



FORUM III HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2000

On the fifth day of FORUM III, delegates assembled in morning and afternoon Plenary to discuss, *inter alia*, the development of a capacity building network, the IFCS Financial Statement, revised Priorities for Action, the Bahia Declaration and Global Harmonization of Chemical Classification and Labelling Systems. The *ad hoc* working group on the Bahia Declaration convened in the afternoon and evening.

PLENARY

CAPACITY BUILDING NETWORK: Facilitator Achim Halpaap, UNITAR, introduced the background, issues for consideration and requested action relating to Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals: Discussion on and Possible Adoption/Endorsement of a Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) (IFCS/FORUMIII/12w). He noted the origins of the concept at ISG-3 in 1998, UNITAR'S organizing role and the international review meeting held in January 2000 resulting in draft TOR. Summarizing proposals from the meeting, Halpaap highlighted as guiding principles: a simple, flexible mechanism; providing "added value" to existing activities; minimal coordinating functions; phased introduction; an umbrella framework; and that it not be a granting or funding agency. Proposals for operation of the network include: designation of points of contact by participating countries and organizations; establishment of a Network Steering/Advisory Group with FSC assistance; IOMC organizations to seek a location for a Central Coordinating Node (CCN); and minimal resource requirements.

SWITZERLAND called for adoption of the TOR. The CZECH REPUBLIC noted the Central and Eastern European region's support for the network. He proposed that national points of contact be identical to IFCS national focal points and, with SLOVAKIA, suggested that UNITAR be the CCN. ARGENTINA noted his region's support, said the network needs to be enhanced to be feasible and stressed coordination of information. FRANCE, supported by the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, stressed having points of contact at the regional level.

The NETHERLANDS stressed, *inter alia*, the recipient country being the owner of the project, an active central core to allow its functioning as a switchboard between demand and supply, and better coordination between IOMC organizations. On location of the CCN, Facilitator Halpaap suggested that UNITAR may not be an ideal location. Judy Stober, IFCS Executive Secretary, said the Secretariat could act as CCN in an interim capacity and provide limited resources in a guiding role. INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL AND ALLIED WORKERS ASSOCIATION (IUF), CAMEROON and others supported the Secretariat offer.

The FAO, supported by UNEP, proposed as a more accurate title: Information Exchange Network for Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals. HUNGARY stressed avoidance of overlapping functions. SOUTH KOREA noted his region's prioritization regarding network services. The EUROPEAN COMMISSION stressed, *inter alia*, a flexible and step-by-step approach. UNEP stressed coordinating development of the network with similar initiatives such as the capacity assistance network emerging under the POPs convention negotiations. He cautioned against duplication and premature launching of the network, and offered text that allows development of the network in a complementary manner. He also noted the network would be highly useful for Article 16 of the Rotterdam PIC Convention on technical assistance. A representative of a participating IPEN organization noted strong support for the network from public interest groups and stressed close coordination in its establishment. RUSSIA alluded to lack of feedback and stressed coordination. UNITAR noted that, in light of UNEP's comments, it would be premature to adopt the TOR.

In summarizing, Chair Hickman noted agreement on, *inter alia*: designating points of contact; proceeding in a manner consistent with related initiatives; FSC assistance in Steering Group establishment; an interim and limited IFCS Secretariat role as CCN; amendment of the title by the FAO; and request for a report on lessons learned for FORUM IV.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT: IFCS Executive Secretary Judy Stober presented the IFCS Financial Statement for adoption by Plenary (IFCS/FORUMIII/07w). She highlighted the information regarding the IFCS Trust Fund, in-kind and domestic resources, and the Twinning Fund. She acknowledged that in-kind and financial contributions are key to the success of the FORUM and that Plenary was requested to approve the budget for 2001-2003.

SWITZERLAND, supported by the US, proposed adopting the budget as outlined and congratulated the Secretariat for its efficient work. BRAZIL also thanked the Secretariat for its work and proposed that the budget be kept up-to-date in light of new contributions and new initiatives resulting from FORUM III and FSC discussions. BELGIUM noted that budget costs seem reasonable when compared to national programmes. GERMANY, supported by the US, appealed to all countries, institutions and NGOs to increase spending on the IFCS process as it is helpful for all stakeholders in making chemical safety global. CAMEROON noted the concern of the African group regarding potential barriers to contributions from industry. Chair Hickman responded that industry does contribute and that nothing prevents such contributions other than a need to maintain a balance of contribution sources. Plenary approved the budget as presented, taking into account Brazil's suggestion to keep it up-to-date.

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PRIORITIES FOR ACTION BEYOND 2000: On the revised draft Priorities for Action, COLOMBIA summarized the previous night's working group discussions. In Programme Area A, on hazard evaluations, she highlighted a reference to "industry," as opposed to "ICCA," initiatives. In Programme Area D, on POPs, she noted: a reference to "toxic" chemicals; and addition of new text requesting the FSC to invite countries and regions to present, at FORUM IV, risk reduction initiatives on other chemicals of major concern. In Programme Area E, on risk reduction activities, she noted a reference to national "and regional" policies with targets for improving chemicals management. She pointed out remaining brackets in introductory paragraphs on the precautionary approach and the efficient coordination of chemical safety endeavors.

Regarding reference to the precautionary approach, the US, with BELARUS, CANADA and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported text stating that the approach be "considered." NORWAY, supported by numerous countries, preferred text stating that the approach be "applied." After a show of hands, "applied" was accepted. Chair Hickman suggested that a footnote be added to indicate that not all delegations approved of the reference to the precautionary approach being "applied," due to the potential implications of this terminology. In the same paragraph, delegates accepted reference to encouraging, "in particular," replacement of more dangerous chemicals with less dangerous ones. In the paragraph on efficient coordination, delegates agreed to delete a reference to the role of public authorities in monitoring and assessing substances of major concern.

Delegates then approved recommendations under the Programme Areas. Under Programme Area A, delegates approved recommendations on: common principles for harmonized approaches; hazard evaluations; the cooperation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and ensuring data is available to the public. Under Programme Area B, delegates approved recommendations on the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. Under Programme Area C, delegates approved recommendations on: arrangements for information exchange; ratification of the Rotterdam PIC Convention; and the provision of safety information. Under Programme Area D, delegates approved recommendations on: ecologically sound pest management strategies; establishment of relevant action plans; continued work toward a POPs convention; emergency response for industrial accidents; pesticides; poison control centers; and PRTRs. Under Programme Area E, delegates approved recommendations on: national profiles; subregional, regional and national action plans; and technical assistance and technology transfer. Under Programme Area F, delegates approved recommendations on: establishment of a working group on illegal trafficking; and elaboration by governments on national strategies of prevention, detection and control of illegal traffic.

In the afternoon, delegates considered the introductory paragraphs on the recommended priorities. ICEM proposed that language regarding reference to "industry" demonstrating its commitment to chemical safety be changed to "stakeholders." This was accepted. Regarding language on "replacing more dangerous chemicals with less dangerous ones," ICCA, supported by the US and CANADA, suggested adding the phrase "where suitable alternatives are available" as this concept had been previously discussed. BRAZIL opposed reopening discussion on this text and the WWF noted that it was not mandatory language. The Chair noted general support for the text as drafted.

NORWAY introduced, and participants accepted, action items agreed upon in an informal working group, incorporating Plenary interventions on PRTR/emission inventories. Chair Hickman noted the FORUM III PRTR/Emission Action Plan would be annexed to the Priorities for Action.

BAHIA DECLARATION: Working group Chair Peter Burnett (Australia) introduced amendments made to the draft Bahia Declaration by the working group as of 18 October. He highlighted amendments made to the preamble, call to support priorities, record of progress, areas needing increased effort, commitment to broad approaches, and commitment to specific goals. GERMANY, supported by the NETHERLANDS, BELARUS, the US and BRAZIL, said the declaration was long and bureaucratic and emphasized the importance of a shorter document for the purposes of external consumption. The US suggested moving detailed material to an appendix. RUSSIA said style as well as volume required attention. Chair Hickman requested, and the working group agreed, to attempt to shorten the declaration using an annex approach.

GLOBAL HARMONIZATION OF CHEMICAL CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING: Facilitator Anna-Liisa Sunquist (Finland) outlined the status of the work and plans for implementation of the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). She highlighted: the benefits and principles of harmonization; tools required and plans for international implementation; and form and structure of the GHS.

Roque Puiatti (Brazil) emphasized the importance of commitment by all countries, especially developing ones. He noted the positive aspects of the GHS, highlighting the need for capacity building. Guy Ethier (ICME) discussed partnership in the development and implementation of the GHS. Reg Green (ICEM) noted that all workers have the right to information regarding chemicals, and called for a major capacity-building programme and a campaign to promote the benefits of the GHS. Achim Halpaap (UNITAR) advocated immediate initiation of work at the country level and establishment of pilot projects to initiate GHS action plans.

BRAZIL noted work underway by his government and emphasized translating it into concrete initiatives. The US anticipated completion of the harmonization work and implementation before FORUM IV. THE GAMBIA inquired whether factors of local language and illiteracy had been taken into consideration.

LOCATION OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS AND OTHER MATTERS: Chair Hickman noted that the IFCS had received two official offers to host FORUM IV from Thailand and Hungary. He informed delegates that the matter of location had been resolved by having Thailand offer to host FORUM IV in 2003 and Hungary host FORUM V in 2005 or 2006. These offers were accepted.

On information exchange, participants made minor amendments and agreed to revised documents Information Exchange for Chemical Production Decision-Making (IFCS/FORUMIII/13w rev1) and Barriers to Information Exchange for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IFCS/FORUMIII/11w rev1).

IN THE CORRIDORS

Eleventh hour calls to significantly shorten the Bahia Declaration generated concern in some camps that remaining time would not allow this. Others assured that the task was achievable given the dedication and competence of the working group.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will reconvene in Plenary in the Iris Room at 9:00 am to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of FORUM III, elect new officers, and adopt the Bahia Declaration and the report of the meeting

CLOSING CEREMONY: The closing session of FORUM III will feature a statement by Izabella Teixeira, Environmental Quality Deputy Director of Brazil's Ministry of Environment.