



FORUM III HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2000

On the second day of FORUM III, delegates met in a morning Plenary to discuss organizational matters for the meeting and for the IFCS. Participants also discussed IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000. A lunchtime presentation, sponsored by the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF), was held on "Multistakeholder Success Stories: Sustainable Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals." Regional Groups met in the afternoon.

PLENARY

ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

MATTERS: Chair Roy Hickman, President of the IFCS, drew participants' attention to organizational matters and reported on preparations for FORUM III. He noted that the Forum Standing Committee (FSC) was created in Ottawa in 1997 and has met 26 times, mainly by teleconference. He thanked the FSC for their hard work, identified the thorough preparation of the agenda and documentation, and anticipated a stimulating and productive meeting as a consequence. Participants then agreed to designate Dr. Rolf Hertel (Germany) as Rapporteur. Judy Stober, IFCS Executive Secretary, reported on the week's procedures and responsibilities pertaining to agenda items and noted amendments to the detailed time schedule. Chair Hickman noted that documents were divided into working decision documents, background information documents and room documents. Delegates then adopted the Agenda (IFCS/FORUMIII/01w) and Time Schedule (IFCS/FORUMIII/04w). Chair Hickman presented the issues to be discussed during the week and highlighted the FORUM III declaration to be discussed on Thursday, stressing that it is a draft requiring discussion by all participants. To facilitate this, he noted the formation during the morning session of an *ad hoc* working group. Stober reported on regional and other nominations for the group's membership, including lead sponsors Australia and the US.

Participants then turned to IFCS Administrative Items in the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety: Organization of Work and Terms of Reference (IFCS/FORUM III/06w) and first considered the IFCS Terms of Reference. Chair Hickman directed participants to Annex I that tabulates the 1994 Terms of Reference and proposed changes. Highlighting the principal differences, he identified: the reference to future sessions; the FSC proposal to discontinue the Intersessional Group (ISG) and devote those resources to FORUM meetings; the FSC proposal to elect five Vice-Presidents, one from each region, and an independent President, and delete reference to the Rapporteur; an expanded role for

the FSC; and provision for National Focal Points and an administering organization concerning Secretariat services. Participants then commented on the Terms of Reference, taking into account discussions in Regional Groups.

On the purpose and aims of the IFCS, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested, and participants agreed to, text modifications referring to: the importance of "analysis" of progress in achieving the environmentally sound management of chemicals; and consensus among representatives of governments in consultation and collaboration with other participants on the development of priorities and strategies.

On participation, delegates accepted a proposal from the REPUBLIC OF KOREA adding "subregional" to a description of groups. SWEDEN called for language stating that: participants shall have the right to attend all FORUM organized meetings, such as regional *ad hoc* working groups and plenary; exceptions should be for specific, limited and sensitive topics; and that the reason for exclusion should be stated one day in advance to the Secretariat. Participants agreed, with language placement to be decided.

HUNGARY and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA pointed out a lack of regional representation in the FSC. HUNGARY, with others, called for greater FSC membership. Chair Hickman identified the difficulty in enlarging the FSC, in that much of the work is by teleconference in English, but said the FSC would consider the issue and report back.

On budget and expenses, BRAZIL, supported by THE GAMBIA, CAMEROON, URUGUAY, ARGENTINA and others, called for language providing that the FORUM, through the Secretariat, mobilize financial assistance in order to ensure the participation of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. ICEM added NGO representatives to this proposal. Participants agreed in principle to this suggestion. MALI, supported by ANGOLA, called for budgeting separate from FORUM funds to specifically assist the IFCS Vice-Presidents and President fulfill their responsibilities. Chair Hickman noted this was an issue to be dealt with under policies and procedures as opposed to terms of reference.

Regarding Annex II, Regional Roles and Responsibilities for Vice-Presidents, ECUADOR suggested text emphasizing the promotion of FORUM recommendations, in addition to promotion of the IFCS. Delegates supported the amendment and the Annex was agreed as drafted. On Annex III, Guidelines for National Focal Points, THAILAND proposed text expanding the role of National Focal Points to include establishing a mechanism for coordinating

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efforts and disseminating information. THE GAMBIA proposed text referring to close collaboration between the Vice-Presidents and the National Focal Points in their regions.

Regarding Annex IV, the FSC, SAMOA proposed, and delegates supported, changing the name of the Asia region to "Asia-Pacific" region. Delegates accepted a suggestion by BRAZIL to delete reference to participant funding in extraordinary circumstances, stating that the issue was addressed in the discussion on Terms of Reference. Delegates agreed to Annex V, The Role of the President, as drafted.

Judy Stober summarized the Financial Statement (IFCS/FORUMIII/07w), which presents information on: the IFCS trust fund (organization and administrative arrangements); other contributed resources; and the IFCS twinning fund and bilateral twinning assistance. She highlighted: financial contributions to the IFCS trust fund; in-kind resources; and the twinning fund. She noted that expenditures were below the approved budget, and that the action requested of FORUM III was to approve the proposed budget for 2001-2003 and to provide advice regarding longer-term arrangements for both administrative costs and twinning arrangements.

Chair Hickman announced the creation of an Election Facilitating Committee, stating that each Vice-President had nominated, on behalf of their region, a representative for the Committee.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION BEYOND 2000: Gyorgy Ungvary, IFCS Vice-President, introduced the document regarding IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 (IFCS/FORUMIII/09w). He noted that the FORUM needed to update the Priorities for Action because they were formulated in 1994 and additional challenges have surfaced since then. He described the procedure by which the updated Priorities were produced, noting criteria including: the potential to improve chemical safety at all levels; the need to prevent or reduce adverse health and environmental effects of any chemical at any stage during its lifecycle; realistic yet challenging priorities; and the availability of tools which enable rapid application at the national level.

Gunnar Bengtsson, Sweden, summarized the findings in the document. In Programme Area A, he noted recommendations regarding: harmonization of principles; the need to perform 1000 risk assessments with the involvement of developing countries; and the need for a procedure for use after FORUM IV. In Programme Area B, he described a recommendation regarding the implementation of global harmonization of classification and labelling. In Programme Area C, recommendations referred to: broad national arrangements for exchange; ratification of the Rotterdam PIC Convention; and national safety information. In Programme Area D, he described recommendations on: integrated national pest/vector strategies; regional/national plans for disposal of obsolete chemicals; continuation of work on POPs; national systems to prevent accidents; national poison control centers; and national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). In Programme Area E, recommendations referred to: national coordination mechanisms, focal points and national profiles; national policies and action plans; and examination of assistance for FORUM IV. Recommendations for Programme Area F are to be developed this week. Bengtsson proposed a small working group to update the Priorities for Action. AUSTRALIA supported the proposal. GERMANY suggested that the Priorities for Action working group be open-ended and linked with the working group on the Bahia

Declaration. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said that working group meetings should not overlap with Regional Group meetings. The proposal was agreed.

The EUROPEAN COMMISSION summarized its proposals regarding Priorities for Action. He described major problems in EU chemical policy, including, *inter alia*, a lack of knowledge regarding risks associated with chemical use and a system where the burden of proof falls on authorities and not on industry. He stated that the new EU initiative is to remedy these shortcomings with the overriding goal of sustainable development, with consideration of the following elements: the necessity to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment for future and present generations; the precautionary principle; reduction of dangerous substances; a balance of economic, ecological and social development; the need to increase transparency; the need for technical innovation incentives; avoiding duplication of testing involving animals; and fulfillment of national obligations such as those derived from UNCED.

The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) outlined their recent activities in pursuit of the Priorities for Action, including, *inter alia*, consolidation of relevant data in a database available on CD-ROM and the Internet. He noted that the IPCS is working with countries toward: the harmonization of risk assessment methodologies; the collection of precisely defined human toxicology data; the establishment of poison information centers and development of harmonized national and regional systems for data collection; and collection of harmonized human health data for the purpose of follow-up on exposed individuals. ECUADOR thanked WHO for their support. The session was concluded.

IN THE CORRIDORS

IFCS commitment to inclusiveness was brought to the fore Monday as procedural discussions turned to participation in the working groups on the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000. A proposal to change the name of the IFCS from "Intergovernmental" to "International" further highlighted the tension both within the IFCS to be seen as inclusive and encouraging partnerships for all stakeholders and within the UN system more broadly to encourage participation from civil society while maintaining governmental decision-making authority and state sovereignty. On an upbeat note, some delegates expressed appreciation for the hard work done in preparation for FORUM III by the small yet efficient IFCS Secretariat.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

REGIONAL GROUPS: Regional Groups will meet between 9:00 am and 12:30 pm.

PLENARY: Delegates will reconvene in Plenary in the Iris Room at 2:30 pm to hear input from Regional Groups on "Priorities for Action Beyond 2000." This will be followed by consideration of "Prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products."

AD HOC WORKING GROUPS: It is expected that an *ad hoc* working group on the Bahia Declaration and an *ad hoc* working group on Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 will begin meeting today, pending finalization of their composition by the Regional Groups.

INFORMAL MEETINGS: The IPCS will host a lunchtime presentation at 1:15 pm on "Harmonization of the Approaches to the Assessment of Risk from Exposures to Chemicals" and an interactive evening session at 6:30 pm on "Preventing Toxic Exposures, Responding to Chemical Incidents, and Setting Up Poisons Centres: Challenges and Opportunities for Collaboration."