



ICCM-4 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Fourth Session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4) opened on Monday, 28 September, in Geneva, Switzerland. Following a morning of regional and sectoral meetings, ICCM4 opened in the afternoon with a short video on SAICM, its work, and its importance, as well as a cultural performance from Swiss musicians.

Delegates then heard opening statements from dignitaries, regional groups, national delegations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and industry groups. They also addressed: organizational matters; representation, credentials and accreditation; and progress and challenges towards achieving the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management (2020 goal).

In the evening, delegates attended a reception hosted by the Government of Switzerland.

OPENING SESSION

On Monday 28 September, Jacob Duer, Principal Coordinator, SAICM Secretariat, opened the meeting welcoming dignitaries and delegates.

Alexandre Fasel, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, on behalf of Bruno Oberle, Director, Federal Office of the Environment, Switzerland, recalled that chemicals are an integral part of the SDGs and noted that SAICM can specifically contribute to the monitoring of SDGs' implementation. He emphasized defining the stakes and priorities for the next five years, and beyond 2020, as important tasks for ICCM4.

Ligia Noronha, Director, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), UNEP, welcomed participants on behalf of Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP, noting that ICCM4 represents a unique opportunity to assess and celebrate progress made and renew commitments towards the sound management of chemicals. She highlighted the multistakeholder and multisectoral nature of SAICM and its role in discussing EPIs as key assets, and stressed the importance of reflecting on waste management, when looking at the future, beyond 2020.

President Richard Lesiyampe (Kenya) officially opened ICCM4, noting that it was the tenth anniversary of SAICM's inception. He said ICCM4 is an opportunity to renew commitment for implementing SAICM, identify remaining challenges and opportunities toward achieving the 2020 goal, place sound management of chemicals and waste within the context of the post-2015 development agenda and link them to

the SDGs, plan an intersessional process toward ICCM5 in 2020, and start contemplating the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Poland, for the CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE GROUP (CEE), encouraged adoption and implementation of the Overall Orientation and Guidance (OOG) and invited an omnibus resolution on EPIs. He emphasized the opportunity ICCM4 presents on deciding future goals and targets and on showing political will, cooperation and renewed support for chemicals management.

Côte d'Ivoire, for the AFRICAN GROUP, highlighted the importance of highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) and of hazardous substances within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products, noting the need for further action on these issues in Africa. He also urged discussion on an effective financial mechanism given that the QSP is moving towards closure.

The EU, for its Member States, noting that sound chemicals management is at the heart of sustainability, said that the agenda beyond 2020 should be looked at within the context of the newly adopted SDGs. He also noted regional efforts undertaken to implement SAICM, including on developing a strategy for a toxic-free environment to be adopted by 2018.

IPEN highlighted a number of steps ICCM4 should take during the course of the meeting, including: establishing an intersessional process leading up to ICCM5 to consider the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020; and defining concrete steps to address EPIs.

The INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHEMICAL ASSOCIATIONS (ICCA) said that sound chemicals management goes to the heart of SDGs because while it can damage health and environment, it can also have direct economic benefits. He called for greater efforts to be made in sound chemicals management at the national level.

Iran, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, highlighted achievements on chemicals management in the region, underscoring a lack of financial and technical support. Recognizing the need for continued efforts, he said that the region calls for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) to be the guiding element for all relevant policies.

Dominican Republic, for GRULAC, said that while the QSP facilitated access for NGOs to work with governments, challenges remain in implementation and coordination among stakeholders. Highlighting the region's commitment to sound chemicals management, he noted linkages between chemicals management and SDGs and called for establishing an intersessional process considering SAICM's work beyond 2020.



The World Federation of Public Health Associations, for the HEALTH SECTOR, emphasized the unfinished SAICM agenda in the health sector and reported on priorities for the sector, including: better determination of the impacts of chemicals on health; building capabilities to deal with poisonings and chemical incidents; formulating strategies directed specifically at children's health; improving access to scientific knowledge; and promoting alternatives to highly toxic and persistent chemicals. The INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC) noted that much remains to be done on the decent work agenda, and stressed the importance of accessible, adequate and sustainable financing for the future of SAICM.

JAPAN noted the adoption of a national SAICM implementation plan in 2012 and a review of its implementation undertaken in 2015, and suggested it may serve as a model for others and offered to share the results with interested countries. CHINA urged giving priority, when implementing SAICM, to addressing the difficulties of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including through priority in financial and technical assistance for capacity building and implementing activities linked to EPIs. The US Council for International Business (USCIB) provided information about a brochure outlining their activities, overlapping goals and support for SAICM.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: President Lesiyampe requested the five regional groups to notify the Secretariat of their nominations for the ICCM5 Bureau, the QSP Executive Board, and regional focal points no later than 1 pm Thursday. He asked sectoral groups to notify the Secretariat of their nominations for the three observer representatives to the Bureau by the same deadline. He said the results would be announced during Friday afternoon's plenary.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: The meeting adopted the agenda as proposed (SAICM/ICCM.4/1 and 1/Add.1).

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: President Lesiyampe discussed his scenario note (SAICM/ICCM.4/2), the planned organization of work, and programme for the High Level Segment (HLS). The proposed organization of work was approved.

REPRESENTATION, CREDENTIALS AND ACCREDITATION

It was decided that the Credentials Committee will present a report on credentials on Friday afternoon.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 2020 GOAL OF SOUND CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT

REGIONAL AND SECTORAL ACHIEVEMENTS, STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKING TOWARDS THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGIC APPROACH OPS: The Secretariat presented the summary report on progress in the implementation of the Strategic Approach for the period 2011-2013 (SAICM/ICCM.4/3) as well as other relevant reports (SAICM/ICCM.4/INF/1-4, SAICM/ICCM.4/INF/24, SAICM/ICCM.4/INF/26, SAICM/ICCM.4/6).

The CEE expressed both satisfaction and concern regarding the summary report, emphasizing the common responsibility to achieve the 2020 goal globally. He welcomed efforts to compare data in accordance with the 11 basic elements in the OOG, but said that data coverage could be further improved.

The AFRICAN GROUP outlined projects and policies of importance to the region and that are currently being implemented. He emphasized the need for more finance and capacity building to address chemicals management in Africa.

UK, for the WESTERN EUROPE AND OTHERS GROUP (WEOG), said that the group considered SAICM as a positive tool to raise awareness on chemicals issues. He underscored the importance of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines to achieve the 2020 goal and links between SDGs and the 2020 goal.

The OECD, on behalf of the INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS (IOMC), discussed the main results of the IOMC's analysis presented at the OEWG2. Highlighting issues such as HHPs and mainstreaming sound chemicals management, he underscored proposals for setting indicators to track future SAICM implementation.

ICCA, for INDUSTRY, drew attention to ICCA's fifth update report on the implementation indicators of the SAICM. He indicated notable improvements by the CEE and Asia-Pacific regions in SAICM implementation. Underscoring limited data on the African region, he noted the ICCA's efforts to build capacity in Africa and the ICCA's partnership with UNEP, which will be announced later in the week.

IPEN, for PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS, discussed IPEN's campaigns on lead in paint and mercury, and work on HHPs within the SAICM process. She advocated building NGOs' capacity and increasing NGO-government dialogue.

The HEALTH SECTOR emphasized developments since ICCM3, highlighting: the movement to eliminate mercury in the provision of health care; the development of databases providing independent science-based comparisons of chemicals; and understanding the environmental impact of pharmaceutical usage.

ITUC noted the support provided by the QSP in the implementation of training and other activities on chemicals management and safety in various regions of the world, and noted the challenges faced by trade unions to participate in SAICM as equal partners.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL called for prioritizing access to information on chemicals to affected groups and individuals through mandatory disclosure by companies, including, where possible, the source data for analyses conducted on the environmental and health impacts of chemicals. The EU considered the OOG as very useful and encouraged all stakeholders to undertake additional activities in the areas highlighted by the OOG in the years up to 2020. He urged greater focus on improving the basic elements of managing chemicals safety, particularly for developing countries, and including chemicals and waste policies in national development plans. MEXICO urged regions to establish short-term goals covering the years remaining before 2020.

IN THE CORRIDORS

ICCM4 opened on Monday with many delegates eager to start tackling the packed agenda facing them. Indeed, many of the opening statements reflected the imperative nature of achieving greater progress toward the 2020 goal, creating some sort of intersessional process to maintain momentum until ICCM5 in 2020, and making firm decisions on how to address the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Some participants fretted that there may not be sufficient time to fully address each of the many substantive matters by the announced 1 PM Thursday deadline. Others reminded such skeptics that OEWG2 managed to complete its work under similar constraints, so the target is entirely achievable if, as one put it, "everyone remains focused."