



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM IFCS IV: MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2003

On Monday morning, delegates heard a brief report on the draft Action Plan for the globally harmonized system (GHS) for the classification and labeling of chemicals, and began their deliberations on: hazard data generation and availability; acutely toxic pesticides; capacity building assistance; and the SAICM. Regional Groups met in the afternoon to prepare their inputs to discussions on occupational safety and health, and the SAICM. *Ad hoc* Working Groups convened in the evening to focus on: hazard data generation; acutely toxic pesticides; and addressing the widening gap among countries.

### PLENARY

GERMANY briefed participants on the success of the GHS workshop held the previous night, highlighting the development of a draft GHS Action Plan, which will be presented in Plenary for adoption. Delegates then heard presentations from the Chairs of the FSC Working Groups established in the intersessional period, and began discussions on several agenda items.

**HAZARD DATA GENERATION AND AVAILABILITY:** Gunnar Bengtsson (Sweden) presented the decision document on *Hazard Data Generation and Availability* (IFCS/FORUM-IV/09w), which contains a proposal for an additional *Priority for Action* on the generation and sharing of hazard information for all chemicals in commerce and a set of proposals for concrete actions. The OECD expressed its willingness to work on this issue. The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (EC) highlighted its new regulation on Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals, which she said could provide input to the global efforts to collect hazardous data. The WESTERN EUROPE AND OTHERS GROUP (WEOG), CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (CEE), and ASIA AND THE PACIFIC Regional Groups supported the proposal in the decision document. The AFRICAN GROUP stressed the importance of safety data sheets containing safe waste disposal information, and suggested that provision of hazardous data by industry become a legal obligation. SWEDEN and GERMANY requested developing a timetable for the proposed actions. The WHO proposed acknowledging the relevant work of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS). The INTERNATIONAL POPS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN) expressed concern about using the OECD List of Non-Confidential Data on Chemicals, which, she said, does not balance the public's right to know with commercial interests. The PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK (PAN) called for addressing the need to provide information on the active ingredients of products. Delegates agreed to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group on this issue.

**ACUTELY TOXIC PESTICIDES:** Cathleen Barnes (US) presented on *Acutely Toxic Pesticides - Initial Input on Extent of Problem and Guidance for Risk Management* (10w). She noted that this issue is addressed in several international fora and

outlined key recommendations of the report, highlighting: the prohibition of some acutely toxic pesticides as a risk mitigation mechanism; expanding research on safer alternatives; disseminating existing information; and improving reporting and health systems. The CEE outlined the problem of under-reporting of pesticide-related poisonings, and called for addressing long-term exposure. The GROUP OF LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES (GRULAC) urged, *inter alia*, a ban on the use of WHO class Ia and Ib pesticides. WEOG asked industry to extend product stewardship. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC proposed: surveillance and monitoring systems; support for non-chemical methods; addressing pesticide stockpiles; and information exchange. THAILAND questioned the scientific credibility of CropLife International (CI), which he said understated poisonings in Thailand by misinterpreting data. He further suggested that the WHO reconsider its association with CI. The WHO, BRAZIL and PAN said under-reporting and subsequent lack of data should not be used to underestimate the problem of acute poisonings, and WHO underscored its commitment to strengthening poison centers. CI reiterated its commitment to improving the safe management of pesticides in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. PAN called for vulnerable groups' participation in international and national discussions, and commended proposals to restrict the availability of acutely toxic pesticides and promote research on alternatives. CYPRUS called for raising awareness among children, women, and farmers. An *ad hoc* Working Group was established to further consider this agenda item.

### CAPACITY BUILDING ASSISTANCE: INFOCAP:

Matthias Kern (Germany) presented on the *Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) Progress Report* (3 INF). He outlined next steps, including the need to raise awareness and facilitate participation, promote INFOCAP at relevant international and regional conventions, and develop French and Spanish websites. THAILAND proposed the inclusion of national profiles.

**Review of capacity building assistance:** Referring to the *Assistance for Capacity Building Report for Forum IV* (11w), Kern, speaking for Roy Hickman (Canada), stressed that chemical safety projects should be based on national profiles and entail multi-stakeholder participation. He said the document recommends that countries and stakeholders, *inter alia*: take advantage of driving forces, such as international environmental agreements on chemicals; integrate chemical safety into sustainable development policies; and enhance dialogue with donors to ensure prioritization of chemical safety. All Regional Groups expressed support for the document. WEOG identified the need for data linking chemical safety and development, and highlighted WHO's work on the health effects of chemicals. The CEE highlighted the lack of inter-sectoral information flows and basic knowledge on chemical

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safety in the region. GRULAC noted that some countries in the region lack national profiles, and some profiles are obsolete. SWITZERLAND, supported by CYPRUS and the EU, proposed a decision on integrating chemical safety into poverty reduction strategies. SWEDEN emphasized the importance of project ownership, and SLOVENIA called for assistance in raising public awareness. UNEP highlighted funding opportunities through the Global Environment Facility and advocated addressing chemical safety in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. UNITAR announced two new programmes to support capacity building. Kern said a revised document will be discussed in Plenary on Thursday morning.

**Addressing the widening gap:** Rashid Bayat Mokhtari (Iran) presented on *Addressing the Widening Gap Among Countries in Following Chemical Safety Policies* (12w), highlighting obstacles faced by many developing countries in meeting chemical safety requirements. He stressed the need to strike a balance between further policy development and helping countries that have lagged behind with regard to chemical safety policies. He proposed that Forum IV request the FSC to establish an *ad hoc* Expert Group to promote systematic ways to strengthen the sound management of chemicals in countries with implementation challenges. WEOG supported cooperation with developing countries, including through pilot projects. GRULAC noted that an expert group alone cannot address all problems associated with the gap. Supporting the formation of an Expert Group, the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHEMICAL ASSOCIATIONS suggested that closing the gap be a focus of the SAICM. The ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FUND said the proposed Expert Group should report regularly to the FSC as well as to Forum V. UNITAR urged countries to prepare their national profiles as a basis for identifying challenges and gaps.

**SAICM:** William Sanders (US) presented on the *SAICM Forum IV Thought Starter on Gaps in the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000* (13w), noting that its purpose is to stimulate discussion on identifying gaps in chemicals management policies and their implementation. He suggested that participants focus on children and chemical safety, occupational health and safety, and the widening gap. The PHILIPPINES stressed the importance of national inter-agency coordination for chemicals management. Speaking for the AFRICAN GROUP, Senegal stressed the need to consider financial mechanisms and technology transfer to implement relevant agreements. MOLDOVA highlighted SAICM's potential role in mobilizing resources and coordinating regional activities. Stating that different institutions and processes should contribute according to their competencies, SWITZERLAND stressed avoiding duplication of work. UNEP urged the Forum to focus on identifying gaps in discussions on SAICM. Underscoring the chemicals-related goal agreed to at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, IPEN recommended that governments use SAICM as a tool to achieve that goal and stressed the need for appropriate assistance to this end.

#### AD HOC WORKING GROUPS

**HAZARD DATA AND GENERATION:** Chaired by Bengtsson, this Working Group addressed the proposals made in Plenary earlier in the day. On the legal obligation for industry to report, Bengtsson explained that the decision document allows for a range of instruments, including regulatory interventions. Delegates agreed to acknowledge relevant IPCS efforts and use "general" language regarding the timetable for actions. Citing high costs, some delegates opposed the proposal to translate Internet databases. On achieving a balance between the right to know and commercial interests, a participant suggested recommending that additional information be made accessible "according to the need to protect both community's right to know and industry's valid

claims for the protection of commercial information," while others said a reference to the validity of confidentiality claims would be sufficient.

**ACUTELY TOXIC PESTICIDES:** This Working Group was chaired by Barnes. One delegate recommended that priority be given to Regional Group proposals. Regarding amendments to the decision document, the Working Group decided to preliminarily include all the inputs from Regional Groups and other participants, leaving major disagreements in brackets. On risk mitigating mechanisms, an industry group proposed an amendment suggesting that risk analysis be conducted before action is undertaken. An NGO participant expressed concern that this proposal restricts the ability of countries to apply the precautionary principle. Participants will reconvene on Tuesday evening to finalize the document.

**ADDRESSING THE WIDENING GAP:** Chairing this Working Group, Mokhtari identified two categories of countries: those equipped to follow chemical safety policies; and those unable to implement or understand them. Explaining that further international policy development will widen the gap, he proposed requesting the FSC to establish an *ad hoc* Expert Group to devise solutions to this problem. Discussing the proposal, which includes possible elements of a system for strengthening chemicals management in countries with an expressed need, one participant noted that some countries lack political will and good governance, and therefore cannot be helped at present. Another delegate said some countries are unaware that they have a problem. Working Group participants agreed that: the FSC will decide on the composition of the *ad hoc* Expert Group; the Expert Group will set its own rules of procedure; and the FSC will review the implementation of the system in its regular sessions and report back to Forum V. They also agreed to request the FSC to endorse Iran's proposal, and to urge donor countries to provide funding.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

The morning discussion was spiced up with a provocative statement by the host country on the scientific reliability of an industry group and the subsequent reactions the statement engendered. A number of delegates said that today's interventions did not help the credibility of the industry group, which some participants noted was already compromised following the group's presentation given on the previous day. Some delegates also discussed the rapid advance of the GHS Action Plan to a formal agenda item. While many recognize the value of a coherent approach to identifying chemical hazards, some delegates noted the complexities involved in its implementation, highlighting: the short transition period to adopt appropriate measures to implement the system; the need for technical assistance; and possible trade implications. Participants expressed widespread support for the proposal to address the widening gap, an issue that several delegates identified as critical to achieving global targets and implementing intergovernmental commitments. One developed country has initiated support for this issue through its offer to provide for a pilot project, but some delegates noted that it remains to be seen whether sufficient assistance and resources to effectively address this important issue will be forthcoming.

#### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** Delegates will gather in the ESCAP Hall from 8:00-11:00 am to hear presentations on and discuss occupational safety and health, and children and chemical safety. Delegates will also consider the draft GHS Action Plan and discuss the President's Progress Report. Discussions on the SAICM will take place from 1:00-4:00 pm in the ESCAP Hall.

**AD HOC WORKING GROUPS:** *Ad hoc* Working Groups are expected to meet in the evening to discuss: hazard data generation; acutely toxic pesticides; and the SAICM.