



SUMMARY OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY: 1-7 NOVEMBER 2003

The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS Forum IV) took place from 1-7 November 2003, at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand. Approximately 630 participants representing over 100 governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and industry were in attendance. Convening under the theme "Chemical Safety in a Vulnerable World," Forum IV took stock of the progress achieved on the commitments and recommendations made at Forum III in 2000, focusing on topics relating to: children and chemical safety; occupational safety and health; hazard data generation and availability; acutely toxic pesticides; and capacity building. Delegates also considered and took decisions on the globally harmonized system for the classification and labeling of chemicals, and illegal traffic.

In response to decisions SS.VII/3 and 22/4 IV of the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council (UNEP GC), Forum IV discussed the further development of a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM), with the aim of presenting the outcome of its deliberations to the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the development of a SAICM, which will take place from 9-13 November 2003, in Bangkok.

Forum IV had the highest level of participation to date of any IFCS meeting, and continues to play a valuable role in bringing important new issues onto the chemicals agenda, providing direction for the development of chemicals-related agreements, and setting the course for addressing new hazardous chemicals beyond the scope of existing MEAs.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IFCS

The concept of an intergovernmental forum to address chemical safety originated during preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, when the UNCED PrepCom identified the collaborative efforts of UNEP, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), within the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), as the nucleus for international cooperation on the environmentally

sound management of toxic chemicals. The PrepCom invited the IPCS to identify possible intergovernmental mechanisms for risk assessment and chemicals management. In response, UNEP, ILO and WHO convened an expert meeting in London, UK, in December 1991 to consider priority areas for an international strategy and proposals for an intergovernmental mechanism for the environmentally sound management of chemicals. The meeting resulted in a recommendation to establish an intergovernmental forum on chemical risk assessment and management that was forwarded to UNCED.

At UNCED, delegates adopted Agenda 21, a programme of action for sustainable development. Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 addresses the "Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals Including Prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products," and contains an international strategy for action on chemical safety with six priority Programme Areas: expanding and accelerating international assessment of

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chemical risks; harmonization of classification and labeling of chemicals; information exchange on toxic chemicals and chemical risks; establishment of risk reduction programmes; strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals; and prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products. Chapter 19 also calls for the establishment of an intergovernmental forum on chemical safety.

FORUM I: In April 1994, UNEP, ILO and WHO convened the International Conference on Chemical Safety in Stockholm, Sweden. The Conference established the IFCS and constituted the first meeting of the Forum (Forum I). The Conference adopted a resolution with detailed recommendations on Priorities for Action in implementing Agenda 21, and the Terms of Reference for the IFCS, establishing it as a mechanism for cooperation among governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to promote chemical risk assessment and the environmentally sound management of chemicals.

FORUM II: Forum II, held in February 1997 in Ottawa, Canada, made recommendations on the Programme Areas identified in Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, and on emerging issues such as endocrine disrupting chemicals and pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). Delegates reached agreement on a number of actions regarding the structure and function of the IFCS. The Forum Standing Committee (FSC) was established as a mechanism for responding to new developments and advising on preparations for future meetings.

FORUM III: Forum III was held from 15-20 October 2000, in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, under the theme "In Partnership for Global Chemical Safety." Delegates reviewed the IFCS, assessed progress made on implementing Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, reached agreement on the Priorities for Action Beyond 2000, and issued the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety. The Bahia Declaration lists six priorities for review at future Forums, as well as key goals with target dates for their achievement. The Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 include recommendations that are linked to these goals and organized according to the six Programme Areas set forth in Agenda 21. Forum III also considered: the prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products; barriers to information exchange; information exchange for chemical production decision making; PRTRs and emissions inventories; a capacity building network for the sound management of chemicals; awareness raising and the prioritization of chemicals management capacity building issues at the political level; and the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS).

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD): The WSSD convened from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and adopted, among other outcomes, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), a framework for action to implement the UNCED commitments that includes a number of new commitments. The issue of chemicals management is addressed primarily in Chapter III on Changing Unsustainable Patterns of Production and Consumption, which reflects a renewed commitment to the sound management of chemicals. Chemicals-related targets contained in the JPOI include: the aim to achieve, by 2020, the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment; the development, by 2005, of a SAICM based on the Bahia Declaration and

IFCS Priorities for Action beyond 2000; and the national implementation of the new GHS, with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008.

UNEP GC RESOLUTIONS: At its 21st session in 2001, the UNEP GC adopted decision 21/7, which requests the UNEP Executive Director, in consultation with governments, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), IFCS and others, to examine the need for a SAICM.

In February 2002, at its seventh Special Session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, the UNEP GC agreed in decision SS.VII/3 that a SAICM was needed, and requested its Executive Director to develop a SAICM with the IFCS Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 as its foundation. This process was to entail an "open-ended consultative meeting involving representatives of all stakeholder groups" jointly convened by UNEP, IFCS and IOMC.

The 22nd session of the UNEP GC, held in February 2003, reached agreement on a number of chemicals-related issues. In its decision on the SAICM, the GC endorses the concept of an international conference for chemicals management, with preparatory meetings, as the basis for developing the SAICM.

FSC WORKING GROUPS: Established in view of Forum III recommendations, FSC working groups met during the intersessional period to: consider occupational safety and health in the context of chemical safety; review assistance given to countries to support capacity building for the sound management of chemicals; address the issue of consistency and collaboration in hazard data generation and availability; and provide initial input regarding the problem of acutely toxic pesticides. Working groups were also formed to address the widening gap among countries in following chemical safety policies, consider the issue of children and chemical safety, and develop a "Thought Starter" on the SAICM.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Forum IV began on Saturday afternoon, 1 November 2003, with an opening session and a panel on Chemical Safety in a Vulnerable World. Opening the meeting, IFCS President Henrique Cavalcanti (Brazil) outlined how the issue of chemical safety has been addressed in the international arena, and highlighted that this was the first time the Forum was held in Asia.

Keiko Okaido, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), informed participants that ESCAP has established a new unit dedicated to health and development issues. She identified Forum IV as a critical opportunity for fostering cooperation among countries and stakeholders.

Sudarat Keyuraphan, Thailand's Minister of Public Health, welcomed participants to Thailand and encouraged them to develop strategies for effective chemicals management.

HRH Chulabhorn, Princess of Thailand, commended the IFCS for establishing a mechanism that ensures collaboration between governments, IGOs and NGOs working actively to achieve chemical safety. She presented the IFCS Award of Merit to György Ungváry, IFCS Vice President for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and the IFCS Special Recognition Award to the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN). Following the award ceremony, participants were treated to a "rap" music video on chemical safety.



HONORARY ADDRESS: In her honorary address, HRH Chulabhorn presented on the issue of chemical safety in Southeast Asia, noting that while some countries in the region have experienced rapid industrialization and achieved progress in relation to chemical safety, others are only beginning to develop. She called for enhancing human resources and capacity building in toxicology at all levels in developing countries, and outlined the contributions of the Chulabhorn Research Institute to this end.

PANEL ON CHEMICAL SAFETY IN A VULNERABLE WORLD: In his keynote address, Panel Chair Carl Djerassi, Stanford University, proposed the establishment of a “technical social service corps” that would entail young chemistry experts from industrialized countries voluntarily working on chemical remediation and detection projects in developing countries in cooperation with local populations.

Recalling the 1984 Bhopal chemical disaster, Satinath Sarangi, Sambhavna Trust, called for international civil and criminal liability regimes and compensation mechanisms to address the consequences of chemical accidents. Omara Amuko, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF), called upon the Forum to help agricultural workers protect themselves from chemical poisoning. Laurraine Lotter, South African Chemical and Allied Industries’ Association, called for actions to: provide technical and financial support for capacity building; implement the GHS; and disseminate information on chemicals use. Guilherme Santana, Brazilian National Oil Agency, called for new approaches to crisis management and capacity building to address organizational failures leading to crises. Yun-Joo Lee, United Nations University, stressed the need for a shift in attitude away from economic valuation of the environment toward an approach where human dignity is recognized. She identified links between political corruption and pollution.

Discussion: Following the panel presentations, panelists discussed issues relating to the Bhopal incident and to agricultural workers. Some panelists highlighted, *inter alia*, the “polluter pays principle,” and the need to educate leaders. Participants also discussed ways to empower the powerless, including through information and awareness raising. One panelist noted that information does not equal empowerment and urged developing mechanisms for implementation and enforcement.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: President Cavalcanti opened the Plenary on Sunday, 2 November, introducing the IFCS Vice Presidents representing each region: Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal) for Africa; Sadao Nakao (Japan) for Asia and the Pacific; György Ungváry (Hungary) for Central and Eastern Europe; Mercedes Bolaños (Ecuador) for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Gunnar Bengtsson (Sweden) for Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG). Following the designation of Miroslav Cikrt (Czech Republic) as Rapporteur, the Secretariat briefed delegates on the process of document preparations.

President Cavalcanti presented the documents relating to the proposed provisional agenda, namely the *Proposed Provisional Agenda*, *Proposed Provisional Annotated Agenda*, *Proposed General Time Schedule*, and *Proposed Detailed Time Schedule* (IFCS/FORUM-IV/01w, 02w, 03w and 04w), and requested the Forum to consider their adoption.

Over the six-day meeting, participants met in Plenary, Regional Groups, *ad hoc* Working Groups and informal working groups to consider: children and chemical safety; occupational safety and

health; acutely toxic pesticides; capacity building assistance, including on the widening gap among countries; illegal traffic; and a GHS Action Plan. Participants also considered the further development of a SAICM with the aim of forwarding their input to SAICM PrepCom1. The Forum closed on Friday afternoon, 7 November, with the adoption of the report of the meeting and a report to SAICM PrepCom1. This summary report presents the discussions that took place during Forum IV, organized by agenda item. All of the final decisions are contained in the Executive Summary of the Final Report (16w), unless otherwise indicated.

IFCS ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

IFCS GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES: On Sunday, President Cavalcanti presented the proposed amendments contained in the *IFCS Guidelines and Procedures* (15w) to Plenary, noting that they concern the *Regional Roles and Responsibilities for Vice Presidents* (15w Annex 1) and *Guidelines for National Focal Points* (15w Annex 2). The matter was revisited in Plenary on Friday, when delegates considered and adopted the revised proposed amendments.

Regional roles and responsibilities for Vice Presidents: On Sunday, delegates requested clarification regarding the phrase “having in mind the special features” of regions or subregions. Delegates also discussed how the Vice Presidents will organize regional efforts concerning the election of Forum Officers and FSC members. On Friday, the Secretariat presented revisions to the amendments and the document was agreed with minor editorial changes.

Final Decision: This contains amendments to the guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities for the Vice Presidents. The amendments include:

- having in mind the specific institutional and administrative framework of each country when fostering good intersectoral contacts through the region/subregion;
- organizing regional efforts for election of Officers and FSC members in accordance with IFCS Terms of Reference and general guidance from the President; and
- working in close collaboration with the National Focal Points in the region, with assistance from the Executive Secretary as required.

Guidelines for National Focal Points: On Sunday, delegates raised concerns about the frequency of reporting on national priorities and the specification that communications should be directed towards, and that National Focal Points should be identified by, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Australia and Sweden said biannual reporting was burdensome for both the Secretariat and the Focal Points, and Iran, supported by several countries, suggested annual rather than biannual reporting. The Philippines said biannual reporting could facilitate the rapid identification of issues at the regional level. Switzerland and the Democratic Republic of Congo said it was inappropriate to assign the identification of a Focal Point specifically to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Argentina stressed that this was a decision to be made by governments.

In considering the revised document on Friday, Madagascar and Burundi noted that the revised text does not specify the frequency of reporting, with Senegal and Egypt proposing annual reporting. Sweden, supported by China, suggested that the format of reporting be proposed in consultation with governments. The guidelines were agreed to with minor editorial changes.



Final Decision: This decision contains amendments to the guidelines for the National Focal Points. The amendments state that:

- each government should have a single National Focal Point identified through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or as appropriate, to act as a conduit for communication on IFCS activities, and the IFCS President and Executive Secretary will be in communication with governments to ascertain their position with regard to the nomination;
- the National Focal Point should report at least once a year on progress in the implementation of the Priorities for Action and other relevant matters, and the Secretariat will propose a reporting format in consultation with governments;
- the Secretariat should be advised of any changes by the respective Ministry or Department where the National Focal Point is located, or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as appropriate; and
- the government representative attending each Forum session is requested to inform the Secretariat, upon registration, of any new National Focal Point designation.

HOSTING MEETINGS OF THE FORUM: On Sunday, the Secretariat presented to the Plenary the *Guidelines and Criteria for Selection of Hosts* (05w). Argentina requested broadening the conditions under which a Forum meeting could be cancelled, and Bangladesh said such a decision should be taken in cooperation with the host country. Switzerland opposed specifying the ministry responsible for communicating a proposal to host a Forum meeting.

A revised text entitled *Hosting Meetings of the Forum* was circulated on Thursday, and presented to Plenary on Friday for consideration. Switzerland, supported by Sweden, suggested deleting text that said the selection of a host country is the prerogative of the FSC alone. The document was agreed upon with this amendment.

Final Decision: This decision provides guidelines for: the selection of a host country; the submission of a proposal to host a future Forum meeting; and the local organizing committee. It also outlines the role of the IFCS Secretariat and lists the criteria to be taken into account by the FCS when awarding the right to host a meeting.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT VICE PRESIDENTS: On Sunday, Vice President Sylla presented the proposal from the IFCS Vice Presidents contained in *Resources to Support Vice Presidents* (07w). Thailand suggested calling for support from donors, rather than bilateral assistance specifically. The Russian Federation proposed including reference to countries with economies in transition (CEITs). Uganda and Burundi called for assistance to Focal Points.

A revised text was distributed on Thursday, and presented to Plenary on Friday. Delegates agreed to move this text from the annex to the body of the report.

Final Decision: Contained in the Executive Summary of the Final Report (16w), this decision recognizes that many developing countries and CEITs lack the ability to provide the necessary resources to support the Vice Presidents in their duties, and calls for support from donors to cover secretariat, communications and travel expenses within the respective regions.

IFCS FINANCIAL STATEMENT: On Sunday, the Secretariat presented the *IFCS Financial Statement* (06w), highlighting the budget status and estimated budget requirements.

PRESIDENT'S PROGRESS REPORT

On Sunday, President Cavalcanti presented his Progress Report, outlining progress achieved in the implementation of the *IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000*. He highlighted the Report's proposals to the SAICM process, including: adding new chemicals and vulnerable groups; defining the life-cycle concept; considering interfaces with other bodies such as the Chemicals Weapons Convention; and revising Priority F on illegal traffic to encompass trade and drug trafficking. He suggested creating French and Spanish websites to enhance information exchange, and called for greater developing country participation, particularly in risk reduction programmes and in the prevention of illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products.

On Tuesday, the Plenary discussed and many delegates congratulated Cavalcanti on his report. Switzerland and the Czech Republic raised concerns that the recommendations on the SAICM could predetermine discussions at the upcoming SAICM PrepCom I.

REPORT ON POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS/EMISSION INVENTORIES

On Sunday, Georg Karlaganis, IOMC PRTR Coordinating Group, reported to Forum IV on progress in implementing Forum III goals on PRTRs/emission inventories, as requested by Forum III. He noted new national PRTRs in two regions and the establishment and upgrading of existing PRTRs. Karlaganis identified a legal framework requiring mandatory reporting as the most efficient way to organize work on PRTRs. He said the Coordinating Group proposed to continue raising PRTR awareness at the international level and to establish a clearinghouse for PRTR support activities.

CHILDREN AND CHEMICAL SAFETY

This issue was included in the Forum IV agenda in response to a request from the CEE, IPEN and the International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety. An FSC Working Group chaired by Vice President Ungváry met during the intersessional period to prepare the decision paper for Forum IV.

Forum IV addressed this issue in Plenary on Tuesday morning, in an *ad hoc* Working Group on Tuesday evening, and again in Plenary on Thursday morning. The final decision was adopted on Friday morning.

In Plenary on Tuesday, Jenny Pronczuk, WHO, presented a draft decision on *Protecting Children from Harmful Chemical Exposures* (14w), which received support from many delegations. Delegates stressed consideration of chemical exposures that can occur during preconception and throughout gestation, and proper labeling of consumer and pharmaceutical products. 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 about 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.

On Tuesday evening, an *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by Michael Firestone (US), discussed the proposed actions outlined in the draft decision, including on the need to: prepare national assessments to provide a basis for developing action plans; develop mechanisms to facilitate collaborative research; and share informa-



tion on ways to protect children from chemical risks where there is uncertainty. The draft decision was amended to include input from the Plenary and Working Group discussions.

On Thursday morning, the revised text was taken up in Plenary and amendments were proposed and incorporated into the text. On Friday morning, the decision, contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w), was adopted without amendment.

Final Decision: The final decision identifies the need to consider chemical exposures that occur during preconception, throughout gestation, infancy, childhood and adolescence. It recommends that governments prepare, through multi-stakeholder consultations, initial national assessments of children's environmental health and chemical safety, and a progress report to Forum V. It requests the WHO to assist at least three countries in different stages of economic development in each region in preparing their assessment and action plans by 2006.

The text also recommends that governments should, *inter alia*:

- promote education and training on children's chemical safety with stakeholder support;
- commit to taking action to prevent or reduce exposure;
- consider the use of indicators and report to Forum V; and
- when setting acceptable levels or criteria related to chemicals, consider the potential enhanced exposures and/or vulnerabilities of children.

The text requests the WHO to support research organizations in developing mechanisms to facilitate collaborative national and international research, and share technology. It recommends that governments and stakeholders commit to sharing information on options for protecting children from established chemical threats and from chemical risks where there is a degree of uncertainty, and requests the WHO to convene a multi-stakeholder meeting to explore mechanisms for collecting data and disseminating information that could be used to reduce uncertainty in risk assessments.

The IFCS President is requested to convey these recommendations to other meetings and fora.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

This issue was considered in response to Forum III recommendations relating to worker safety. Forum IV addressed it in Plenary on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and in an informal group on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, Patabendi Abeytunga (Canada) presented the decision document on *Occupational Safety and Health Issues and the Work of IFCS* (08w). The African Group proposed addressing poison centers, workers' compensation, and women's vulnerability. CEE urged consideration of illegal immigrants. The Asia and the Pacific Group proposed reference to ILO's minimum employment age. A small informal group met that day to review the document.

On Thursday, Abeytunga presented the revised document to Plenary. Poland called for reference to self-employed workers' needs, and PAN urged training for all people involved with pesticide use. Vice President Ungváry recommended inserting a reference to hazardous chemicals management in the health sector.

On Friday, delegates adopted the decision, contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w).

Final Decision: The decision urges the ILO, WHO and FAO to strengthen collaboration in occupational safety, and relevant Forum participants to undertake actions on Programme Areas A (assessment of chemical risks); B (harmonization of chemical clas-

sification and labeling), C (information exchange), D (risk reduction programmes) and E (capacity building). Recommendations include:

- developing measures for the monitoring of workplaces and surveillance of workers;
- establishing roles and responsibilities of employers, employees and governments in reporting, recording, collecting and assessing data from workplaces;
- providing assistance for GHS development in the workplace;
- establishing a means of developing and updating internationally evaluated sources of information on chemicals in the workplace by IGOs;
- establishing new mechanisms to expand and update chemicals-related ILO Conventions and link them to other actions; and
- implementing ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Systems with special attention to chemical safety.

HAZARD DATA GENERATION AND AVAILABILITY

This agenda item was included in response to a Forum III recommendation for improved global consistency and collaboration in hazard data generation. Forum IV considered this matter in Plenary on Monday, Thursday and Friday, and in an *ad hoc* Working Group, which met on Monday and Tuesday.

On Monday, Vice President Bengtsson presented a proposal for an additional Priority for Action and a set of proposals for concrete actions contained in the decision and information documents on *Hazard Data Generation and Availability* (09w and 09w Annex). The EC highlighted its new regulation on Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals (REACH). The African Group stressed the importance of safety data sheets containing safe waste disposal information, and suggested that provision of hazard data by industry become a legal obligation. Sweden and Germany requested developing a timetable for the proposed actions. WHO proposed acknowledging the relevant work of the IPCS. OECD expressed its willingness to work on hazard data generation. IPEN expressed concern about using OECD List of Non-Confidential Data on Chemicals, which, she said, does not balance the public's right to know with commercial interests. Argentina stressed the need for an on-line repository to be free of charge and available in several languages. PAN identified the need to provide information on the active ingredients of products. Delegates agreed to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group on this issue.

Chaired by Vice President Bengtsson, the *ad hoc* Working Group met on Monday and Tuesday. On the legal obligation for industry to report on hazard data, Bengtsson explained that the decision document allows for a range of instruments, including regulatory interventions. Citing high costs, some delegates opposed the proposal to translate Internet databases, but agreed that the international repository should be free of charge. On achieving a balance between the right to know and commercial interests, a participant suggested recommending that additional information be made accessible "according to the need to protect both community's right to know and industry's valid claims for the protection of commercial information," while others said a reference to the validity of confidentiality claims would be sufficient. Other proposals made in Plenary were incorporated in the draft decision document.

Bengtsson presented the revised document to Plenary on Thursday, and the Forum adopted the new Priority for Action in Plenary on Friday.



Final Decision: Contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w), the Priority for Action on Hazardous Data Generation and Availability states that for all commercial chemicals, appropriate hazard information should be made available to the public, and other information should be accessible according to a balance between the public's right to know and the need to protect valid confidential business information.

The Priority for Action further encourages governments to establish national priorities for information generation on chemicals not produced in high volumes and to use appropriate measures to promote timely generation of hazard data.

It also invites the OECD to have by Forum V, *inter alia*:

- established a detailed programme for an international repository on hazard information;
- agreed to timeframes for how industry will make accessible or generate hazard information for high production volume chemicals;
- established generally applicable guidelines on the respective roles of stakeholders;
- further harmonized data formats for hazard information;
- established recommendations on tiered approaches to screening information requirements for chemicals not produced in high volumes; and
- identified possible approaches for prioritization for such chemicals.

The Priority for Action also invites IPCS and OECD to harmonize terminologies to be used in hazard and risk assessments, and encourages the use of the Internet as a tool for identifying and disseminating hazard data information.

ACUTELY TOXIC PESTICIDES – RISK MANAGEMENT AND REDUCTION

This issue was addressed in response to a Forum III request to the FSC to provide initial input on the extent of the problem of acutely toxic pesticides. Forum IV considered the agenda item in Plenary on Monday, Thursday and Friday, and in an *ad hoc* Working Group, which met on Monday and Tuesday.

On Monday in Plenary, Cathleen Barnes (US) presented *Acutely Toxic Pesticides - Initial Input on Extent of the Problem and Guidance for Risk Management* (10w). She outlined the report's key recommendations, including: prohibiting certain pesticides as a risk mitigation mechanism; expanding research on safer alternatives; and improving information, reporting and health systems. The Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) urged a ban on the use of extremely and highly hazardous pesticides. The Asia and the Pacific Group proposed supporting non-chemical methods of pest control and addressing stockpiles. The CEE Group outlined the problem of under-reporting of pesticide-related poisonings. WHO, Brazil and PAN said under-reporting should not be used to underestimate the problem of acute poisonings. Noting that CropLife International (CI) understated poisonings in Thailand by misinterpreting data, Thailand questioned CI's scientific credibility.

In the *ad hoc* Working Group, delegates agreed on a provision suggesting that governments and stakeholders consider "liability and compensation issues," but opinions diverged on its placement. Delegates decided to forward this decision to the Plenary.

On Thursday, Barnes presented the revised draft to the Plenary. On the prohibition or restriction of availability of pesticides, CI proposed dividing the provision into two parts. He said this would

permit the application of the precautionary approach to restrict availability of pesticides based on 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 Working Group's discussions, and opposed the proposed amendments.

On liability and compensation, the EC, supported by Sweden, IPEN and Uganda, said that reference to these issues were useful and should be left in the document. Kenya proposed mentioning industrial and informal sector workers in pesticide production. Madagascar proposed raising public awareness on the risks of reusing pesticide containers. The Russian Federation, supported by Switzerland, suggested a broad interpretation of the concept of acutely toxic pesticides. The text was agreed upon, with the reference to liability and compensation.

On Friday, the Plenary adopted the revised decision contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w).

Final Decision: The decision recommends that governments take various actions to reduce pesticide-poisoning incidents, including policy, regulatory, and communication actions. Recommended policy actions include:

- implementing relevant agreements;
- prioritizing pest management in national development strategies; and
- basing national decisions on pesticides considering their intrinsic hazards, anticipated local exposure and conditions of use.

Regulatory actions include:

- promoting integrated pest management and research on alternatives; prioritizing the use of pesticide formulations suited to their conditions of use;
- substituting acutely toxic pesticides with safer alternatives;
- ensuring appropriate labeling, application equipment and packaging; encouraging industry stewardship;
- establishing or enhancing national systems of surveillance and reporting on poisonings;
- avoiding the build up of obsolete pesticides stocks; and
- prohibiting or restricting the availability of acutely toxic pesticides and/or pesticides associated with severe poisoning incidents.

Communication actions include: improving access to information on pesticides and safer alternatives; expanding awareness raising, education and training appropriate to the public and user communities; and evaluating the efficacy of current pesticide risk reduction programmes and alternative pest control methods.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Delegates considered and adopted decisions on two issues under this agenda item: capacity building assistance; and addressing the widening gap among countries in following chemical safety policies.

CAPACITY BUILDING ASSISTANCE: This issue was considered in response to a Forum III recommendation that the FSC should review assistance to countries on capacity building support. Forum IV addressed this matter in Plenary on Monday, Thursday and Friday.



On Monday, Matthias Kern (Germany) presented the *Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) – Report to Forum IV* (3 INF). Kern outlined next steps identified in the report, including the need to raise awareness and facilitate participation, revise the promotional strategy, and develop French and Spanish websites. Thailand proposed the inclusion of national profiles on the INFOCAP website.

On behalf of Roy Hickman, FSC Working Group Chair on capacity building assistance, Kern presented the decision document *Assistance for Capacity Building Report for Forum IV* (11w) to the Plenary on Monday. GRULAC and the Asia and the Pacific Group emphasized the importance of developing national chemical profiles as a basis for action. Many countries encouraged the integration of chemical safety into poverty reduction strategies, and Sweden emphasized the importance of project ownership.

A revised list of recommendations to be included in the *Final Report* (16w) was discussed in Plenary on Thursday morning. China emphasized the value of bilateral cooperation to capacity building and Kenya stressed the need to urge the ILO to develop compensation mechanisms for workers poisoned by chemicals. The amended text, included in the Executive Summary and the annex of the *Final Report* (16w), was agreed in Plenary on Friday.

Final Decision: The recommendations in the Executive Summary invite the private sector and civil society to participate in efforts and encourage: recognition of the importance of sound management of chemicals in poverty eradication; promotion of dialogue with international development assistance institutions; and integration of chemicals issues into all relevant activities.

The annex on capacity building assistance counsels IFCS participants to, *inter alia*: ensure adequate capacity for the sound management of chemicals; disseminate chemical management success stories; and integrate chemicals management into other environmental management programmes. It counsels countries and stakeholders to take full advantage of existing funding opportunities; strengthen bilateral capacity-building efforts; apply a multi-stakeholder approach; and consider defining financial mechanisms. The annex counsels the IOMC and other IOs, to: use the momentum of existing chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); develop training centers and ILO guidelines on compensation in the case of worker poisoning; and strengthen the integration of sustainable development and chemicals issues into all relevant activities. Furthermore, the annex recommends that the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) integrate all chemical safety related agreements into the 2002 DAC guidelines of the Integration of Rio Conventions in Development Cooperation by 2004.

ADDRESSING THE WIDENING GAP AMONG COUNTRIES IN FOLLOWING CHEMICAL SAFETY POLICIES: This issue was considered in response to a proposal by Iran at the 44th FSC meeting to address the widening gap among countries in implementing chemical safety policies. Delegates discussed this issue in Plenary on Monday, Thursday and Friday, and in an *ad hoc* Working Group that met on Monday.

In Plenary on Monday, Rashid Bayat Mokhtari (Iran) presented *Addressing the Widening Gap among Countries in Following Chemical Safety Policies* (12w), highlighting obstacles faced by many developing countries in meeting chemical safety requirements. He stressed the need to strike a balance between developing further policies and helping countries that have lagged behind with

regard to chemical safety policies. He proposed that Forum IV request the FSC to establish an *ad hoc* Expert Group to promote systematic ways to strengthen the sound management of chemicals in countries with implementation challenges.

On Monday evening, the *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by Mokhtari, discussed the proposal for an *ad hoc* Expert Group, including possible elements of a system for strengthening chemicals management in countries with an expressed need. Working Group participants discussed the role of the FSC in establishing the *ad hoc* Expert Group, reviewing implementation of the system, urging donor countries to provide funding, and reporting back to Forum V.

On Thursday morning, the revised proposal was taken up by Plenary. Mokhtari highlighted amendments to the text, which: elaborate on the role of the proposed *ad hoc* Expert Group; emphasize the National Profile Process; and enhance FSC's monitoring role. On the activities of the proposed Expert Group, Mokhtari said the Group would not create a new system, but would advise countries with problems implementing existing chemicals agreements. On Friday morning, the decision, contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w), was agreed with a minor amendment.

Final Decision: The final text identifies the need to bridge the wide gaps that exist between developed and developing countries in their ability to pursue chemical safety policies. It explains that the Forum will establish an *ad hoc* Expert Group, including interested observers, to propose a systematic way to strengthen the sound management of chemicals in countries with an expressed need. The decision requests the FSC to decide on the Group's modalities.

It mandates the Group to propose a system by which a government could avail itself of available expertise. It also proposes possible elements of a system, including:

- listing states that face greater challenges in implementing chemical safety policies;
- taking stock of the available capacities, for example, as identified through the National Profile Process, and demands of countries seeking support;
- preparing an indicative survey of circumstances and challenges faced by developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing chemical safety policies;
- facilitating visits to states; and
- recommending actions on chemical safety to the requesting government and/or IOMC organizations.

The text indicates that countries requiring assistance, OECD countries, NGOs, other institutions, and other IFCS participants including IOMC organizations, should prioritize this undertaking and mobilize financial resources and technical assistance. It requests the FSC to review implementation of the system in its regular sessions and report back to Forum V.

GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM FOR THE CLASSIFICATION AND LABELING OF CHEMICALS

This matter was first addressed in a dinner workshop on Sunday on the opportunities and challenges of implementing the GHS. A draft *GHS Action Plan* was presented to Plenary on Tuesday, and an informal working group chaired by Kim Headrick (Canada) met during the week to address revisions to the document.

On Thursday, delegates considered a revised draft in Plenary. Many delegates expressed support for the draft *Action Plan*, although many also raised concern about the 2008 target and the



transition period for global implementation. Germany and Switzerland underscored their support for capacity-building activities to this end. Trinidad and Tobago questioned how the GHS would address the issue of confidentiality. Thailand called for more regional workshops and pilot projects, and China proposed a data bank to enable quick access to information.

On Friday, the Secretariat presented the GHS Action Plan, noting that it was attached as an annex to the Final Report. Delegates agreed that the text should be contained in the Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w).

Final Decision: The decision comprises preambular and operative sections. The preambular section, *inter alia*:

- reaffirms the WSSD recommendation that all countries are encouraged to implement the GHS as soon as possible with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008;
- notes the importance of minimizing the transition period to global implementation;
- welcomes the framework work-plan of the WSSD GHS Partnership;
- emphasizes that GHS implementation has become a top priority for capacity building in developing countries and CEITs; and
- encourages developing countries to integrate chemical management into national poverty reduction and sustainable development strategies.

The operative section of the decision, *inter alia*:

- invites UNITAR and ILO to develop a roster of GHS experts by end of 2004;
- encourages the WSSD GHS Partnership to aim for specific capacity-building targets on the development of GHS awareness-raising materials, and regional and national GHS capacity development; and
- invites the FSC to submit a progress report to Forum V.

PREVENTION OF ILLEGAL INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC IN TOXIC AND DANGEROUS PRODUCTS

The issue of illegal traffic was first raised on Sunday in Plenary during consideration of the provisional agenda, when Nigeria, on behalf of the African Group, with Thailand, Bangladesh, many Latin American countries and IPEN, called upon Forum IV to address illegal traffic. The issue was discussed in an *ad hoc* Working Group that met on Wednesday, and considered in Plenary on Thursday and Friday.

On Wednesday, the *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by Abiola Olanipekun (Nigeria), discussed 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 should address this problem. Developing country delegates called for the 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 as a key reason for slow progress. Delegates also 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.

On Thursday, Olanipekun presented the revised draft resolution to Plenary. Senegal noted that preventing illegal traffic depends on resource availability. Switzerland and Zimbabwe proposed high-

lighting 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.

On Friday in Plenary, delegates agreed to reiterate the urgency of taking actions at the national level in accordance with recommendations of Forum III. The resolution was adopted with this amendment.

Final Resolution: In the resolution, contained in Executive Summary of the *Final Report* (16w), the IFCS:

- invites UNEP to take the lead in initiating the actions requested at Forum III;
- calls upon governments and organizations to provide technical and financial resources;
- invites IOMC governing bodies, in particular UNEP GC, to consider adopting a decision on the prevention of illegal international traffic; and
- requests UNEP, on behalf of the IOMC, to report to Forum V on the implementation of this decision.

SAICM

This issue was considered in response to decisions SS.VII/3 and 22/4 IV of the UNEP GC. Delegates discussed the Forum's input to SAICM PrepCom1 in Plenary throughout the week. The final report was adopted on Friday afternoon.

On Monday morning, William Sanders (US) presented the *SAICM Forum IV Thought Starter on Gaps in the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000* (13w), noting that its purpose is to stimulate discussion on identifying gaps in chemicals management policies and their implementation. Delegates addressed: the importance of national inter-agency coordination for chemicals management; the need to consider financial mechanisms and technology transfer to implement relevant agreements; and SAICM's potential role in mobilizing resources and coordinating regional activities. Underscoring the goal agreed to at the WSSD to achieve, by 2020, the use and production of chemicals in ways that minimize adverse effects on human health and the environment, IPEN recommended that governments use the SAICM as a tool to reach that goal.

On Tuesday morning, Regional Groups presented their input. WEOG recommended discussing governance and priority setting at SAICM PrepCom1. 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 the illegal trafficking of chemical products. She urged increased technical and financial assistance and the development of national profiles and priorities. The African Group called for: a broader scope for technology transfer and financial assistance; the development of clean technologies; corporate responsibility; and application of the precautionary and polluter pays principles. He also recommended a legal framework to address illegal trafficking. Asia and the Pacific suggested that the SAICM address the need to prevent polluting industries from migrating to developing countries, and recommended preventive measures and regulatory mechanisms.

On Tuesday afternoon, delegates addressed gaps in the *Bahia Declaration* and the *IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000*. Sweden, supported by many, urged the integration of chemicals



management into poverty reduction and development objectives. Highlighting the life-cycle approach, IPEN and others stressed the need to address wastes. Senegal urged strengthening capacity to respond to chemical emergencies. 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 references to multi-stakeholder involvement, the precautionary approach, chemical substitution, and corporate responsibility. Thailand suggested addressing technical and financial assistance, and harmonization of the classification and labeling of chemical products. Iran proposed addressing the development of a global mechanism for responding to chemical disasters, the migration of polluting industries to the developing world, and chemical dangers resulting from war. Argentina noted that the SAICM should build on existing mechanisms to achieve chemical safety. The International Council on Mining and Metals emphasized the need to consider the benefits of chemicals.

On ways to improve assistance, Senegal reiterated the importance of training and, with Mexico, recommended evaluating existing assistance efforts. The International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) supported developing measurable indicators for success. Australia recommended exploring the potential of GEF funding. On strategies for chemicals management, the Dominican Republic called for changes in production practices and, with PAN, called for information on product toxicity. Madagascar proposed defining global criteria for the selection of countries requiring financial assistance. Jamaica suggested linking food safety and chemicals management. Delegates' comments were integrated into a compilation document.

On Thursday afternoon, Sanders introduced the revised *Forum IV Report to SAICM PrepCom I* (13w revised), re-emphasizing that the revised report, or "Thought Starter," was not a negotiated text but a compilation document that incorporated 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. Norway underscored the need to address gaps in policy integration and coordination and, supported by others, the need to consider new priorities and set concrete timetables to achieve targets, including the WSSD 2020 target. WWF stressed that the precautionary principle is a cornerstone for chemicals management, while Japan recommended emphasizing the importance of a science-based approach. ICCA 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 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.

Kenya recommended stressing the role of responsible journalism and lobbying groups in information exchange. 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. Norway suggested elaborating a reference to principles such as corporate responsibility, multi-stakeholder involvement, and the substitution of hazardous substances with alternatives posing less risk.

On Friday morning and afternoon, the Plenary took up the revised *Forum IV Thought Starter Report to SAICM PrepCom I*. Germany, supported by Nigeria, Australia, Sweden, Norway and ICCA, urged drawing more attention to Forum IV decisions, including the decision on illegal traffic. WWF, supported by Denmark, Finland, Australia and Sweden, recommended maintaining a balance between addressing implementation gaps and adding to the current list of priorities. Denmark, supported by Finland, Sweden, Austria and Spain, urged governments to identify their priorities for managing carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins, in addition to endocrine disruptors, heavy metals, and persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals. Egypt reiterated the need to address illegal traffic in hazardous substances, products and wastes. On the need to strike a balance between developing further policies and helping those who lag behind to catch up, IPEN, supported by Australia, Iran and others, suggested reflecting in the text that this opinion is widely shared. Sweden, supported by Norway, Switzerland and IPEN, said cost benefit analyses should reflect the drawbacks as well as the societal benefits arising from chemicals use.

On gaps in taking effective preventive measures with regard to health, Slovenia, supported by IPEN, and opposed by Australia and Japan, called for a reference to the precautionary principle. Delegates adopted the revised *Forum IV Thought Starter Report to SAICM PrepCom I* (13w Revision 3) with several amendments.

Final Text: The *Report* contains a preface, a summary, and sections on: centrality of chemicals in a modern world; life-cycle management of chemicals since Agenda 21; new and ongoing challenges; chemicals management regimes; gaps in life-cycle chemicals management; resources for capacity development and implementation; and increased coordination and linkages. It also contains an overview of the main discussion points raised in Forum IV, and an annex containing tables that identify key themes in the *Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000*.

The summary clarifies that the *Report* is a compilation of issues and not a negotiated document. It says that the need for developing countries to "catch up" with developed nations in their capacity to manage chemicals is fundamental, and that the time has come to strike a balance between developing further policies and helping those who lag behind to catch up. It acknowledges that some countries stressed that preference should be given to addressing gaps in the implementation of current priorities, rather than adding to the current list of priorities, while other countries stressed the need to consider new priorities and set concrete timetables to achieve



existing targets, such as the WSSD 2020 target. The *Report* notes that some delegates emphasized the need for a fundamental change in the way chemicals are managed and for benchmarks against which to measure progress toward achieving the WSSD 2020 target.

The *Report* contains a section on the Centrality of Chemicals in the Modern World, which, *inter alia*, states that in addition to the benefits of chemicals, there are also unintended costs.

The section on the Life-Cycle Management of Chemicals since Agenda 21 says, *inter alia*, that the key issue facing all nations is to ensure that chemicals are produced, transported, used and disposed of throughout their full life-cycle within a sustainable development context.

The section on New and Ongoing Challenges calls attention to several Forum IV decisions. There are subsections on: the increasing global chemical output; the developing world's increasing share in chemical production and consumption; and the changing "mix" of chemicals produced in developed countries.

The section on Chemicals Management Regimes refers to various international efforts to improve chemicals management.

The section on Gaps in Life-Cycle Chemicals Management contains subsections on: gaps common to developed and developing countries; developing country gaps; gaps in legally-binding international instruments and their implementation; stakeholder gaps; and obstacles and enablers.

The section on Resources for Capacity Development and Implementation has subsections describing how current finance sources are largely MEA-based, and how a "mainstream" resource model could promote broad-spectrum gains.

The section on Increased Coordination and Linkages highlights developing country concerns about the number of international initiatives and agreements, and the resulting burden on human and financial resources. It says the international community has identified the need for coordination and linkages among chemicals management programmes. The *Report* also identifies the need for governments to carry forward IFCS recommendations to the IOMC governing body organizations for effective implementation.

CLOSING PLENARY

REVIEW OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING:

On Friday morning, delegates considered the *Final Report* (16w) comprising the Executive Summary, which contains an introduction that is yet to be drafted and decisions on:

- children and chemical safety;
- occupational safety and health;
- hazard data generation and availability;
- acutely toxic pesticides;
- capacity building;
- the GHS Action Plan; and
- the prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products.

The *Final Report* also includes annexes containing: reports of the Regional Group Meetings; amendments to the IFCS Guidelines and Procedures; guidelines and criteria for hosting meetings of the Forum; and the Participants List.

Delegates discussed the report, proceeding through the agenda items, and adopted the report following agreement on each of its parts.

ELECTION OF IFCS OFFICERS AND GOVERNMENTAL MEMBERS OF THE FSC: Nominations for Vice Presidents and FSC Members from each Regional Group were announced and accepted on Friday morning:

- WEOG: US as Vice President; Australia, Canada and Germany as FSC members;
- CEE: Russian Federation as Vice President; Slovenia and Kazakhstan as permanent FSC members, and Croatia and Poland as alternates;
- GRULAC: Chile as Vice President; Suriname and Costa Rica as permanent FSC members, and Cuba and Bolivia as alternates;
- Africa: Tanzania as Vice President; Zimbabwe and Guinea as permanent FSC members, and Mauritius and Mauritania as alternates; and
- Asia and the Pacific: the Philippines as Vice President; Fiji and Iran as FSC members, and Japan and China sharing the FSC membership.

The Forum accepted Thailand's nomination for Suwit Wibulpolprasert as the next IFCS President.

FUTURE MEETINGS: President Cavalcanti noted a conference room document on the *SAICM International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM): Future IFCS and SAICM Meetings – Options for timing and venue*, containing options for the scheduling of the ICCM, and its impacts on the IFCS and the timing of Forum V. Delegates agreed to convene Forum V in the second part of 2006 in Hungary, with Germany expressing strong support for this time schedule, and Switzerland stating that the three-year IFCS cycle has proven to be effective and that scheduling Forum V in 2006 will enable substantial progress in the SAICM negotiations.

Cavalcanti noted a letter from UNEP Executive Director, Klaus Töpfer, inviting the Forum to consider holding the ICCM in conjunction with the ninth Special Session of the UNEP GC/Global Ministerial Forum scheduled for early 2006. Cavalcanti underscored that the ICCM be scheduled in accordance with the need for the highest representation of all stakeholders.

Senegal offered to host Forum VI, and requested support for this initiative. Cavalcanti commended this proposal as a sign of confidence in the future of the IFCS.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: In closing, many delegates thanked the President and the Secretariat for their work, and the host country for its hospitality. Switzerland highlighted the role of the IFCS in convening stakeholders and raising areas of concern regarding the sound management of chemicals.

President Cavalcanti identified the SAICM and the WSSD 2020 target as the two key "movements" in international chemicals management and expressed hope that the IFCS would contribute to them.

Addressing the Plenary as the new IFCS President, Suwit Wibulpolprasert said he would not be non-partisan, and would support those who care about the safe use of chemicals and who join the Forum in good faith and in the spirit of partnership. He stated that he would not support those who abuse others for their own benefit, and stressed the importance of inclusiveness. He highlighted that while IFCS does not have the financial or authoritative influence that other organizations have, it has social and spiritual power. Stressing the need for appropriate strategies to address the



issue of chemical safety, he underscored the importance of “knowledge generation, social movement and political linkages,” noting that IFCS comprised all three elements.

IFCS Executive Secretary Judy Storber and IFCS President Cavalcanti were presented with tokens of appreciation. The meeting came to a close at 2:50 pm

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF IFCS IV

ON THE PATH TO CHEMICAL SAFETY NIRVANA?

Forum IV comes at a point when new challenges presented by the WSSD and new opportunities provided by the anticipated entry into force of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions urge many to think about how the international chemicals agenda should be developed. This analysis will discuss whether Forum IV demonstrated that IFCS is well positioned to respond to these new developments. It will consider the strengths and the weaknesses of the Forum, as well as the factors that can affect its future role in the international arena.

STRENGTHS: EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Many perceive that the Forum retains a unique position within the international chemicals regime as an overarching and flexible forum capable of both initiating and responding to innovative policy proposals. Since its creation, many emphasized that the Forum could provide the opportunity for new ideas to be discussed by all stakeholders, including NGOs and donor agencies, as partners. As in previous Forums, many participants, including those with a more limited voice in other international chemical processes, reiterated their appreciation to the IFCS for providing an opportunity for stakeholders to express their positions and have them reflected in both IFCS agenda setting and recommendations. Both NGOs and donor agencies alike note that the Forum is unique in that it enables them to communicate directly with chemicals experts and government officials, and work on integrating chemicals into the wider sustainable development agenda.

The openness of the Forum to innovative ideas remains a key strength, as evidenced by the adoption of Iran’s initiative to address the widening gap between countries in implementing chemical safety policies. Several delegates emphasized the significance of a developing country’s leadership on this initiative. Many expressed that this initiative indicates that developing countries are optimistic about the Forum’s future and are assuming the responsibility of moving forward on their priority issues. Moreover, this initiative capitalizes on the Forum’s ability to develop synergies, identify gaps and prevent duplication between existing agreements.

The Forum also has a valuable umbrella role in placing important new issues on the chemicals agenda. For example, Forum IV addressed the issues of occupational health and safety, children and chemical safety, and the development of an action plan on GHS. Furthermore, the IFCS provided recommendations on acutely toxic pesticides that move beyond the information system provided for under the Rotterdam Convention toward a more comprehensive acute pesticides management regime. Activities like these provide direction for the development of chemicals-related agreements, and set the directions for addressing new hazardous chemicals beyond the scope of existing multilateral environmental agreements.

WEAKNESSES: THE LIMITATIONS OF MATERIAL REALITY

Despite the optimism generated by these developments, several delegates noted that, in order to be effective in the future, the Forum needs to consider not only its strengths, but also its current limitations, particularly with regard to its implementation capacity and financial clout. The slow progress on illegal trafficking demonstrates the need for recognition that the Forum’s recommendations, however progressive and innovative, need strong political support from governments and institutions with tangible implementing power. There was optimism following Forum III’s decision to address illegal trafficking of toxic and dangerous products – an innovative and much needed initiative. However, the lack of intersessional progress disappointed many developing country delegates who felt that, while developed countries have the resources to ensure that their concerns are prioritized on the agenda, developing countries’ priorities had been sidelined.

Indeed, whether the Forum will advance its recommendations into practice depends primarily on the follow-up activities undertaken, the existence of champions willing to push certain issues forward, and the prioritization of issues by donors. Some argue that the disappointment of developing countries should not be directed at the Forum itself, especially since the Forum has no implementation power. Instead, there is a need to place the issue of illegal traffic high on the agenda of the IOMC governing bodies, which have both the financial and technical resources necessary to take real action on this issue.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is Forum attendance. While the IFCS has had growing attendance and receives continued praise for its participatory nature, the diversity of delegations can still be improved. Many delegations, especially from developing countries, consisted predominantly of health and agricultural officials, and lacked support of environmental officials who are more active in the international chemical conventions and could provide important input to the Forum’s attempts to create more coherence and synergies. Donor agencies could also be more active at future Forums, and a plea to donors to engage in the Forum’s discussion was reiterated by several delegates.

FUTURE OF THE IFCS: ON THE PATH TO CHEMICAL SAFETY NIRVANA?

While some successes of the Forum, such as the advances in capacity-building initiatives, suggest an important role for the Forum in the international chemical arena, many have started thinking if the Forum in its current form will have an influence in the changing chemical landscape, where responsiveness to the WSSD targets and SAICM will be important factors affecting the relevance of international processes like the IFCS.

It is indisputable that the future of the IFCS will be tied closely with the SAICM process. While it was considered by some that discussions on the role of the Forum regarding the SAICM might be premature, discussions held at Forum IV indicated that re-assessing the Forum’s mandate and role might be needed in the foreseeable future. Some ideas to this end were already voiced at Forum IV, demonstrating that there are divergent views on the future direction of the IFCS. On the one hand, stakeholders who use the IFCS as a unique forum where they are represented as partners, rather than merely observers, would like to see the development of a stronger, more institutional role for the Forum. On the other hand, many delegates said that the openness and flexibility of the IFCS could be damaged if the IFCS were to be institutionalized,



and cautioned against "reinventing the wheel." They pointed out that while many institutions already exist, the Forum remains unique because of its informal setting.

The Forum may also need to re-evaluate its role in the broader context of implementing the WSSD outcomes. One of the most important determining factors in Forum's future may be whether or not the Forum can take the lead in moving toward the WSSD 2020 target to achieve the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. However, Forum IV's discussions on the WSSD 2020 target were considered by some delegates to be rather limited. Many felt that the deliberations on how to move further toward achieving the WSSD's goals, particularly relating to the life-cycle approach to chemicals management and the need to address the management of wastes, should have been much more prominent on Forum IV's agenda. Some referred to the absence of key champions for the issue as a reason for the fact that the consideration of concrete timetables to reach the WSSD 2020 target were not taken up. In fact, a suggestion by an NGO to discuss the potential for the IFCS to take on a monitoring role and evaluate progress towards achieving the WSSD 2020 target was dismissed as too ambitious and far beyond the current mandate of the Forum.

Like Forum III three years ago, Forum IV concluded on a relatively optimistic note, having made advancements on some important issues, including the GHS, addressing the widening gap and acutely toxic pesticides. But the lack of financial resources and the Forum's timidity in addressing some of the developments that attract the most interest, including WSSD chemicals-related targets, left many questioning how the Forum will keep up with advancements in other international fora. The fact that some delegates kept their cards under the table on the possible role of the IFCS in the SAICM has disappointed some, who felt that the Forum has missed an opportunity to provide space for a more dynamic and open multi-stakeholder dialogue on the SAICM. Nevertheless, on the whole, Forum IV demonstrated that the IFCS does have a unique role to play and can exercise political, and even "spiritual" power, in advancing the international chemical dialogue.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE IFCS V

PREPCOM1 OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT (SAICM):

This meeting will take place from 9-13 November 2003, at the UNCC in Bangkok, Thailand. For more information, contact: UNEP Chemicals Unit; tel: +41-22-917-8200; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: strategy@chemicals.unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/>

24TH ANNUAL SETAC MEETING: This meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry will take place from 9-13 November 2003, in Austin, Texas, US. It will convene under the theme "Science without Borders." For more information, contact: SETAC Office in North America; tel: +1-850-469-1500; fax: +1-850-469-9778; e-mail: setac@setac.org; Internet: <http://www.setac.org/austinmain.html>

PIC INC-10: The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for an international legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade will be held from

17-21 November 2003, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Rotterdam Convention Interim Secretariat, UNEP Chemicals Unit; tel: +41-22-917-8183; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: pic@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.pic.int/en/ViewPage.asp?id=337>

GEF COUNCIL MEETING: The GEF Council meeting will convene from 19-21 November 2003, in Washington, DC, US. NGO consultations will precede the Council meeting. For more information, contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240; e-mail: secretariatgef@worldbank.org; Internet: <http://www.gefweb.org>

EU SUSTAINABLE CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT MEETING: This meeting will take place from 24-25 November 2003, in Brussels, Belgium. It will consider the effects of the REACH Chemical Policy. For more information, contact: EU Conferences Ltd; tel: +44-1873-830-724; fax: +44-1873-830-692; e-mail: info@euconferences.com; Internet: <http://www.euconferences.com/frachemical.htm>

SECOND MEETING OF THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION EXPERT GROUP ON BAT-BEP: The second meeting of the Expert Group on Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practices (BEP) is scheduled to meet 8-12 December 2003, in Chile. For more information, contact: Stockholm Convention Interim Secretariat, UNEP Chemicals Unit; tel: +41-22-917-8191; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: ssc@chemicals.unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.pops.int>

THIRD SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP OF THE BASEL CONVENTION: This meeting will take place from 26-30 April 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Basel Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8218; fax: +41-22-797-3454; e-mail: sbc@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.basel.int>

SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP7) TO THE BASEL CONVENTION: Basel COP-7 is tentatively scheduled to convene from 25-29 October 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Basel Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8218; fax: +41-22-797-3454; e-mail: sbc@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.basel.int>

EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/FIFTH GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: The eighth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Fifth Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place from 29-31 March 2004, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, Secretary for UNEP Governing Council; tel: +254-2-623431; fax: +254-2-623929; e-mail: beverly.miller@unep.org; Internet: <http://www.unep.org>

29TH SESSION OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE FAO PANEL OF EXPERTS ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN FOOD AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WHO EXPERT GROUP ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES: Convened by FAO and WHO, this meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Amelia Tejada, FAO; tel: +39-6-5705-4010; fax: +39-6-5705-6347; e-mail: amelia.tejada@fao.org; Internet: <http://www.fao.org/>

IFCS FORUM V: This meeting is expected to take place in 2006 in Hungary. For more information, contact: Judy Stober, IFCS Executive Secretary; tel: +41-22-791-3650; fax: +41-22-791-4875; e-mail: ifcs@who.ch; Internet: <http://www.ifcs.ch>