work on international harmonization as a high priority; recommend that countries give a high priority to resolving outstanding technical differences encountered in the current work of harmonization; and recommend that countries and stakeholder organizations assist the harmonization effort by providing increased resources to complete work within the recommended time frame.

The document also notes that, regarding the scope of a globally harmonized system, the 8th meeting of the CG/HCCS agreed that the system should address all chemicals and mixtures of chemicals thereof, including when they are intended to be used as pesticides, pharmaceuticals, food additives and other chemical use categories that may be currently regulated by specific and strict standards. Annex 1 contains the final report of ISG-2 relating to classification and labelling. Annex 2 contains a US proposal to create an international standard for classification in line with the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Annex 3 contains a clarification of the scope of a global system prepared by the CG/HCCS.

The UK Thought Starter on an international instrument proposes to allocate the setting up and maintaining of a classification system to an ECOSOC body, disband the current UN Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UNSCETDG) and

reconstitute it with a new mandate to address classification and labelling. The UK also proposed that the Global Harmonization System Committee should promote consensus building that reflects the needs of participating countries and should be co-housed with the reconstituted UNSCETDG to minimize costs.

Many participants supported a non-binding instrument, including AUSTRALIA, GERMANY, JAPAN, FRANCE, SUDAN, SWEDEN and ICME. The US expressed concern about the resources needed to pursue a convention. NORWAY preferred a binding agreement, but noted that a non-binding agreement would be easier to achieve. CANADA said that a non-binding agreement allows flexibility in implementation and could be linked to a binding agreement in the future. SWEDEN sought expressions from lead players that they would be willing to change their current systems.

The ILO emphasized the right of workers and consumers to know about hazardous chemicals and said the effectiveness of the agreement is more important than its binding or non-binding nature. He suggested that the IFCS should not preclude the possibility of eventually adopting a binding instrument. ICME, on behalf of labor NGOs, called for a legally-binding agreement. NORWAY and FRANCE supported the UK proposal for a non-binding agreement. The EUROPEAN COMMISSION suggested combining the UK and US proposals. SUDAN and CAMEROON emphasized the importance of coherent information for developing countries that import chemicals.

On the scope of the instrument, the US focused on whether some chemicals are excluded by virtue of their end use. She noted standards should not be applied to finished food products that may contain trace amounts of chemicals. AUSTRALIA suggested a review of the CG/HCCS membership and stressed the need to advance the work on chemical mixtures. ICME said that the work should focus on the chemical classes and ensure predictability, and noted that work on mixtures must be initiated as soon as possible. The ILO cautioned against establishing duplicative systems and said classification rules must apply at every point in the life cycle of a chemical.

On 12 February, delegates received the draft recommendations concerning harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.12W/Add.1). The recommendations, which will be referred to the CG/HCCS for follow-up and implementation, state that a globally harmonized system should be implemented through a non-binding legal instrument, but note that eventual adoption of a binding instrument is not precluded. The recommendations also state that the CG/HCCS should take account of both the UK and US papers and should review the terms of reference and clarify the scope of the instrument during its June 1997 consultations. The draft also notes, *inter alia* that: national priority should be given to resolving technical differences in the harmonization work, recognizing that all of the major existing systems will be required to change their approach in some respects; countries and stakeholder organizations should assist the harmonization effort by providing increased resources to the work; and technical work on mixtures should be given high priority. The draft recommendations also reiterate the principle that global systems must not weaken the protections of existing systems and request a report for ISG-3.

A number of delegations requested clarification about the reference to the instrument's non-binding nature and suggested non-legally binding as the appropriate term. The ILO requested including a principle from the terms of reference of the IOMC-CG, which states that chemical classification should be based on the intrinsic properties of the chemical, which was accepted. The final report of the meeting recommends a non-binding instrument.

PROGRAMME AREA C — INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON TOXIC CHEMICALS AND CHEMICAL RISKS

On Tuesday, 11 February 1997, Fatoumata Ouane-Keita, UNEP, presented the report, Chemical Information Exchange Activities (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.13w/Rev.1). This report outlined the activities of the IOMC relating to ensuring easy access to appropriate information on the safe management of chemicals. The activities presented included meta-databases, information dissemination mode, integrated information delivery, Internet access, databases and networking, the PIC procedure and interlinkages. The report also made several recommendations to countries, international organizations and intergovernmental bodies, regional organizations, industry and NGOs. Dr. T. Kaminuma (Japan) made a presentation on the Global Information Network on Chemicals (GINC), which included the conceptual framework, history and the status of implementation of GINC.

Several participants, such as the US and CANADA, emphasized the importance of information exchange, while others outlined their actions in this area, such as an EU chemical reporting system, WHO's work on Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) documents and international chemical safety cards, JAPAN's establishment of national coordinating mechanisms and the provision of free information by the ILO. Other issues were also highlighted. CANADA noted the need to consider cost effectiveness, while COSTA RICA and ST. LUCIA voiced the concerns of developing countries regarding ability to access information and a lack of resources. AUSTRALIA informed participants of a joint UNEP/OECD workshop on New Industrial Chemicals Notification and Information Sharing held in Kuala Lumpur in January 1997, which had discussed new procedures on information exchange on industrial chemicals and emphasized harmonization for notification and assessment of industrial chemicals.

On 13 February, Fatoumata Ouane-Keita (UNEP) presented the draft recommendations of the Forum for Programme Area C, as contained in IFCS/FORUM-II/97.13w/Rev.2/Add.1. The recommendations state: chemical information should be shared widely and consideration should be given to coordinating common terminology and data structure; the joint OECD/UNEP project on chemical information management should develop a report on costs and other barriers to wide information exchange; industry should freely provide non-confidential information on chemicals; and countries should give high priority to the establishment or strengthening of national and regional information centers.

OMAN noted that these recommendations would not provide practical assistance to those countries experiencing difficulty with information already available. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION highlighted that they were one of the largest importers of pesticides in the world and, while they have large amounts of data, they also have difficulties in translating all the information. The US suggested that standardization of input of data and terminology among information databases was preferable to the creation of one large database. ARGENTINA and CUBA expressed concern that work on information exchange in the IFCS should not duplicate work in the PIC process. UNEP responded that the information requirements stated here were for the universe of chemicals and not just those in international trade. The INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH (ICOH) noted that non-confidential information should not be limited to chemical properties, but should also include occupational hygiene and health information. The ILO, supported by ICCA, COSTA RICA and OMAN, noted that hazard information should never be confidential. CHINA and ARGENTINA noted that developing countries are often not aware of what information exchange

infrastructure exists and are concerned about obtaining the required information at the lowest possible cost.

On 14 February, Ouane-Keita presented the revised draft recommendations (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.13w/Rev.2/Add.1/Rev.1). MALAYSIA, supported by GERMANY, the UK and SWEDEN, suggested a reference to chemical management practices. The recommendations for Programme Area C were then accepted by the Plenary.

PROGRAMME AREA D — ESTABLISHMENT OF RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

OBSOLETE CHEMICAL DISPOSAL AND PESTICIDE RISK REDUCTION:

A representative of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented the document on disposal of obsolete chemicals, sponsored by FAO, UNEP and Mali (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.20w). The paper provides an overview of the problem, as well as reports on the progress and status on disposal of unwanted stocks of chemicals. The paper notes that obsolete pesticides are a worldwide problem and developing countries are the most seriously affected because of inappropriate legislation and regulations, improper storage and stock management, and lack of facilities and resources for disposal. There is a need for a concerted international effort to: determine the level and extent of the problem worldwide; determine resources for disposal and prevention of future accumulation; mobilize resources; and develop a global database of inventories.

The document also notes that the discussion on POPs will have to provide adequate disposal solutions for existing stocks. For some developing countries, the problem of obsolete stocks of pesticides can be solved by removing the stocks from the country, while in others disposal capacity must be established. The actions requested by FORUM II include: recommendations on coordination and the identification of international partners and identification of resources, including possible access to the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Robert Visser, OECD, presented the document on pesticide risk reduction, sponsored by the OECD and FAO (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.19w). The paper describes the work on pesticide risk reduction that is underway or proposed by the OECD and FAO and outlines the context for international work on pesticide risk reduction. These activities include: an FAO/OECD workshop on pesticide reduction, held in Uppsala, Sweden, in October 1995, which identified projects that could be undertaken by governments, international organizations and others to reduce risks associated with the use of agricultural pesticides; WHO/IPCS activities to reduce pesticide risks through assessments, setting of maximum residue levels, training programmes, surveys and reports; and the UN Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) activities on risk reduction through regional networking and national capacity building. The document requests that FORUM II review and comment on the activities described in the paper and consider other pesticide risk reduction activities that could be initiated within the context of IFCS.

The GLOBAL CROP PROTECTION FEDERATION (GCPF) noted the concerns of the pesticide industry and reaffirmed their commitment to addressing problems. GREENPEACE stated that procedures were needed to prevent exports of chemicals that are obsolete on arrival. Supported by AUSTRALIA and SOUTH AFRICA, he also noted that IFCS could play a facilitative role with regard to emerging technologies.

COSTA RICA stressed the importance of finding mechanisms to reduce the both the legal and illegal traffic of obsolete chemicals and highlighted the importance of providing information. WHO and FAO should investigate research methods. NICARAGUA stated that the IFCS should play a stronger role in coordinating and

called for greater efforts by UNIDO and others. Beyond obsolete chemicals, obsolete products disposed of by industry also present a serious problem and strong international pressure should be applied to industries to produce less waste.

SOUTH AFRICA and AUSTRALIA noted that the Basel Convention has held extensive discussions on obsolete chemicals and called for better coordination between the IFCS and the Basel Convention secretariat. AUSTRALIA also proposed a clearinghouse mechanism to distribute information on this topic. EQUATORIAL GUINEA stressed that the international community has a duty to help African communities identify and understand and resolve problems with hazardous products.

On 13 February, delegates considered draft recommendations on disposal of obsolete pesticides (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.20w/Add.1). In the recommendations, the IFCS: invites countries to continue to develop national infrastructures to enable the sound management of chemicals to ensure that new stockpiles might be avoided; supports FAO activities in Africa and recommends similar initiatives to determine the magnitude of disposal problems; and recommends that technical guidelines on disposal and prevention of stockpiles be made available to IFCS members.

The IFCS also: invites FAO, with UNEP and others, to evaluate further technologies as alternatives to high temperature incineration for the destruction of obsolete pesticides; endorses the partnership between FAO and UNEP in establishing a working group on obsolete pesticides and chemicals; and encourages cooperation between this working group, UNIDO and the Basel Convention secretariat. The IFCS also: urges industry to take an active role in preventing further accumulation of stockpiles through product stewardship and similar programmes and assist in disposal programmes; notes the substantial funding requirement for disposal of chemicals; welcomes discussions between FAO and industry on contributions to solutions; and recommends that countries identify the issue of disposal of stockpiles of obsolete pesticides and industrial chemicals as a priority when requesting assistance.

GREENPEACE suggested a reference to UNIDO and pilot projects on commercialization of technology, and requested a report on those activities for ISG-3. UNIDO expressed willingness to commence pilot projects on new developments. The US proposed a reference, in addition to destruction of chemicals, to detoxification and containment. CAMEROON proposed adding bilateral and multilateral agencies to the reference to discussions between FAO and industry. The recommendations were accepted as amended.

On 13 February, delegates also received draft recommendations on pesticide risk reduction. Under the draft recommendations, the IFCS should encourage countries in regional working groups to share information and experience in the development and implementation of pesticide risk reduction activities, which should build on recommendations of the OECD/FAO Workshop on Pesticide Risk Reduction. The IFCS also considers that pesticide risk reduction activities represent excellent opportunities for partnership with industry, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and recognizes the importance of identification of pesticide reduction activities and chemical management initiatives as priorities when seeking funding.

WWF proposed that in addition to building on the OECD/FAO workshop, the regional groups should also explore ways to take these issues forward. ST. LUCIA proposed that the IFCS not only recognize the opportunities for partnerships but also recommend their development. These proposals were accepted. Proposals to expand the scope of the recommendations to include fertilizers and other agro-chemicals were not accepted.

POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS

(PRTRs): On 12 February, a representative from Mexico introduced the document on pollutant release and transfer registers, sponsored by the US and Mexico (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.18w). The document states that one of the clear successes from UNCED is the rapid progress witnessed by individual countries and international organizations in the development of PRTRs. The document recalls that UNCED brought international attention to PRTRs, and that attention was focused and directed at FORUM I, ISG-1 and ISG-2. Four years later, much of the work mapped out at these meeting has been completed and the IFCS now has the opportunity to build on this foundation of work.

The document requests the IFCS to consider its continuing role in encouraging the development of PRTRs, particularly in the areas of supporting the continued development of PRTRs around the globe and in creating an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on PRTRs. The document notes that the IFCS can, *inter alia*: encourage information sharing on PRTRs and foster their development around the globe; invite UNEP to continue to foster dissemination of information relating to PRTRs; invite UNITAR to assist countries in the PRTR design process; and invite the OECD to foster the implementation of PRTR systems.

The US and AUSTRALIA expressed support for PRTR systems and agreed with efforts to facilitate their development by IGOs. The US, supported by WWF, SLOVAKIA, NORWAY and the UK, also supported the proposed *ad hoc* working group but noted that the ongoing cooperative efforts between the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and OECD could provide a way forward. JAPAN stated that the proposed working group should focus on monitoring and reviewing, and expressed an interest in participating.

The ICCA noted that PRTRs must be tailored to local circumstances and should address all forms of emissions, including traffic, agriculture and housing. PRTRs must strike a balance between reporting requirements and overall efficiency of programmes and countries creating PRTRs should consider the range of chemicals. WWF highlighted PRTRs as a means for capacity building and also called for references to the principle of the community's right to know.

On 13 February, delegates were presented with draft recommendations on PRTRs (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.18W/Add.1). Under the draft recommendations, the IFCS encourages the development of PRTRs, continues to monitor and encourage progress and invites the continued effort of IOMC organizations to facilitate their development. IFCS also recognizes the work of UNITAR and OECD in this area and takes note of the needs of developing countries in establishing PRTRs. IFCS also recognizes public interest NGO concerns that they be actively involved in PRTR development and also recognizes industry concerns related to the need to tailor PRTRs to local circumstances. The recommendations also state that PRTRs should focus on all forms of emissions, including industrial releases and emissions by diffuse sources, such as traffic, agriculture and housing. The IFCS also recommends that UNITAR and OCEC continue to work with other IFCS participants to help establish PRTRs in individual countries.

ICEM suggested that IFCS support rather than recognize the work of UNITAR and OECD. SLOVENIA called for reference to countries with economies in transition and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested a reference to local PRTRs. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, supported by the US, proposed that UNITAR and OECD work with national monitoring agencies within countries that address PRTRs. WWF proposed a reference to the international PRTR coordinating committee. These amendments were accepted. A proposed reference to support and encourage both public interest and labor NGOs in PRTR development was also

accepted. AUSTRALIA noted that the recommendations call for tailoring PRTRs to local circumstances while also listing several specific release and emission sources to be covered. Following additional consultations, the IFCS accepted a recommendation that PRTRs should consider various forms of emissions, including industry and diffuse sources.

In discussing the final report for Programme Area D on 14 February, INDIA proposed an amendment relating to the prevention and preparedness for chemical emergencies that asked governments and UNEP to develop policy and infrastructure in this area. This proposal, along with the other recommendations, was accepted by the Plenary.

PROGRAMME AREA E — STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPABILITIES AND CAPACITIES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

On Tuesday, 11 February 1997, the President opened the morning Plenary session by introducing Dr. Michel Mercier, Executive Secretary of the IFCS, who summarized a letter to FORUM II received from Nitin Desai, UN Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The letter stressed that the Forum has a central role to play in the environmentally sound management of chemicals and recognized the importance of the IFCS work on POPs. Lastly, it highlighted the upcoming review of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 at the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Special Session of the General Assembly and wished the Forum success in its work. The President and Plenary noted this letter for the record.

Professor G. Ungvary (Hungary) then presented an Integrated Report on Programme Area E (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.15w/Rev.3). This report was sponsored by Hungary, with the contribution of UNITAR, and co-sponsored by China, Kenya, Mali and Mexico, with the contribution of others. Available information regarding progress in this area suggested that implementation of the priorities of Programme Area E had been somewhat slower than anticipated following FORUM I. In order to strengthen this area, FORUM II may wish to consider the 11 objectives and recommendations contained in the report. These recommendations should lead to a collaborative approach that could result in a major step forward in the facilitation of this Programme Area at the national and global levels.

Dr. Robert Visser (OECD) then presented the OECD Survey of bilateral development aid projects for capacity building (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.10B). He noted that the survey was a response to a request from ISG-2 to develop an information exchange programme that complements the activities of the IOMC. The purpose of the survey was to facilitate the coordination of bilateral and international activities, to avoid duplication, and to indicate the possibility of available information material. The form of the survey was a questionnaire, the responses to which were summarized and organized by donor country. Sixteen OECD countries and the European Commission responded to the questionnaire. In conclusion, the document notes that good possibilities for cooperation and coordination exist and asks whether an update of this information would be useful.

Basit Khan (WWF-Pakistan) presented a report on capacity building for public-interest NGOs (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.14w/Rev.1). It was noted that capacity building helps institutions, organizations and individuals and helps to further independently managed programmes in a locally relevant manner. An example of this is the WWF-Pakistan involvement in the development of legislation on environmental protection. To be more effective, however, NGO capacity needs to be enhanced and both governments and industry could assist with this. The IFCS can help in three ways: it should endorse the need for NGO capacity

building and encourage partners to help build that capacity; it should monitor the degree of NGO participation in meetings; and it should support the development of pilot projects (such as those with UNITAR) on NGO capacity building.

Erica Phipps (UNITAR) then discussed recent activities related to capacity building. She noted that the UNITAR/IOMC work on national profile guidance documents was ongoing and that a Thought Starter on Achieving Coordinated Global, Regional, and National Action Towards Strengthening National Capabilities and Capacities for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.16B) was available.

CHILE, THAILAND, GCPF, UNIDO, CAMEROON, GABON, NIGERIA, the EC, and the US acknowledged the work of UNITAR in advancing capacity building and reported on their own efforts in this area. Many participants also noted that further work was needed. A number of other participants outlined special problems faced by their countries, such as the situation faced by African states, the large population of CHINA, or the circumstances of certain central and eastern European countries. COSTA RICA raised the issue of chemical emergencies in Latin America. MEXICO confirmed its proposal to host a working group meeting in 1997 for developing countries in order to meet and discuss the sound management of chemicals.

On 14 February, Prof. Ungvary presented the revised draft recommendations prepared for this area. The recommendations request countries to prepare and continuously update national profiles, with the assistance of international organizations and their regional offices and encourage them to establish inter-ministerial committees to facilitate the comprehensive treatment of chemical safety issues. The recommendations also invite the IOMC, in concert with the Forum and governments, to prepare guidelines on effective national legislation and to give high priority to establishing and strengthening regional networks and cooperation.

INDONESIA offered to coordinate a workshop on the evaluation of national profiles for Asia. AUSTRALIA and UNIDO offered to support the workshop proposed by Indonesia. BRAZIL highlighted the need to assist developing countries through financial and technical means; countries with economies in transition were also added to this recommendation. ICEM noted that industry should also be invited to promote community awareness. This was supported by the ILO, who also underscored that developed countries also required work on cleaner production and sustainable alternative practices. POLAND supported the suggestions of the ILO.

UNEP, supported by ST. LUCIA, suggested that in the future the Forum could consider recommending policy advice regarding the expenditure of resources that promote chemical safety. UNEP also proposed that a regional level policy workshop on strategic training and capacity building be held. The NETHERLANDS supported the idea of policy-level workshops for strengthening the implementation of Programme Area E and indicated its willingness to provide resources for such workshops. IOMC noted that UNITAR would soon join the IOMC and highlighted the progress made in the different Programme Areas. WWF raised the issue of the IFCS tracking the role and participation of public interest NGOs. TRINIDAD and TOBAGO, supported by ST. LUCIA, noted the need for increased awareness about the Forum and suggested that non-participants be made aware about the Forum and its activities. BRAZIL and CHINA wondered if this concern was not already addressed in other recommendations. The recommendations of Programme Area E were then accepted as amended.

THE IFCS ROLE IN SHAPING EMERGING CONCERNS

On 11 February, Lynn Goldman, US Environmental Protection Agency, presented the document on the IFCS's role in shaping emerging concerns, criteria beyond POPs, endocrine disruptors and role in supporting implementation of legally-binding instruments, sponsored by the US, Canada, ICCA and WWF (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.17w/Rev.1).

The document states that FORUM II should consider a more systematic delineation of its appropriate role in the context of future international activities in chemical management. The document addresses: a general approach for important emerging issues; criteria to identify hazardous chemicals for possible international action beyond the current POPs short list being considered under UNEP Decision 18/32; an approach on endocrine disruptors; and efficient implementation of legal instruments.

On emerging issues, the document invites the President and coordinating group to take appropriate action between the IFCS and ISG meetings. On criteria for targeting hazardous chemicals beyond the POPs list, the document notes that consideration should be given to the timing for this initiative relative to the current focus on POPs. It notes that the April 1996 meeting of government-designated experts in Copenhagen recommended that the UNEP Governing Council call on the IFCS to develop criteria to identify chemicals other than POPs that create risks to human health. On endocrine disruptors, the document reports on the nature of the issue, areas for research and recent developments. Ms. Goldman also reported on late-breaking events, such as the Round Table on Endocrine Disruptors held 23-24 January 1997 in Washington, DC, and the US/EU joint Working Group on Endocrine Disruptors.

ADDRESSING EMERGING ISSUES: On addressing emerging issues, the INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU) proposed a mechanism to establish consensus on emerging issues and to receive and review the report being prepared by UNEP and the IOMC on enhanced coherence of activities. AUSTRALIA expressed reservations about the proposal and questioned the need for an additional group. Participants agreed to form a drafting group on the issue and the US, BRAZIL and AUSTRALIA expressed interest in participating. On 12 February, the drafting group proposed inviting the IFCS President and the Standing Forum Committee to undertake preparatory work on new issues between meetings to enable informed decisions on these issues to be taken by the Forum and ISG. The proposal was accepted.

CHEMICALS BEYOND POPS: On targeting chemicals beyond the current POPs list, DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN and FINLAND supported including chemicals beyond POPs in the IFCS programme of work. GERMANY and CHINA called for clarifying the issues to be discussed and noted that the IFCS already has substantial work before it on the 12 POPs. The US proposed discussing the issue at ISG-3. CANADA supported initiating discussions on chemicals beyond POPs, but noted that the IFCS will have to address priorities and resource issues. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION also noted the importance of setting priorities and urged the IFCS to create the mechanisms to begin the work. INDIA stressed that the issue of chemicals other than POPs should be given its proper place and not wait until ISG-3. ICCA recalled that the Council's decisions were based on the idea that only so much work could be done at one time on chemicals. The IFCS agreed to request the Forum Standing Committee to report on the issue for ISG-3.

On 13 February, Bo Wahlström (Sweden) presented a proposal to the Forum Standing Committee regarding activities for chemicals of international concern other than POPs. The proposal

notes that a number of countries (China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) are interested in working with other interested countries, IGOs and NGOs to review the Report of the Government-Designated Group of Experts on Further Measures to Reduce and Risk from a Limited Number of Hazardous Chemicals and its Annexes (UNEP/PIC/EG/1/3) with respect to issues related to risk reduction from a limited number of hazardous chemicals other than POPs and consider actions to implement them.

The document states that such work could proceed in several steps and it provides nine possible activities, including: identifying chemicals that are subject to different international legal instruments or activities; developing an overview of national, regional and international work to identify and control risk from chemicals other than POPs; initiating a process to develop generic criteria for the identification of chemicals other than POPs; and considering the development of options for risk management of these chemicals. The proposal also states that a workshop, organized by the interested countries, could be held in early 1998 to discuss some of these issues.

CANADA, supported by the US and AUSTRALIA, noted that the proposed workshop should be rescheduled for mid-1998 to avoid conflicts with the POPs negotiations. CANADA and the US also noted that the Standing Committee is intended to play a preparatory role, while some of the proposed activities would require decision-making authority. AUSTRALIA cautioned against taking decisions that conflict with those taken by the UNEP Governing Council. ARGENTINA supported the proposal for action on chemicals other than POPs. An informal session was convened in the evening to further discuss the issue.

On 14 February, delegates received a revised proposal, to which Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Ireland and Italy added their support. The revised proposal states that the countries are interested in working in an open and transparent process to review the report of the expert group and consider taking action and to report on such action to the Governing Council at its twentieth session, as stated in the recent UNEP Governing Council decision (UNEP/GC.19/L.57). The revised proposal suggests the following activities: identification of health and environmental problems caused by chemicals that pose significant risks; and development of an overview of national, regional and international work to identify hazardous chemicals and to control risks from such chemicals of international concern other than POPs. The revised proposal also notes that the process outcome should be a clear understanding of chemical problems that are insufficiently addressed at present and, if appropriate, propose actions to be taken. The revised proposal states that a workshop will be held in 1998 to discuss some of these issues. The IFCS agreed to take note of the proposal.

ENDOCRINE DISRUPTING SUBSTANCES: The US, the EUROPEAN COMMISSION and JAPAN proposed forming an *ad hoc* working group on endocrine disruptors. WHO noted a number of decisions and recommendations made at international workshops and other bodies calling for work on this issue and suggested clarifying the roles of all involved organizations. Supported by GERMANY, OMAN and ARGENTINA, he said WHO and the OECD should play a key role. WWF said the IFCS should develop options for funding a global research project on endocrine disrupting chemicals. DENMARK said a broad international effort is needed, but urged examination of resources and costs. Participants agreed to form a drafting group on the issue.

On 13 February, delegates received draft findings and recommendations on endocrine disrupting substances (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.17w/Rev.1/Add.1). The findings state that the IFCS agrees that a rapidly growing body of scientific research indicates that a number of substances have the potential to interfere

with the normal functions of the body governed by the endocrine system. Countries and other IFCS partners have expressed concern about these findings, and many are investing significant resources into learning how and to what extent substances may be adversely affecting human health and the ecosystem via endocrine pathways. Considerable scientific uncertainty remains on the methodologies, exposures and effects of these substances. Therefore, new information and activities relevant to endocrine disrupting substances are rapidly emerging. This calls for effective coordination of the various efforts.

The findings also state that addressing the concerns of endocrine disruption requires an open and transparent mechanism for assuring cooperation among governments, IGOs and NGOs and other interested parties. This effort requires coordinating research, testing, assessment and sound management of endocrine disrupting substances in ways that minimize duplication of efforts, make research more accessible and recognize the special needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The draft recommendations state that the IFCS should request the IOMC through its participating organizations to: compile and harmonize the definitions and terms appropriate to endocrine disruption; promote coordinated research strategies and processes; identify testing priorities and gaps; adopt and maintain an inventory of research activities and other relevant and related information; and facilitate information exchange on existing and new scientific evaluations, research results, surveys, workshops, meetings and risk management actions. The IFCS also requests that the IOMC report to the Standing Committee and ISG-3.

ICEM noted that it is too soon to speculate about risks and proposed a reference to hazard control rather than risk management. The US proposed action on the management of risks and hazards. FAO expressed concern on making requests of IOMC organizations and the US proposed that IOMC, when reporting to the Standing Committee of the Forum and ISG-3, also report on its ability to support these actions.

The IFCS also planned to discuss a possible integrated international mechanism for management of hazardous chemicals. The President stated that, as a result of the UNEP Governing Council Meeting, UNEP has been requested to produce a report on this issue, in consultation with IOMC. The report will be provided to the IFCS. The US proposed inviting UNEP and IOMC to expedite the report, if possible, for ISG-3. GREENPEACE and WWF supported authorizing the Standing Committee to convene an *ad hoc* group to review the report. FRANCE, the UK and ICCA cautioned against spreading resources too thin and supported requesting that an expedited report be made available by summer 1998. The President noted a lack of consensus on forming an *ad hoc* group. The IFCS agreed to leave the issue to the Standing Committee.

OTHER IFCS ISSUES

AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON POPS: On Thursday, 13 February 1997, delegates were presented with an informal draft proposal on terms of reference for the IFCS *ad hoc* working group on POPs. The proposal notes that the recommendation of the Executive Board of the WHO and the decision of the nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council clearly indicate that international action will be taken on POPs. The Council decision gave priority to the establishment of an INC and subsequent negotiation of a global legally-binding instrument on POPs, and urged governments to initiate action on the recommendations of the Final Report of the IFCS Working Group.

To assist in preparing for the INC process, the proposed IFCS *ad hoc* working group on POPs should, *inter alia*: facilitate information sharing, including possible regional workshops;

prepare governments for taking action on POPs; provide, prior to the first INC, scientific and technical information pertaining to criteria and processes that may be used in selecting POPs in addition to the 12 specified in the UNEP decision; characterize the issues for each of the 12 specified POPs that must be addressed to design and implement action to reduce the risks to human health and the environment; promote development of baseline data for sources, production and uses of the 12 specified POPs; and promote development of media/biota/human monitoring data for the 12 specified POPs.

The US stressed that the terms of reference must clearly establish a process that involves all participants, including developing countries and NGOs. She also supported a review of the groups activities at ISG-3. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by UNIDO, said the percentage of POPs in countries with economies in transition is the same as in developed countries and called for a specific reference to their needs. UNEP cautioned against establishing an informal process when a political body such as the Governing Council has called for formal negotiations. He said that some of the proposed activities could be logically undertaken by an INC and also noted the need to consider most efficient way to allocate financial resources. Continuing the *ad hoc* group until ISG-3 could prove difficult once the INC commences.

The US stated that the UNEP Governing Council did not comment on the activities of IFCS until the INC and noted that the INC is under no obligation to use the information this group could provide. GERMANY supported the proposal as a good way to draw on the strength of the IFCS. JAPAN asked whether sufficient time remains prior to the INC to produce an input that addresses the concerns of all regions. FAO requested clarification regarding the groups mandate. The President stated that the group would try to produce a primer on the 12 POPs. He also proposed that the terms of reference should extend only until the INC and recognized that adding value to the INC process would require the group to work expeditiously. The group should also report to ISG-3. The proposal was accepted as amended by the President.

REPORT TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION: On Thursday, 13 February, Roy Hickman (Canada) presented the draft President's Report to the UN General Assembly Special Session to review the implementation of Agenda 21. He noted that the drafting team included all of the regions, industrial, labor and environmental NGOs and the IOMC. He noted that because the audience for this report would be Heads of State and ministers, the level of technicality must be considered. The recommendations recognize the importance of the sound management of chemicals, the role of the IFCS as the overarching framework to promote sound chemical management, the new challenges such as substances that may affect the endocrine system, and the role of international organizations, industry, NGOs, scientific organizations and donors for capacity building and sound management.

GERMANY indicated its support for the ongoing international work on chemicals since UNCED. The US, NORWAY and ICCA suggested that there should be recognition of the importance of the sound management of chemicals in order to achieve sustainable development, and the ICCA suggested including the first two sentences of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21. The US also suggested that there should be more emphasis on public health, a recognition of the need to continue work beyond 2000, as well as a recognition of the work of Sweden, Belgium, Australia and Canada. NORWAY suggested that the effects of most chemicals, not some chemicals, are not well understood. MEXICO commented that the needs of developing countries were not properly reflected in this document and SOUTH AFRICA suggested a reference to obsolete chemicals.

Discussions continued during the afternoon Plenary and Hickman presented a revised draft that contained many of the amendments suggested in the morning session. WWF, the US, ICEM, and MALAYSIA noted that a general or shorter reference, rather than a specific one, should be made to Chapter 19. The ICCA suggested that the current excerpt represented an appropriate balance and MOROCCO also suggested referring to the totality of Chapter 19. The President proposed that only a brief reference be made and this was accepted by the Plenary. The INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOODWORKERS (IUF) suggested that the terms "responsible care" and "product stewardship" were industry terms and not terms adopted by IFCS. The President noted that these terms were in Chapter 19 and both the US and Hickman noted that these were acceptable terms.

On 14 February, Hickman introduced the third draft of the President's report to the Special Session, which was revised after the previous day's discussion. GERMANY suggested that substances only may have the potential to disrupt endocrine systems and proposed that this should be reflected in the text. FRANCE supported Germany and also noted that scientific research could not only bring about new facts but also new understandings. The ILO expressed concern that the language of this proposal was being watered down and that the wording of a number of substances have the potential to interfere with normal body functions governed by the endocrine system should not be changed. GERMANY proposed a new text for the introduction that mentioned the substantial and widespread use of chemicals, but WWF and AUSTRALIA expressed reservations. AUSTRALIA suggested simply an affirmation of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21. JAPAN noted the need for a balanced text but supported mentioning the importance of chemicals. ICCA suggested including language from the President's report. WWF suggested that this language did not belong in the proposals to Special Session as it is already in the President's report. The President then suggested that the original language of the draft document should be used. MOROCCO noted there should be an extensive reference to Chapter 19 if reference is to be made at all. The US asked if the introduction to the report was meant to reaffirm the entirety of Chapter 19 or to make specific reference to the Programme Areas. FRANCE noted the need for compromise on this issue and suggested acceptance of the President's proposal. Participants agreed that the final text reaffirms the importance of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21. The proposals for the Special Session, as amended, were then accepted by the Plenary.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday, 14 February 1997, the President presented the documents Proposed Guidelines for National Focal Points (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.05w/Rev.1) and Designation and Criteria for Meetings Held Under the Auspices of the IFCS, which were accepted. Delegates also discussed final amendments to the recommendations under Programme Areas C and E. Participants then opened discussion on the draft meeting report (IFCS/FORUM-II/97.R) and approved all sections with amendments. Roy Hickman (Canada) then introduced Alan Nymark, Associate Deputy Minister of Health Canada who delivered the closing address to FORUM II. Following this address, the President thanked the participants, the host government and the Secretariat and closed the Second Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

WWF BRIEFING ON ENDOCRINE DISRUPTING CHEMICALS

On Tuesday, 11 February, WWF-International held a press briefing on endocrine disrupting chemicals featuring Dr. Theo Colburn, WWF-US Senior Scientist and co-author of *Our Stolen Future*. Dr. Colburn described the role of the endocrine system in human development and noted several recent studies on the effect of chemicals that can interfere with it. According to WWF, more than 51 different synthetic chemical substances are suspected of mimicking or interfering with hormones found in both wildlife and humans and thereby interrupting their nervous, endocrine and immune systems. Dr. Colburn noted that the persistent nature of a chemical is not a prerequisite for causing harm and said that the timing of exposure is also important. She noted that even one low dose of an endocrine disruptor at a crucial stage in development of an embryo can cause irreversible damage. Where these substances are persistent they can be transferred from one generation to another.

She noted that reproductive and other effects should concern humans where they are dependent upon the same resources, such as contaminated fish. Evidence of lowered sperm counts around the world and significant increases in testicular cancer, breast cancer, as well as of cases of undescended testes and endometriosis, is heightening concern about human health. Dr. Colburn noted that in each study, the individuals studied, usually children, did not exhibit a noticeably altered behavior or retardation, but their ability to reach their full development potential was hindered. For more information on WWF's work on this issue, contact Elizabeth Foley in Ottawa; tel: +1-613-237-9300 or Barbara Rutherford at WWF International; tel: +(41 22) 364-9111; fax: +(41 22) 364-5829; e-mail: brutherford@wwfnet.org.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF FORUM II

The IFCS terms of reference state, among other things, that the Forum shall provide clear and consistent advice for risk assessment and management of chemicals and improve the delineation of roles and initiatives for governments and international organizations. FORUM II definitely took some solid steps to fulfill this mandate and increased its credibility as the laboratory for policy guidance and consensus-building in the field of chemical safety. As one participant noted, international progress may appear glacial, but given the high complexity and uncertainty in the field, FORUM II's accomplishments are considerable.

Delegates agreed to recommend a non-binding globally harmonized system for classification and labelling of chemicals, as well as to consider the assessment of chemicals beyond the 500 that are to be completed by 2000. Many participants also informed the meeting about national and regional efforts to improve information exchange, with a view to improving coordination at the international level. More work was also recommended in the area of obsolete chemical disposal and pesticide risk reduction, an issue of particular concern in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. FORUM II also provided an opportunity for information sharing among stakeholders and, hopefully, provided useful new knowledge, especially for those who do not yet have the capacity or resources to handle chemicals in an environmentally sound manner.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES: In many respects, the IFCS is decidedly not the UN — in procedure, style or formality. While skeptics may have initially seen this as a reason to doubt its usefulness or question its credibility, the IFCS should be commended for turning its differences into a comparative advantage. The concern for broad participation may mean that

progress is slower than some might desire, but the inclusive nature of the Forum is highlighted by many participants as one of its greatest strengths. Indeed, an entity such as the Forum, designed as a consensus-builder rather than a decision-maker, could not function without the active support of as many stakeholders from the field of chemical safety as possible. Industry, labor organizations, environmental NGOs and scientific groups all participate and contribute to the IFCS's work and, as one observer noted, typically refrain from traditional battle tactics. FORUM II stressed this trait in the thematic session, "In Partnership for Global Chemical Safety." While there is a formal voting mechanism in the terms of reference for IFCS (only governments have voting privileges), participants thus far have taken steps to ensure that consensus is the norm and to date, the voting procedure has never been used.

The IFCS, as with any intergovernmental body, will continually face funding problems and, as some moments of Plenary discussions exhibited, could sometimes be perceived or misperceived as competing with other programmes or fora for resources. Nonetheless, some participants informally suggested IFCS's non-UN status grants it a certain freedom to experiment with innovative financing and money-saving tactics. Problems with the costs of interpretation and translation services are a source of growing concern for many at the UN. Yet in the corridors, some participants suggested that some countries, at least those unable to provide a lump sum contribution, could instead provide the services of a translator as an in-kind contribution to the process. Though never stated formally, the Canadian hosts also seemed eager to set a precedent by holding an economically responsible conference. From standard per diems to simple maple leaf scarves to identify the staff, FORUM II demonstrated that a host need not stage an opulent extravaganza, nor even be a wealthy Northern country, in order to host a productive international meeting.

EMERGING ISSUES AT FORUM II: FORUM II fulfilled another of the terms of reference established at FORUM I: to review progress in the area of chemical safety prior to the UN General Assembly Special Session. Despite some controversy as to what wording should introduce the report that the President of IFCS would submit to the Special Session, many participants seemed to feel that this report was important both in terms of making the work of the IFCS known to the wider international community and in shaping what suggestions might be made at the Special Session with respect to future work on chemical safety beyond 1997.

Several participants highlighted the inter-relationship between Programme Areas C (information exchange) and E (national capabilities). They noted that the improvement of national capacities for the sound management of chemicals is dependent on the availability of accurate, comprehensive and easy to understand information. This is especially true for developing countries who often lack the resources and infrastructure to deal effectively with a wide range of chemical hazards. Many of the initiatives undertaken as a result of FORUM I and FORUM II will improve the information situation, but international cooperation and the spirit of partnership must be maintained if these objectives are to be realized.

FUTURE CHALLENGES: Chemicals are everywhere, more than we know. As scientific understanding about the linkages and relationships between chemicals and their effects on human health and the environment improve, the international community will likely increase activities that are designed to manage those linkages in an environmentally sound manner. The key issues in the immediate future for the IFCS, and indeed for the international efforts to address chemical safety, are the efforts to complete PIC negotiations on chemicals in international trade and to begin negotiations for a legally-binding instrument for POPs. However,

other important issues remain, and FORUM II took some steps in addressing them. For example, on endocrine disrupting substances, which were of special concern to environmental groups at FORUM II, the IFCS requested IOMC to compile and harmonize definitions and terms, promote coordinated research strategies and processes, identify research priorities and maintain an inventory of research activities.

Another key challenge for the Forum will be to clearly delineate its relationship to other bodies dealing with chemical safety issues. The subject of an integrated global mechanism was raised in Ottawa, but it seems clear that it is too soon to create a single international mechanism to deal with this issue. In the meantime, the IFCS, along with UNEP, the IOMC and other actors in the field of chemical safety, will continue to relate to one another in a loose framework.

Many of those involved in the Forum seemed to feel that chemical issues will become increasingly important on the international agenda, and that the IFCS is currently placed to play the leading role in addressing these important issues. Nevertheless, the full nature and extent of this role remains to be seen. Regional groups and organizations may become increasingly important, given the number of statements emphasizing regional cooperation. Lastly, in a universe of expanding chemical hazards, it remains to be seen if one Forum meeting every three years is sufficient to deal with international concerns. As in other areas of international environmental concern, however, increased action requires matching political will and financial resources. IFCS will need to address these concerns, as with any other process. However, if FORUM II provides any indication, IFCS appears to be gaining the momentum necessary to fulfill its mandate.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

FUTURE IFCS MEETINGS: JAPAN offered to host ISG-3 in Tokyo in late 1998. BRAZIL will forward its decision to host FORUM III, scheduled for late 2000, to the IFCS as soon as possible. The Plenary also agreed tentatively to hold ISG-4 in 2002. MEXICO confirmed its proposal to host a working group meeting in 1997 for developing countries to discuss the sound management of chemicals. For information on these meetings, contact the IFCS Secretariat, World Health Organization, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland; tel: +(41 22) 791 3588; fax: +(41 22) 791 4848; e-mail: ifcs@who.ch.

THIRD SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY-BINDING INSTRUMENT FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE (INC-3): This meeting will be held in Geneva from 26-30 May 1997. The UNEP Governing Council at its last meeting adopted a

decision calling for completion of negotiations on a legally-binding agreement by the end of 1997. The final (INC-4) is tentatively scheduled for Autumn 1997 in Brussels, Belgium, and the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries for the Adoption of a PIC Convention will be held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in December 1997. For more information contact: UNEP Chemicals (IRPTC); tel: +(41 22) 797 9111; fax: +(41 22) 797 3460; e-mail: IRPTC@unep.ch.

JOINT MEETING ON PESTICIDES: This meeting, scheduled from 17-21 March 1997 in Leicester, is expected to result in three Environmental Health Criteria documents, three Environmental Assessments and two to four Concise International Chemical Assessment Documents. For information contact: Dr. M. Younes, WHO; tel: +(41 22) 791-3574; fax: +(41 22) 791-4848; e-mail: younesm@who.ch; or Dr. J. Herrman, WHO; tel: +(41 22) 791-3569; fax: +(41 22) 791-4848; e-mail: herrmanj@who.ch.

RESPONSIBLE CARE ASIA PACIFIC CONFERENCE 97 TOKYO: This conference, scheduled for 11-14 May 1997 in Tokyo, is designed to provide participants with extensive knowledge and the latest information on how the world chemical industry has been implementing Responsible Care, and what they should bear in mind in its implementation, as well as opportunities to discuss how to tackle the various issues in the Asia Pacific Region. For information contact the RCAP 97 Tokyo Secretariat, c/o Congress Corporation, 7th Akiyama Bldg., 5-3 Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102, Japan; tel: +81-3-3263-5394; fax: +81-3-3263-4032.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PESTICIDE USE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES — IMPACT ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT: This meeting, scheduled from 23 February - 1 March 1998 in San Jose, Costa Rica, will discuss and exchange knowledge about pesticides concerning their impact on the environment, impact on health, economic issues, regulations, policies and clean technology in developing countries. For information contact Yamileth Astorga, PPUNA, Universidad Nacional, Apdo. 86-3000 Heredia, Costa Rica; tel: +(506) 277-3584; fax: +(506) 277-3583; e-mail: ppuna@irazu.una.ac.cr.

Planning a Meeting in 1997?

The International Institute for Sustainable Development, publishers of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, now provide a new publication called *Sustainable Developments* to report from government, UN agency or NGO sponsored initiatives. *Sustainable Developments* provides daily and/or summary reports for conferences, workshops and symposia. This service includes distribution through our print and e-mail network to more than 25,000 readers and creation of a World Wide Web page for your event with photos and RealAudio interviews with participants. For more information and pricing contact Kira Schmidt at tel: +1 212 644 0204; fax: +1 212 644 0206; e-mail: kiras@iisd.org.