



IFCS IV HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, 5-6 NOVEMBER 2003

An *ad hoc* Working Group met on Wednesday, 5 November, to consider the issue of illegal traffic. On Thursday, 6 November, the Forum convened in Plenary throughout the day to consider the outcome of deliberations from *ad hoc* and informal Working Groups, as presented in the newly circulated *Draft Final Report* (IFCS/FORUM-IV/16w). In the morning, delegates discussed: children and chemical safety; hazard data generation and availability; acutely toxic pesticides; addressing the widening gap; the globally harmonized system (GHS) for the classification and labeling of chemicals; and capacity building assistance. In the afternoon, delegates considered illegal traffic and discussed the development of the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM).

AD HOC WORKING GROUP

ILLEGAL TRAFFIC: On Wednesday, 5 November, an *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by Abiola Olanipekun (Nigeria) met to discuss a draft resolution on illegal traffic proposed by the AFRICAN and GRULAC Regional Groups. Some delegates noted slow progress in implementing relevant Forum III recommendations, and suggested that the FSC address this problem. Developing country delegates called for identification of the reasons for slow progress, while others advocated focusing on the way forward. Referring to UNEP's status report on this issue (9 INF), UNEP highlighted a lack of political will and low prioritization of this issue at the UNEP Governing Council as key reasons for slow progress.

Delegates discussed whether the convening of a working group by UNEP should be "subject to available resources," and considered the need to take action and assess capacities and activities at the national level, with one participant suggesting pilot studies to this end.

PLENARY

CHILDREN AND CHEMICAL SAFETY: On Thursday, 6 November, Jenny Pronczuk, WHO, guided participants through the Working Group's recommendations. IPEN emphasized the significance of multi-source exposure to lead. CYPRUS stressed the need for standards in chemicals legislation to consider children's vulnerability. THAILAND suggested that the recommendation to promote education and training be directed at relevant intergovernmental organizations as well as governments, and COSTA RICA supported reference to the UNICEF. CHINA recommended that the countries from each region receiving assistance from WHO be at different levels of economic development. After urging the inclusion of chemical weapons as a source of exposure, EGYPT agreed to Pronczuk's suggestion that the Final Report refer to the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

HAZARD DATA GENERATION AND AVAILABILITY:

Gunnar Bengtsson (Sweden) introduced the outcome of discussions of the *ad hoc* Working Group. He highlighted some substantial changes, including an emphasis on: safety data sheets; a balance between the public right to know and the need to protect commercial information based on valid confidentiality claims; free access to the international repository; the introduction of timeframes; and the invitation to the International Programme on Chemical Safety to develop mechanisms for collecting, disseminating and using clinical and exposure data from human observations.

ACUTELY TOXIC PESTICIDES: Cathleen Barnes (US) presented the outcome of the *ad hoc* Working Group's deliberations. She noted that no agreement had been reached on liability and compensation, and requested the Plenary to recommend an appropriate forum to address this issue.

CROPLIFE INTERNATIONAL (CI) proposed dividing the provision on the prohibition or restriction of pesticide availability into two parts. He said this would permit application of the precautionary approach to restricting pesticide availability on the basis of hazard classification, while allowing for pesticide bans where there is evidence of poisoning incidents. AUSTRALIA expressed concern that requiring evidence of poisonings may restrict governmental action. The EC, BRAZIL, THAILAND, PAN, FAO and others highlighted that CI had agreed to the language during the group's discussions, and opposed the proposed amendments.

The EC, supported by SWEDEN, IPEN and UGANDA, said reference to liability and compensation is useful and should remain in the document, while AUSTRALIA said the language was too general. KENYA proposed the consideration of industrial and informal workers in pesticide production, while MADAGASCAR stressed the need to disseminate information to the public concerning the risks of reusing pesticide containers. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by SWITZERLAND, suggested interpreting the concept of acutely toxic pesticides more broadly in order to address other toxic substances. The text was agreed upon, with the reference to liability and compensation.

ADDRESSING THE WIDENING GAP: Rashid Bayat Mokhtari (Iran) highlighted amendments that: elaborate on the role of the proposed *ad hoc* Expert Group; emphasize the National Profile Process; and enhance the FSC's monitoring role. Several participants requested further clarification on the activities of the proposed Expert Group. Mokhtari said the Group would not create a new system, but rather advise countries with problems in implementing existing chemicals agreements. SWITZERLAND stressed the need to avoid duplication with the SAICM process and suggested that the Expert Group be open-ended. MOLDOVA emphasized the importance of mobilizing domestic and regional resources. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed the develop-



ment of an information resource that provides an overview of the understanding of international strategies on chemical safety. TONGA prioritized implementation over data collection.

GHS ACTION PLAN: Kim Headrick (Canada) presented the results of discussions in the informal group. She highlighted, *inter alia*, preambular language recognizing the importance of minimizing the transition period of GHS implementation, and text expanding the list of organizations called upon to provide financial and technical resources. GERMANY and SWITZERLAND reiterated their support for capacity building activities for GHS implementation. CHINA highlighted the need to consider existing national classification and labeling systems, and proposed a data bank to enable quick access to information. Several delegates, including the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and BRAZIL, raised concerns regarding the 2008 target.

CAPACITY BUILDING ASSISTANCE: Matthias Kern (Germany) presented the recommendations to be included in the Final Report. CYPRUS recommended that the report encourage IFCS to establish a structure for the promotion of continuous dialogue between international development assistance institutions. The WORLD BANK suggested that specific reference to UNDP be deleted. SWITZERLAND, supported by the EC, suggested that recommendations be directed at all IFCS participants, since the IFCS itself is not in a position to undertake all activities. FAO noted that recommendations should be forwarded to the IOMC's governing bodies. KENYA suggested the report urge the ILO to address insurance and compensation mechanisms for workers poisoned by chemicals. CHINA emphasized the value of bilateral cooperation between developed and developing countries to capacity building. OPCW suggested a reference to OPCW as an international organization promoting the integration of chemical issues into all relevant activities. The PHILIPPINES encouraged the inclusion of precautionary measures as an area for training activities. Kern said that all amendments would be accommodated and noted that the contribution of INFOCAP would be included in the Final Report.

ILLEGAL TRAFFIC: Dlanipekun presented the draft resolution on illegal traffic, highlighting that the document: invites UNEP to take the lead on this issue; calls for technical and financial resources; invites IOMC governing bodies to consider a relevant decision; and requests UNEP to report on progress to Forum V. Many supported the resolution. GERMANY stressed the need to ratify and implement the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions. SENEGAL noted that preventing illegal traffic depends on resource availability. While SOUTH AFRICA said there had been no progress on illegal traffic since Forum III, Dlanipekun noted that some progress had been made, as indicated in UNEP's status report. SWITZERLAND and ZIMBABWE proposed highlighting the importance of the World Customs Organization's work on this issue. THAILAND emphasized that member countries should actively support the Forum's recommendations in IOMC governing bodies, including UNEP Governing Council.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH: Patabendi Abeytunga (Canada) said the decision document on *Occupational Safety and Health Issues and the Work of IFCS* (8w) had been amended based on Plenary and informal Working Group discussions, and annexed to the revised *Forum IV Report to SAICM PrepCom 1* (13w revised). POLAND called for a reference to the needs of self-employed workers, and PAN urged the promotion of training for all people directly or indirectly involved with pesticides use. Vice President György Ungváry (Hungary) recommended inserting a reference to hazardous chemicals management in the health sector. Delegates agreed that the decision on occupational safety and health would not be annexed, but instead be referenced, in the Report to the SAICM PrepCom 1.

SAICM: Introducing the revised *Forum IV Report to SAICM PrepCom 1* (13w revised), William Sanders (US) explained that the revised Report, or Thought Starter, is not a negotiated text but a compilation document that incorporates the viewpoints expressed in Plenary on Tuesday.

On "addressing current implementation gaps rather than adding to the current list of priorities," IPEN and others questioned whether merely addressing implementation gaps will be sufficient to achieve the WSSD 2020 target. In addition to addressing current implementation gaps and setting concrete targets and timetables to achieve the WSSD 2020 target, NORWAY stressed the need to address gaps in policy integration and coordination. Supported by others, he proposed deleting the phrase "rather than adding to the current list of priorities."

WWF stressed that the precautionary principle is a cornerstone of chemicals management, and JAPAN recommended emphasizing the importance of a science-based approach. The INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHEMICAL ASSOCIATIONS suggested recommending that governments promote IFCS recommendations in relevant IOMC governing bodies. UNEP suggested emphasizing the importance of enhancing national-level coordination.

On gaps in strengthening integrated approaches, IPEN noted the lack of an overarching framework for preventive measures and called for clearer articulation of the precautionary principle.

On gaps in chemicals life-cycle management, NORWAY suggested elaborating the reference to principles such as substitution, corporate responsibility, and multi-stakeholder involvement.

On the establishment of risk reduction programmes, ZIMBABWE suggested a reference to public health practitioners and integrated vector management programmes. Regarding hazard and risk assessment and management, NORWAY identified the need to investigate the risks posed by persistent and bioaccumulative chemicals not covered by the Stockholm Convention.

On information exchange, KENYA recommended stressing the role of responsible journalism and lobbying groups. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for focusing on other groups of chemicals in addition to workplace chemicals, and on chemical risks to the environment.

WHO suggested emphasizing the need to establish and strengthen poison control centers. SWITZERLAND and others suggested deleting text on addressing heavy metals under existing policy instruments, stating that the language is too limiting and that new instruments may be needed in the future. In addition to heavy metals, DENMARK, supported by SWITZERLAND and others, said attention should be given to endocrine disruptors and substances that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic, persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As Forum IV comes to a close, there is increasing speculation among participants concerning the SAICM process and how it will be addressed next week at its first PrepCom. Expectations seem to be divided between those who perceive that the SAICM should focus on achieving better implementation of existing chemicals-related conventions, and those who have a broader vision of SAICM as adopting a life-cycle approach and contributing to the realization of all Agenda 21 and WSSD chemicals-related goals. One delegate mentioned the possibility of taking up discussions on the precautionary approach, which he noted was being sidestepped at Forum IV. Many delegates seem to agree, however, that the SAICM should increase coherence between current agreements. As for the IFCS's role in the process, one delegate expressed a desire to see the Forum ensure participatory access to the SAICM, and guarantee that the SAICM adopts a multi-sectoral approach to international chemicals management.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will convene at 9:00 am to elect Officers and FSC members, decide on future IFCS meetings, and consider other administrative items. Delegates are also expected to consider and adopt the Final Report of the meeting, which will contain recommendations and revisions from Thursday's Plenary discussions.