



SAICM/OEWG.3/INF/10



**Strategic Approach  
to International  
Chemicals Management**

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**Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference  
on Chemicals Management  
Third meeting**

Montevideo, 2–4 April 2019

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda\*

**Progress towards the achievement of  
the 2020 overall objective of the sound management of chemicals:  
Implementation of the health sector strategy**

**Report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the  
WHO Chemicals Road Map and Global Chemicals and Health  
Network**

**Note by the secretariat**

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, in the annex to the present note, a report received from the World Health Organization on the WHO Chemicals Road Map and global chemicals and health network. The report is presented in the annex as received by the secretariat and has not been edited by the secretariat.

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\* SAICM/OEWG.3/1.

## Annex

# Report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the WHO Chemicals Road Map and Global Chemicals and Health Network

## The WHO Chemicals Road Map

In May 2017, the Seventieth World Health Assembly approved the *Road map to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond*<sup>1</sup> (the road map). The road map was requested by World Health Assembly Resolution WHA69.4 (2016) and, as requested, it builds on WHO's existing relevant work as well as the strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach<sup>2</sup> adopted by the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2) in September 2012.

The road map is available on the WHO website and in print, in all six UN languages. The road map identifies concrete actions where the health sector has a lead or an important supporting role to play in the sound management of chemicals, recognizing the need for multi-sectoral cooperation. The actions are organized into four areas, namely: risk reduction; knowledge and evidence; institutional capacity; and leadership and coordination.

The road map has been used by ministries of health and other health sector stakeholders to identify priority areas for further action including with other sectors and stakeholders, for advocating action from decision-makers and/or feed into other national planning processes. Capacity-building and the need for support to implement the road map, and the value of sharing experiences, for example through regional and subregional networking, have been highlighted as important considerations for the health sector moving forward.

As a companion to the road map, WHO developed the WHO chemicals road map workbook<sup>3</sup> (the workbook) which offers a structured way to work through the road map, choose priorities, and plan activities. The workbook is also available online and in print, in all six UN languages. Use of the workbook can facilitate discussions within and among organizations about health sector priorities and potential activities to address these priorities. Exchange of information on priorities and planned actions could then lead to the identification of shared priorities, and greater collaboration and coordination within the health sector as well as with other sectors.

## Health sector roles in road map implementation

It is recognized that all sectors and stakeholders need to work together to achieve the goal of sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle. The road map identifies concrete actions where the health sector has either a lead or important supporting role to play. For those actions not completely within the mandate of the health sector, there still needs to be an awareness of the importance of the action, active support for implementation of the action and, in many cases, increased engagement by the health sector.

As well, for each action, the main actor, or lead, within the health sector, has been identified: either all stakeholders, WHO Member States or the WHO Secretariat.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Chemicals Road Map <https://www.who.int/ipcs/saicm/roadmap/en/> (Last accessed 5 March, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> SAICM/ICCM.3/24, annex V. <http://www.saicm.org/About/ICCM/ICCM3/tabid/5963/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (Last accessed 5 March 2019)

<sup>3</sup> WHO chemicals road map workbook <https://www.who.int/ipcs/saicm/roadmap-links/en/> Last accessed 5 March, 2019)

While it is recognized that, in many cases, success depends on cooperation between a variety of stakeholders and sectors, the identification of a lead within the health sector, where possible, is intended to be helpful and to facilitate progress.

### **Implementation of the road map by WHO**

WHO has undertaken multiple activities where it was identified as the lead and/or joint lead with Member States as well as to support road map implementation by others. Technical activities are described in document SAICM/OEWG.3/INF/6 - Activities of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to support Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Implementation.

In addition, WHO is promoting and raising awareness about the road map and workbook, supporting uptake and use, and providing a global coordination function.

The World Health Organization hosted a number of panel sessions on the road map and workbook during SAICM Regional meetings to prepare for the second intersessional meeting, as follows:

- Asian Pacific Region, Bangkok, Thailand, 23-25 January 2018
- Latin America and the Caribbean Region, Panama City, Panama, 23-29 January 2018
- Africa Region, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 6-8 February 2018
- Central and Eastern Europe Region, Lodz, Poland, 19-21 February 2018.

Panel participants offered examples of how the road map has been instrumental in the implementation of their national chemical safety agenda, and the importance of the health sector being involved in the management of chemicals. A summary of the panels is available online at:

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/279903/WHO-CED-PHE-EPE-18.07-eng.pdf>

WHO has also convened health sector side meetings at the first and second meetings of the intersessional process to prepare recommendations on the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

The WHO Secretariat met with civil society in May 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland, on the margins of the 70<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly to introduce the road map and to identify activities of interest and areas for collaboration to support implementation of the road map. Activities of interest for civil society included: technical work on specific chemicals, safer alternatives; data collection of vital statistics and biomonitoring; tools for training and inclusion into academic curricula; partnerships with the health and environment sector; and awareness raising activities for health impacts of chemicals. A follow-up meeting was held in May 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland where civil society underscored the benefits of the roadmap and shared how they have been using the workbook to develop work plans.

WHO also had discussions with industry stakeholders who have expressed interest in supporting road map implementation.

The 72nd World Health Assembly in May 2019 will consider a progress report on the WHO Secretariat's implementation of the road map. A further report on progress, as well as on actions undertaken by the WHO Secretariat to update the road map in the light of the outcome of the intersessional process at the 74th World Health Assembly in 2021.

### **WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network**

One of the actions in the road map mandates the WHO Secretariat to establish a global chemicals and health network, with links to existing subregional, regional and international networks, to facilitate health sector implementation of the road map. Following approval of the road map, WHO invited Member States to nominate a contact point for the WHO Chemicals and Health Network (the network).

The goal of the network is to facilitate implementation of the road map by promoting collaboration on common policy challenges, perspectives and priorities of health ministries in managing chemicals, especially in light of the intersessional process on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (the intersessional process), and to facilitate continuity of contact among health ministries and with WHO.

The objectives of the network are to:

- Provide a forum to discuss implementation of the road map, including what different countries are doing and how, as well as challenges and success stories;
- Improve awareness of the health impacts of chemicals and the health sector role in chemicals management at national, regional and global levels;
- Identify common issues for discussion and collaboration;
- Foster greater inclusion of health sector perspectives in international chemicals discussions; and
- Provide a platform/venue for mutual support among Member States, for example, through sharing information and best-practices as well as funding opportunities.

By 7 March 2019, over 70 Member States had joined the WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network.

#### Inaugural Meeting of the WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network - Summary

Forty-one participating Member States attended the inaugural meeting of the Network held 5-8 November, 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting laid the groundwork for how the Network will work together, and how the WHO secretariat can best support this. Member States developed posters to display at the inaugural meeting to share information on activities from the WHO Chemicals road map that they are addressing or planning to address as well as ideas for collaboration. Throughout the meeting, participants shared their experiences in using the road map, and were pleased with the poster session which raised awareness about the activities of other countries in their regions and in other regions. The poster session demonstrated the significant work on chemicals management undertaken by ministries of health and led to the identification of common challenges, successes, and opportunities for collaboration in the implementation of the road map.

Areas identified for future collaboration included:

- Better quantifying the impacts of chemicals on health including at country level;
- Implementing the chemicals components of the International Health Regulations;
- Sharing knowledge about poisons centres;
- Raising awareness of the health impacts of chemicals;
- Sharing regulatory approaches/legislation;
- Education and training for human biomonitoring;
- Coordinating efforts for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury;
- Phasing out lead paint; and
- Better integration of waste and disposal issues in the health sector.

Participants noted the challenge for the health sector to access and/or mobilize resources. The importance of multi-sectoral cooperation, and common goals was underscored as a way to increase the health sector's ability to access resources. The suggestion was made to leverage the capacity-building strategy from the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network, which comprises more than 90 risk assessment institutions worldwide. Participants were keen to expand their poster to share with the Network a more complete picture of all the activities being undertaken.

One session of the meeting covered the Health in All Policies approach<sup>4</sup> (HiAP), an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks

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<sup>4</sup> WHO chemicals road map workbook <https://www.who.int/healthpromotion/frameworkforcountryaction/en/> (Last accessed 5 March, 2019)

synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts, in order to improve population health and health equity. The HiAP can be used to engage, break down the silos, and negotiate effectively with other sectors and stakeholders so that the health sector is able to secure agreements on chemical management. The roadmap was highlighted as a HiAP approach.

Another session covered the UNEP Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening that provides support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to enhance their sustainable institutional capacity to develop, adopt, monitor and enforce policy, legislation and regulation for effective frameworks for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention and SAICM. Network members were provided with suggested types of road map activities that would qualify for the programme and were encouraged to submit project application for the third round.

The SAICM Secretariat provided an update on the beyond 2020 Intersessional Process and David Morin, co-chair of the intersessional process, provided an update on the draft co-chair's paper that will be submitted to the third session of the ICCM's Open-Ended Working Group meeting<sup>5</sup>. The importance of health ministry engagement in the beyond 2020 process was underscored. Views shared by the participants included:

- On targets and objectives, it was suggested that a number of health sector activities be specifically included, such as poisons centres and public access to information through labelling, and that the role of the health sector should be clearly visible.
- Regarding engagement in international fora, delegations to meetings should include the different sectors, and travel support provided to enable health participation. National coordination in preparing for international meetings was considered crucial in order to ensure that all perspectives are covered.
- The participants also considered how the health sector could be better represented in chemical-relevant discussions at national level. In that the focal point for SAICM is often the ministry of environment, participants proposed that a national interagency committee be set up and more guidance be provided on selecting which entity is the focal point, how the focal point would relate to sectors outside her/his own, and what roles, such as co-chairs, other ministries might carry. It was proposed that national committees be co-chaired by the health and environment ministries.
- In examining the need for a science policy forum or other subsidiary bodies, it was questioned whether the issue was lack of science but rather a lack of policy coherence and political will. Existing bodies were noted and emphasis placed on strengthening ties between existing bodies and avoiding competing for resources. The science perspective was seen as essential, but needed to involve the national and local levels, and to be translatable at that level to improve people's health. The need for more work on quantifying the burden of disease from chemicals and products was highlighted as was the need for more science in developing countries.

Participants were invited to consider attending the upcoming third session of the Open Ended Working Group meeting.

The meeting concluded with Member States recommending the network to meet again, face-to-face in 2020, after the outcome of the ICCM and before the required report to the World Health Assembly in 2020, to finalize the plans for the beyond 2020 period.

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<sup>5</sup> Third session of the Open Ended Working Group meeting.

<http://www.saicm.org/About/OEWG/OEWG3/tabid/5984/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (Last accessed 5 March , 2019)