

**THE NINTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL
MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM, AND
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT:
4-9 FEBRUARY 2006**

The International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) opens today at the Dubai International Conference Centre in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and will continue until 6 February 2006. It will be followed by the ninth Special Session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-9/GMEF), to be held from 7-9 February 2006.

The ICCM is expected to complete negotiations and adopt the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which comprises a high-level declaration, an overarching policy strategy and a global plan of action. Following this conference, Ministers and delegates at GCSS-9/GMEF will consider issues regarding: assessment, monitoring and early warning; policy issues relating to energy and environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment; follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and contribution of UNEP to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development; international environmental governance; outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the GC/GMEF; and implementation of the programme of work of UNEP and the relevant decisions of the Governing Council (GC). Various side events, as well as the seventh Global Civil Society Forum on 5-6 February, will also take place throughout the week.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GC/GMEF AND THE SAICM PROCESS

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, officially established UNEP as the central UN node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making. The resolution also established the GC to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues. The GC's responsibilities include the promotion of international environmental cooperation and the recommendation of policies to achieve this, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) is constituted by the GC as envisaged in UN General Assembly resolution 53/242. The purpose of the GMEF is to institute a process for ensuring policy coherence in the environmental field.

The issue of chemicals management and the idea of a SAICM have been discussed by the GC and reflected in various forms since 1995, including in:

- UNEP GC decision 18/12 of May 1995, which invites UNEP's Executive Director to convene an expert group to consider and recommend further measures to reduce risks from a limited number of chemicals;
- an expert group meeting in April 1996, which made recommendations in four areas, namely: inadequate capacity of developing countries to handle hazardous chemicals and pesticides; disposal of unwanted stocks of pesticides and other chemicals; insufficient information for chemicals management decision making and action; and the possible need to ban and phase out certain chemicals; and
- UNEP GC decision 19/13 of February 1997, which seeks out options for enhanced coherence and efficiency among international activities related to chemicals.

SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The sixth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place from 29-31 May 2000, in Malmö, Sweden. Ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which stated that the WSSD in 2002 should review the requirements for a strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

21ST SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The 21st session of the GC/GMEF took place from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted Decision 21/7, which requests UNEP's Executive Director, in consultation with governments, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and others, to examine the need for a SAICM. Delegates also established the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives (IGM) to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses, as well as future needs and options for strengthening IEG.

SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The seventh Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-7/GMEF) was held from 13-15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. Delegates adopted decision SS.VII/3, stating that the further development of a SAICM was needed, and requesting UNEP's Executive Director to develop such an approach, based on the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety, and the Priorities for Action Beyond 2000, both adopted by the IFCS Forum at its third session. Delegates also adopted the IGM report on IEG, and decisions related to, among other things: a strategic approach to chemicals management at the global level.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD): The WSSD convened from 26 August-4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, where delegates adopted the Johannesburg Declaration and the

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). The Johannesburg Declaration outlines the path taken from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to the WSSD, and the JPOI sets out a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at Rio. Both documents are widely relevant to UNEP's mandate and ongoing work. The JPOI's chemicals-related targets 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 IFCS Bahia Declaration, and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000; and
- the national implementation of the new Globally Harmonized System of classification and labelling of chemicals, with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008.

22ND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The 22nd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-22/GMEF) took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted decision 22/4 endorsing the concept of an international conference, with preparatory meetings, as the basis for developing SAICM. The GC also recognized the need for an open, transparent and inclusive process for developing the approach, and further requested UNEP to compile possible draft elements of SAICM. GC-22/GMEF also adopted decisions on issues relating to, among other things: IEG; a mercury programme; and support to Africa.

SAICM INFORMATION MEETING: A stakeholder information and consultation meeting took place on 29 April 2003, in Geneva, Switzerland. Delegates heard briefings on the background of the SAICM process, an outline of the preparatory process, and perspectives from organizations in the SAICM Steering Committee. Participants also heard an update by UNEP on SAICM PrepCom-1 documents, and a presentation on progress achieved in the compilation of possible draft elements for SAICM.

IFCS FORUM IV: The fourth session of the IFCS (Forum IV) took place from 1-7 November 2003, in Bangkok, Thailand, under the theme "Chemical Safety in a Vulnerable World." In response to GC decisions SS.VII/3 and 22/4, Forum IV discussed the further development of SAICM, and forwarded a non-negotiated compilation report on its work to SAICM PrepCom-1, addressing, among others:

- life-cycle management of chemicals since Agenda 21;
- new and ongoing challenges;
- gaps in life-cycle chemicals management; and
- resources for capacity building and implementation.

SAICM PREPCOM-1: PrepCom-1 took place from 9-13 November 2003, in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants provided initial comments on potential issues to be addressed during the development of SAICM, examined ways to structure discussions, and considered possible outcomes of the SAICM process. There was widespread agreement among participants that the overarching objective of SAICM should be 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, as agreed in the JPOI. There was also broad support for a three-tiered approach for SAICM, which would comprise: a global programme of action with targets and timetables; an overarching policy strategy; and a high-level or ministerial declaration.

EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The eighth Special Session of the GC/GMEF took place from 29-31 March 2004, in Jeju, Republic of Korea. At the conclusion of the ministerial consultations, delegates adopted the "Jeju Initiative," containing the Chair's summary of the discussions and decisions on: small island developing States; waste management; regional annexes; and the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

SAICM PREPCOM-2: PrepCom-2 was held from 4-8 October 2004, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates discussed elements for an overarching policy strategy for international chemicals

management, made progress in creating a matrix of possible concrete measures to include in the global plan of action, and provided comments on an initial list of elements for a high-level political declaration.

23RD SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The 23rd session of the GC/GMEF took place from 21-25 February 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya. Ministers considered the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, and adopted decisions on, among other things, chemicals management, the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, UNEP's water policy and strategy, IEG, gender equality and the environment, poverty and the environment, and strengthening environmental emergency response and developing disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and early warning systems in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster.

SAICM PREPCOM-3: Prep-Com 3 was held from 19-24 September 2005, in Vienna, Austria. Delegates discussed the SAICM high-level declaration, overarching policy strategy, and global plan of action, but did not reach agreement on several elements in the three documents, including: principles and approaches; description of the SAICM as "voluntary"; financial considerations; and the timing and frequency of future ICCM sessions.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

2005 WORLD SUMMIT: The 2005 World Summit was held at UN headquarters in New York from 14-16 September. In the Summit's outcome document, delegates resolved to promote the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle, including hazardous wastes, with the aim that, by 2020, chemicals are "used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment." They resolved to implement a voluntary strategic approach to international management of chemicals, and to support developing countries in strengthening their capacity for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes. Delegates also recognized the need for more efficient environmental activities in the United Nations system, through, among other things, enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, and strengthened scientific knowledge. They further agreed to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework, including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as treaty bodies and UN specialized agencies.

PIC COP-2: The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade met from 27-30 September 2005, in Rome, Italy. Delegates adopted decisions on, among other things: operational procedures of the Chemical Review Committee; pilot projects on the delivery of regional technical assistance; and cooperation and synergies between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention secretariats.

MEETING OF THE EXPANDED BUREAU: The SAICM expanded bureau met in Jongny, Switzerland, on 4 and 5 November 2005, to explore avenues for possible consensus on the outstanding issues. It was attended by, among others, the President, 16 governments from all regions, and a number of non-governmental organizations.

UNEP COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MEETING: The UNEP High-Level Meeting on Compliance with and Enforcement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) met in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 21-22 January 2006. Participants discussed the technical aspects of compliance and enforcement and legal, structural and institutional innovations that could enhance implementation of MEAs. The meeting developed a Chair's summary, which UNEP will use as it develops an action plan on compliance with and enforcement of MEAs.