



IFCS IV HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2003

Participants convened in Plenary in the morning to consider: occupational safety and health; children and chemical safety; the globally harmonized system (GHS) for the classification and labeling of chemicals; and the President's Progress Report. Delegates also heard regional inputs on the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM) in the morning, and discussed the issue further in the afternoon Plenary. *Ad hoc* Working Groups on hazard data generation, acutely toxic pesticides, and children and chemical safety met in the evening, while informal groups convened to consider occupational safety and health, and the GHS.

PLENARY

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH: Patabendi Abeytunga (Canada) presented the decision document on *Occupational Safety and Health Issues and the Work of IFCS* (IFCS/FORUM-IV/08w). Speaking for the AFRICAN GROUP, Ghana noted the fragmentation of chemical safety legislation in many countries and the lack of legislation in some sectors, notably agriculture. Commenting on the decision document, she proposed that poison centers be included, worker compensation considered, and the vulnerability of women emphasized. The WESTERN EUROPE AND OTHERS GROUP (WEOG) and CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE Group (CEE) supported the paper, with CEE noting the significance of occupational exposure in small and medium-sized enterprises and the need to consider illegal immigrants. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC requested reference to the ILO's minimum employment age. The GROUP OF LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC) recommended a greater emphasis on workers' right to know. A small informal group met in the afternoon to further consider this agenda item.

CHILDREN AND CHEMICAL SAFETY: Jenny Pronczuk, WHO, presented a decision document on *Protecting Children from Harmful Chemical Exposures* (14w), which received support from many delegations. Issues addressed during the ensuing discussion included the need for: further research on the effects of chemical exposure to pregnant women and fetuses; proper labeling of consumer and pharmaceutical products; biological monitoring using affordable equipment; governments to consider children's exposure when setting environmental and health criteria and legal limits; toxicity testing; and exposure monitoring. Delegates also identified the need to: train health professionals to diagnose and report environmental illnesses; address the underlying causes of children's vulnerability; and educate parents on the safe use of household chemicals. Additional issues raised by delegates included: the risks posed by endocrine disruptors and tobacco; chronic poisoning from lead and arsenic; and the role of poison

control centers in information dissemination. Several delegates recommended that the WHO assist three countries from each region, rather than one, in the preparation of their assessments on children's health and chemical safety.

GHS ACTION PLAN: Kim Headrick (Canada) presented the *draft GHS Action Plan*, emphasizing language reflecting the need to minimize the transition period. She outlined the Plan's recommendations, highlighting, *inter alia*, targets for capacity building activities, calls for financial and technical resources, and the development of a roster of GHS experts.

CEE and ASIA AND THE PACIFIC supported the recommendations. WEOG and GRULAC expressed concern regarding the short transition period, and the AFRICAN GROUP proposed that UNITAR develop and make available training tools for developing countries and economies in transition. He stressed the need for stronger commitment by developed countries to develop the system, and for regional and subregional projects involving the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO expressed concern regarding how the GHS would address the issue of confidentiality. THAILAND called for more regional workshops and pilot projects. While agreeing that the GHS is important for facilitating chemical safety, ARGENTINA reiterated the problem of illegal trafficking and called for technical and financial support to address this matter. An informal group convened in the afternoon to finalize the draft Action Plan.

PRESIDENT'S PROGRESS REPORT: Many delegates congratulated President Cavalcanti on his report. SWITZERLAND and the CZECH REPUBLIC raised concerns that recommendations on the SAICM presented in the Report would predetermine discussions at the upcoming meeting of the SAICM Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), to which President Cavalcanti suggested that delegates focus on the *Forum IV SAICM Thought Starter* (13w).

SAICM: In the morning, Regional Groups presented their input on the SAICM. WEOG said the *SAICM Thought Starter on Identifying Gaps in the Bahia Declaration and the Priorities for Action Beyond 2000* (13w) gave little recognition to the benefits of chemicals, and recommended discussing governance and priority setting at the SAICM PrepCom. CEE recommended that the SAICM address the life-cycle of chemicals, preferably through a legally-binding instrument, and foster information exchange on the risks of chemicals throughout their life cycle.

GRULAC highlighted the need for: synergies among chemical conventions; application of the precautionary principle; and measures to address illegal trafficking of chemical products. She recommended addressing illegal trafficking, and urged increased technical and financial assistance, and development of national profiles and priorities.

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The AFRICAN GROUP called for: broadening the scope of technology transfer and financial assistance; developing clean technologies; corporate responsibility; and applying the precautionary and polluter pays principles. He also recommended a legal framework to address illegal trafficking.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC recommended that priorities for actions address the need to prevent the migration of polluting industries to developing countries, and recommended preventive measures and regulatory mechanisms.

In the afternoon, Chair Sanders (US) invited participants to respond to questions posed in the thought starter on identifying gaps in the *Bahia Declaration*, the *Priorities for Action Beyond 2000* and their implementation.

Regarding gaps in the *Bahia Declaration* and the *Priorities for Action Beyond 2000*, SWEDEN, supported by many, urged the integration of chemicals management into poverty reduction and development objectives. She highlighted the need to consider: concrete timetables to reach the WSSD 2020 target; carcinogens, heavy metals, endocrine disruptors and other chemicals; and safer alternatives. Highlighting the life-cycle approach, IPEN stressed the need to address wastes. SENEGAL urged: promoting training and research in universities; strengthening capacity to respond to chemical emergencies; and, supported by BELGIUM, considering chemicals and wastes as a single issue, according to the life-cycle approach. MEXICO, KENYA and others called for consideration of synergies between chemicals-related conventions.

The CZECH REPUBLIC advocated the development of mechanisms to phase out the most dangerous chemicals. NORWAY, supported by SWITZERLAND, called for deliberations on: multi-stakeholder involvement; the precautionary approach; chemical substitution; the life-cycle approach; and industry's responsibility in chemical safety. THAILAND suggested addressing harmonization of classification and labeling, prevention of illegal traffic, and technical and financial assistance. IRAN proposed addressing the migration of polluting industries to the developing world and chemical dangers resulting from war, and creating a global mechanism for responding to chemical disasters. ARGENTINA noted that the SAICM should build on existing mechanisms to achieve chemical safety. The INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MINING AND METALS reiterated the need to consider the benefits of chemicals.

On gaps in implementation, AUSTRALIA recommended focusing on implementation rather than on gaps in current priorities. SWITZERLAND said political will is inadequate and noted a lack of institutional cooperation and synergies between relevant conventions.

On ways to improve assistance, SENEGAL reiterated the importance of training and, with MEXICO, recommended evaluation of existing assistance efforts. GERMANY noted the absence of donors at Forum IV and stressed the need to address this problem. ICCA supported focusing on implementation and developing measurable indicators for success. SWEDEN, with others, called for the integration of chemicals management in other policy areas to, *inter alia*, enable donor funding. She also recommended considering raising awareness on the harmful effects of chemicals at all levels. AUSTRALIA recommended exploring the potential of GEF funding.

On strategies for chemicals management, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for changes in production practices and, with PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK, for information on product toxicity. SWEDEN said corporate responsibility initiatives could help prevent the migration of polluting industries to developing countries. MADAGASCAR proposed defining global criteria for the selection of countries requiring financial assistance. JAMAICA suggested linking food safety and chemicals management.

IPEN proposed a potential role for IFCS in reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress toward the achievement of the WSSD 2020. SWITZERLAND and the EC opposed this suggestion, stating that it predetermines the outcome of deliberations at the PrepCom, and said the IFCS has a clear role in the elaboration of the SAICM. Chair Sanders said recommendations and relevant inputs would be incorporated into a compilation document, to be circulated on Thursday.

WORKING GROUPS

HAZARD DATA GENERATION AND AVAILABILITY:

This *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by Gunnar Bengtsson (Sweden), finalized the decision document based on delegates' proposals, including those on: safety data sheets; confidentiality claims; an international repository on hazard information to be available "free of charge"; and timeframes for making information accessible. A revised document will be considered by Plenary on Thursday.

ACUTELY TOXIC PESTICIDES: This *ad hoc* Working Group was chaired by Cathleen Barnes (US). Participants considered the revised draft decision, which took into account the input of Regional Groups and other participants. She noted that provisions on stockpiles and liability and compensation are important but may exceed the Group's mandate, which is to address acutely toxic pesticides causing occupational poisonings. Participants agreed to a revised text that includes, among others, a reference to the safe disposal of pesticide stockpiles. A suggestion that governments and stakeholders consider "liability and compensation issues" met with agreement. The revised document will be presented to Plenary on Thursday.

CHILDREN AND CHEMICAL SAFETY: *Ad hoc* Working Group Chair Michael Firestone (US) noted widespread agreement among participants on the need to protect children. The Group discussed the proposed actions outlined in the decision document, including the need to: prepare national assessments to provide a basis for developing action plans; develop mechanisms to facilitate collaborative research; share information on ways to protect children from chemical risks where there is uncertainty; and convey these recommendations to other fora. The revised text will be presented to Plenary on Thursday.

GHS: Chairing the informal working group, Headrick noted strong support for the *draft GHS Action Plan*. The group discussed financial issues, the 2008 implementation target, and capacity building activities. A revised draft was prepared for consideration by Plenary on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates kicked off discussions on the SAICM on Tuesday. Most participants supported the need for a strategic approach to addressing chemicals management, but as some delegates noted, the interventions did not give much insight as to what form this approach would take and what trajectory discussions at the upcoming SAICM PrepCom would follow. Some delegates said they were surprised at how discussions focused by and large on responding to the thought starter. Disagreement arose regarding the input of this Forum to the SAICM, with some seeing this as an opportunity for the Forum and its stakeholders to enhance their role in the international chemicals management regime, and others preferring to keep the Forum within its present mandate.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

AD HOC WORKING GROUP: The Working Group on illegal trafficking will meet from 9:00 am -12:00 pm in Conference Room 2. A working document on this issue will be available.