



FORUM III HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2000

On the fourth day of FORUM III, Regional Groups met during the morning. Delegates assembled in an afternoon Plenary to discuss Barriers to Information Exchange, Information Exchange for Chemical Production Decision-making, Emission Inventories, and Awareness Raising. The *ad hoc* working groups on priorities for action, the Bahia Declaration, and the prevention of illegal traffic also convened during breaks and in the evening.

PLENARY

BARRIERS TO INFORMATION EXCHANGE FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS: Chair Hickman opened the afternoon Plenary with a discussion on Barriers to Information Exchange for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IFCS/FORUMIII/11w). Facilitator William Sanders (US) stated that having access to the Internet is an integral component of capacity building but is insufficient on its own. He noted that officials in many developing nations are often left out of the international exchange of chemical information. Sanders highlighted the annexes of the document, which state that: Africa is the least connected continent; several ongoing activities have goals that are directly or indirectly related to reducing barriers to information; and chemical information is available via the Internet. He noted a key proposal calling for FORUM III to sponsor global efforts to assure that the world's government officials responsible for chemicals management have and use Internet access. He noted requests for action to FORUM III regarding: a recommendation to charge participating organizations with finding the needed funding and implementation mechanisms; and selecting one IOMC organization to take the lead in this initiative. In conclusion, Sanders provided an update on the US/UNEP Internet access pilot project that has been highly successful in Mali, noting that training in Nigeria, Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire is to take place in the near future.

James Willis (UNEP) said that the US/UNEP pilot project addresses a clear capacity building need in developing countries. He noted that it was not meant to fully install computers in all countries, but was limited to four countries and their focal points for PIC, POPs and the IFCS in providing computers, software, Internet connections, databases and training. Willis suggested that future steps: take stock of the lessons learned; find additional countries to participate in the project; look at broadening the scope of the work; use the focal points of other IOMC organizations; integrate hazardous waste issues; and ensure project sustainability.

MALI outlined its experience with the pilot project and the benefits of training and sharing experience. He noted that communication improved and that different actors were able to build trust. He highlighted the use of the Internet as a tool and stated that the biggest hurdle in developing countries is communication.

Chair Hickman asked the Plenary to discuss and finalize the actions requested of FORUM III in the document. NIGERIA thanked the US for initiating and funding the pilot program and highlighted the importance of information dissemination and access. IPEN stated that NGOs must have as much access to information as possible, but that industry confidentiality agreements sometimes act as barriers to information. She called on the FORUM to propose greater NGO access to information.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE FOR CHEMICAL PRODUCTION DECISION-MAKING: Facilitator Pep Fuller (US) presented the paper on Information Exchange for Chemical Production Decision Making (IFCS/FORUMIII/13w). He noted the basic problem is lack of access to information on best practices in the design and development of new, or expansion of existing, chemical facilities to minimize health and safety problems and environmental risks associated with the manufacture of chemicals. He summarized the actions requested of FORUM III in the paper as: recommending the IOMC to elaborate mechanisms of information exchange; requesting industry to provide advance notification about new production facilities and expansion of existing facilities; and requesting industry associations to urge chemical companies to apply the best practices in all operations, particularly in developing countries.

Frederick McEldowney (ICCA) noted that members have been asked to implement the globalization of Responsible Care encompassing all basic elements including management practice codes. He stressed that companies need consistent standards in all facilities or they create a management nightmare, and highlighted principles for technology transfer. He noted the benefits of their recommendations, including laying groundwork for more systematic information exchange and underscoring the responsibility of both government and industry in establishing facilities.

BRAZIL stressed the importance of the paper and, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean region, proposed text amendments to the requested actions. Underscoring its support for the paper, MALI stressed the problem of the use of confidentiality as a shield for providing valuable information. REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the Asia-Pacific Group's proposed amendments to requested actions, including, with regard to industry providing advance notification, deletion of a reference to conformity with Responsible Care principles. International Council on Metals and the Environment (ICME) noted an example of cooperation between different partners in information exchange. ICCA

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explained, *inter alia*, its opposition to the Latin American and Caribbean Group's suggestion, in the action proposal relating to companies applying best practices, to delete a reference to taking account of local regulations and requirements. RUSSIA noted the paper's lack of reference to countries with economies in transition and called for reformulation, taking into account the different situations and interrelations among manufacturers and agencies.

EMISSION INVENTORIES: Facilitator Achim Halpaap (UNITAR) expressed his hope for a set of precise action-oriented recommendations for use by those involved in PRTR development. John Harman (US EPA) advised that collecting information on chemicals through PRTRs can increase understanding and awareness, which improves decision making. He noted the benefits of PRTRs, including: identification of pollutant sources and hotspots; tracking of progress for chemicals of national and international concern; and identification of opportunities for pollution prevention and reduction.

Peter Acquah (Ghana) summarized the PRTR workshop held on Monday 16 October. He described examples of progress in PRTR development, and identified the common denominator as the protection of human health and the environment through provision of information to governments and the public. He noted areas of consideration covered at the workshop, including: opportunities for PRTRs from the perspective of developing countries and countries with economies in transition; main challenges; and ways to get PRTRs started.

The NETHERLANDS noted that the weaknesses, as well as strengths, of PRTRs were not highlighted, and stated that countries have to face long-term resource implications. ICCA referred to his organization's position paper on PRTRs, and noted that they can provide valuable information and can help communication to key audiences. PROYECTO FRONTERIZO DE EDUCACION AMBIENTAL recommended: the promotion and recognition of PRTRs as building blocks for sustainable development; partnerships in the development and management of PRTRs, especially regarding information sharing; and the creation of an online discussion group on PRTRs. ZAMBIA noted achievements in his country, and recommended that the FORUM promote bilateral cooperation between developing countries or countries with economies in transition and developed countries. ECUADOR identified recommendations on behalf of the Latin American and the Caribbean region, including, *inter alia*: dissemination of methodologies; public participation in the development of information systems; and the establishment of selection criteria.

CAMEROON, supported by MALI, emphasized the need to have PRTR programmes established along the lines of national action plans. NORWAY expressed his support for the proposal in the draft Priorities for Action stating that, by 2004, at least two additional countries in each region should have developed PRTRs. He suggested that all countries take initial steps toward establishing PRTRs by the same time. CANADA suggested that the ICCA report back to FORUM IV regarding implementation of ICCA policies on voluntary PRTRs. ICME warned that focusing on emissions, rather than on transfer, may skew data and impair progress toward objectives. JAPAN outlined their experience with PRTRs and highlighted the work of the OECD. Facilitator Halpaap thanked everyone for their interventions and stated that an informal group would be convened to write a paper on PRTRs for consideration in Plenary.

RAISING AWARENESS AND RAISING THE PRIORITY OF CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING ISSUES AT POLITICAL LEVELS: Facilitator Ulrich Schlottmann (Germany) noted that chemicals management does not rank highly on government agendas. Matthias Kern (Germany) stressed the importance of strengthening national capacities and capabilities toward sound management of chemicals. He stated that implemen-

tation of capacity building projects is only possible when funding is available, and called for dialogue with politicians, administrators and the general public. He noted the roles of the IFCS in promoting chemical safety: sharing lessons learned from efforts made; and identifying strategies that will help strengthen the political commitment to capacity building for chemicals management.

Siriwat Tiptarodol (Thailand) highlighted recent developments in Asia regarding: ratification of international conventions and agreements; raising awareness; review and upgrading of legislation; training and information technology; and safety management and auditing. He outlined the benefits and challenges of stakeholder involvement in chemical safety systems, and external factors which contribute to opportunities and threats. He recommended: support for civil society in terms of technical and financial roles; strengthening and involvement of media; and creation and establishment of global chemical safety reports.

Karel Bláha (Czech Republic) outlined work done at the regional IFCS meeting of the Central and Eastern European region. He stated that governments should: create national profiles; develop national chemical safety programmes; prepare national legal frameworks; and establish infrastructure ensuring the enforcement of regulations. He recommended extending projects supporting chemical safety to countries in need of help and supporting and facilitating the exchange of information and experience within the region.

Viraj Vithoontien (World Bank) highlighted the Bank's initiatives on environmental issues and discussed experiences and lessons learned on data collection and development of national action plans under the Montreal Protocol. He noted that previously, national action plans were developed with incomplete data. He stressed that their development should be a dynamic process requiring both good information and the infrastructure to track progress and improve the plan. He underscored the benefit of an integrated approach, and noted recent Multilateral Fund efforts to ensure implementation strategies that allow effective use of resources.

In general discussion of the document under consideration (IFCS/FORUMIII/15w), IPEN stressed that agencies funding public interest NGOs place low priority on chemicals and this should be addressed as part of raising political awareness. The NETHERLANDS stressed placing emphasis on synergy. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO stressed greater support for worker protection in the future work of the FORUM. GHANA underscored the success of the Multilateral Fund under the Montreal Protocol and called for funding of this kind.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Slow progress in the working group on IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 drew criticism by some that participants were treating recommendations more like draft convention provisions. Others countered that setting priorities for the next five years was more politically sensitive than other topics on the agenda, requiring delicate discussion.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will reconvene in Plenary in the Iris Room at 9:00 am to discuss capacity building networks and to reconsider agenda items already discussed. The FORUM III Bahia Declaration will also be addressed. There will be an information session in the afternoon on Global Harmonization of Chemical Classification and Labelling Systems. It is expected that the Chairs of the *ad hoc* working groups on Priorities for Action Beyond 2000, the Bahia Declaration and Illegal Traffic will address Plenary regarding progress in those groups.

INFORMAL MEETINGS: The Government of Brazil will host a lunchtime presentation at 1:15 pm entitled "Case Studies from Brazil."