

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

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Informal discussions on preparations for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

Rome, 23–24 October 2008

Report of the informal discussions on preparations for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

I. Opening of the meeting

1. Mr. Matthew Gubb, coordinator of the secretariat for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, opened the informal discussions at 10.40 a.m. on Thursday, 23 October.
2. In their opening statements several participants welcomed the opportunity to contribute to furthering the preparations for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management through informal discussions, with one saying that outputs from the discussions should be given as much weight as those from the meeting of the Open-ended Legal and Technical Working Group that was being held in conjunction with the informal discussions.
3. Another participant called for a clear distinction between the operating procedures of the Conference and those of other multilateral environmental agreements. The Conference, he said, should focus on high-level discussions along the lines of those held by the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Ministerial Environment Forum, with the outcome presented as a president's summary of key issues and solutions, together with decisions on such administrative issues as the budget and rules of procedure. One participant, speaking on behalf of a regional group, urged that issues relating to financing for the implementation of the Strategic Approach be accorded top priority with a view to attaining the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals and said that a common understanding on emerging policy issues was also required. Another called for the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety to become a subsidiary body of the Conference and encouraged the complete involvement therein of developing countries, countries with economies in transition and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

4. Participants elected Mr. Babajide Alo (Nigeria) and Ms. Kateřina Šebková (Czech Republic) to serve as co-chairs during the current discussions, in accordance with a proposal to elect one participant from a developed country and the other from a developing country.

B. Adoption of the agenda

5. Participants adopted the agenda set out below, on the basis of the provisional agenda that had been circulated as document SAICM/InfDisc/1:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Election of officers;
 - (b) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (c) Organization of work.
3. Preparatory discussions on issues to be considered by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its second session:
 - (a) Emerging policy issues;
 - (b) Modalities for reporting on implementation of the Strategic Approach;
 - (c) Financial and technical resources for implementation of the Strategic Approach, including evaluation of the performance of the financing of the Strategic Approach;
 - (d) Review and update of the Strategic Approach:
 - (i) Evaluation of implementation of the Strategic Approach and possible strategic decisions to ensure effective implementation in the future;
 - (ii) Process for the possible addition of new activities to the Global Plan of Action;
 - (e) Relationship of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety to the Strategic Approach.
4. Organization of the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.
5. Other matters.
6. Adoption of the report of the meeting.
7. Closure of the meeting.

C. Organization of work

6. Participants agreed to meet from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on 23 October 2008 and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. on 24 October 2008, subject to adjustments as necessary.

D. Attendance

7. Representatives of the following Governments participated in the discussions: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia.

8. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations and United Nations bodies also participated: European Commission, Organization of American States, United Nations Development

Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, World Health Organization, Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

9. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations also participated: Agenda for Environment & Responsible Development, Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre for Africa, Center for International Environmental Law, Centro de Analisis y Accion en Toxicos y sus Alternativas (Centre for Analysis and Action on Toxics and their Alternatives), Croplife International, Day Hospital Institute for Rehabilitation and Development, Environment and Social Development Organization, Environmental Group FRI (Foundation for Realization of Ideas), Environmental Health Fund, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, International Council of Chemical Associations, International Council on Mining and Metals, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, International POPs Elimination Network, International Society of Doctors for the Environment, International Trade Union Confederation, International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, National Toxics Network, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, Sustainlabour – International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development, Women in Europe for a Common Future.

III. Preparatory discussions on issues to be considered by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its second session

A. Emerging policy issues

10. In considering the item, the participants had before them a note by the secretariat summarizing completed questionnaires received from stakeholders on the issue (SAICM/InfDisc/2) and a compilation of the submissions themselves (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/1), documents submitted by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety concerning the future relationship of the Forum to the Strategic Approach (SAICM/InfDisc/6), a proposal by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry and the Society of Environmental Toxicology on contributions to the Strategic Approach from the science community (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/9) and conference-room papers setting out submissions on the issue from the European Union and its member States and from the United States of America. Introducing the documents, the representative of the secretariat noted that some 36 issues had been identified through a questionnaire process by 21 respondents and that, to facilitate the process of their discussion, the secretariat had suggested a number of discussion points on which participants might like to focus rather than attempt to consider each of the identified issues.

11. In the ensuing discussion, one participant drew attention to an extensive paper which his organization had submitted in response to the questionnaire, suggesting a way forward for consideration of the issue. In that context, participants agreed that the focus of discussions should be on finding an effective approach to the issue rather than considering individual issues. There was also agreement that the concern at the current time was to map a way forward to the next session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management; the process to be followed thereafter would be determined at the time of that next session.

12. Some participants stressed the need, at the outset, for a clear definition of the notion of emerging policy issues. To that end, participants suggested, in particular, dividing the issues into distinct categories, depending on whether they resulted from advances in science, from the emergence of new materials or from existing substances which had only recently been identified to be of concern. Other categories included issues which had not been adequately dealt with in the past, including those in the Global Plan of Action on which no action had been taken. Another suggested that there was a need to distinguish between emerging policy issues and national priorities for cooperative action, in particular capacity-building, to address gaps in implementation.

13. Others, including one participant speaking on behalf of a regional economic integration organization which had introduced a conference-room paper on the issue, felt that criteria should be identified first for the identification of issues and, given the limited resources available, the determination of priorities for their consideration. Those included the scope and magnitude of a given problem and its effect on human health and the environment, the feasibility of finding a solution, the level – or lack – of scientific

knowledge about the problem, and whether it was cross-cutting in scope and effectively dealt with in other forums. In that context, several argued against the inclusion of, in particular, climate change issues, which they said were adequately dealt with under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

14. Several highlighted the need for a screening process to determine which issues merited inclusion. That process, one suggested, could comprise three stages: an initial screening by the secretariat against basic eligibility criteria; screening by regional focal points; and screening by a bureau or equivalent body.

15. There was some discussion of the process to be followed both during the period leading up to the second session of the Conference and at the session itself, with a number of participants calling for fuller support from the scientific community in the work of identifying emerging policy issues. One participant suggested that fuller use should be made of stakeholder expertise and, to that end, that stakeholders could be invited to report on their own activities relating to such issues. Others, noting the capacity constraints of the secretariat, favoured the creation or designation of an intersessional body to carry out such work; several participants felt that the International Forum on Chemical Safety was ideally placed to serve in that capacity. One participant called for concerted action through partnerships or a working group while another drew attention to the proposal to declare 2011 the international year of chemistry, a move which would help to put the international spotlight on the emerging policy issues which were identified.

16. Several participants, speaking on behalf of scientific bodies, conveyed the willingness of their organizations to support the secretariat in carrying out that work, a pledge that was welcomed, in particular by the United Nations Environment Programme. Another participant noted the potential usefulness of regional workshops in filling gaps in scientific knowledge about emerging policy issues.

17. Where the process at the Conference itself was concerned, one participant suggested that countries could raise the profile of emerging policy issues through discussion at the Conference; in addition, the Conference could consider the adoption of a declaration or other statement on such issues, it could decide to add them to the Global Programme of Action or it could take concerted action by establishing a partnership or working group.

18. Following the group's discussion the co-chair presented a conference room paper containing a proposal on the way forward concerning emerging policy issues. After discussing the proposal the participants adopted it, as orally amended, as an agreed expression of their views on the way forward on emerging policy issues, on the understanding that certain provisions of it, which were enclosed in square brackets, would have to be adjusted to bring them into line with the outcome of the first meeting of the Strategic Approach Open-ended Legal and Technical Working Group. The proposal as adopted is set out in the annex to the present report.

B. Modalities for reporting on implementation of the Strategic Approach

19. In considering the item, representatives had before them notes by the secretariat on a synopsis of the proposed indicators and an analytical summary of the experiences of stakeholders participating in pilot tests of the indicators (SAICM/InfDisc/4); the full draft indicators (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/4); a compilation of submissions by stakeholders who pilot tested the draft indicators (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/4/Add.1); a submission by the International Council of Chemical Associations (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/4/Add.2), the African regional position (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/4/Add.3) and a baseline estimates report (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/5).

20. Those participants who took the floor congratulated the Government of Canada on sponsoring the project to develop, in consultation with an international project steering committee, modalities for reporting on implementation of the Strategic Approach. Nevertheless, they cited various shortcomings in the indicators and in the conditions for completing the questionnaires, including limited resources, lack of knowledge and time and significant duplication of responses. They called for the indicators to be reviewed further and simplified to render them more user-friendly and less resource-intensive. One participant suggested that the questionnaire should reflect the objectives of the Strategic Approach overarching policy strategy and include a separation between those indicators that would enable measurement of progress on management or implementation, e.g., the stage of development of legislation, as opposed to those that would directly focus on environmental outcomes. One participant suggested that there be a focus on specific chemicals and that submissions be tracked electronically.

21. Another participant proposed that the questionnaire should contain space for narrative, enabling further detailed information to be provided. One participant suggested that national implementation plans consonant with a country's particular circumstances should be taken into account and that any questionnaire employed should not be one-size-fits-all, given the gulf between developed and developing countries in terms of implementation. It was difficult, she said, to report on implementation of control measures if a country had yet to identify the substances to be controlled in the first place. Such national plans could also be extended to the regional level, she suggested.

22. One participant advocated caution with regard to reporting by multiple stakeholders, pointing out that, since Governments were ultimately held responsible for reporting, the involvement of multiple stakeholders could be counter-productive for Strategic Approach implementation. One participant stressed the importance of a baseline to measure progress. Another participant proposed that a single questionnaire for all stakeholders should be introduced, but several participants disagreed, noting that it would not necessarily meet all needs since stakeholders had distinct roles in the process and varying ways of reporting.

23. The co-chair suggested that further work on revising the indicators could be undertaken by a new working group or by the original international project steering committee. Participants agreed to the latter option, with several additional stakeholders expressing interest in participating in the process. The group's task, as suggested by the co-chair, would be to produce a single questionnaire covering 15 or 20 indicators, it being understood that stakeholders could, if they so desired, supplement the questionnaire with their own reporting. One participant pointed out that although the Conference might adopt a slimmed down set of indicators for the questionnaire, stakeholders could still make use of the full set of indicators set out in document SAICM/InfDisc/INF/4. Another participant drew attention to work it had undertaken to align certain elements of the questionnaire with approaches used for measuring progress and improvements by the chemical industry in implementing the Strategic Approach, suggesting that such efforts should continue.

24. The representative of the secretariat said that the steering committee would undertake further work by electronic means before a possible meeting to work further on the matter with a view to submitting a proposal for consideration at the second session of the Conference in May 2009.

C. Financial and technical resources for implementation of the Strategic Approach, including evaluation of the performance of the financing of the Strategic Approach

25. In considering the item the group had before it a note by the secretariat summarizing comments submitted by stakeholders on financial arrangements for the Strategic Approach (SAICM/InfDisc/3) and a compilation of the comments submitted (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/2). Introducing the item the co-chair recalled that the comments had been submitted by stakeholders in response to a questionnaire that had been circulated by the secretariat. He said that, while it could not be expected that the participants would reach agreement, it would be useful to have an airing of views on the subject of financial arrangements in order to come up with suggestions for consideration at the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

26. All who spoke under the item agreed that sustainable long-term financing was crucial to the successful implementation of the Strategic Approach. There was general agreement that providing for sustainable long-term financing for implementation of the Strategic Approach was a key item of business for the Conference at its second session. One participant suggested that given its importance financing for the Strategic Approach should be the subject of a high-level roundtable discussion during the second session of the Conference.

27. There was general agreement that the scope of the Strategic Approach was such that the funding necessary to achieve significant progress toward the 2020 goal far exceeded that currently available. One participant said that funding for the Strategic Approach should be at least equal to that for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. In the light of those sentiments many participants called for new and additional sources of funding. One participant, however, said that the call for additional funding should take into account the question of whether countries had the capacity to spend it effectively on improved chemicals management.

28. The representative of Sweden introduced a conference-room paper setting out options for the long-term financing of the Strategic Approach, which had been prepared by Sweden on behalf of an informal group of donor countries as a thought-starter to stimulate discussion. A key point of the paper was

that there was no single source of funding for all activities under the Strategic Approach, as they encompassed activities covered under other regimes, activities that pertained to the Millennium Development Goals and activities that conferred global benefits. This breadth of activities and the lack of a single source of funding meant that it was necessary to prioritize and, to that end, to identify which activities in the Global Plan of Action belonged in which group and what sources of funding already existed for each. Several other participants praised the paper, in particular its breakdown of activities into the three categories, and one said that the secretariat should prepare a background paper on which of the activities in the Global Plan of Action fell into which category and what funding was available with respect to the categories.

29. Several participants said that it was important to broaden the donor base, expressing concern that the narrowness of the current base would lead to donor fatigue. One called for increased funding from industry in particular, arguing that just 0.1 per cent of annual turnover from the sale of chemicals would provide funding of \$1 billion for chemicals management. Another said that greater efforts should be made to obtain funding from regional funding agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank. Doing so, however, would require developing countries to place chemicals management higher on their development agendas. Another participant called for strengthening the financial mechanisms of multilateral environmental agreements, as they were the means for implementing many activities in the Global Plan of Action. She said too that funding agencies should not look only at national development or poverty reduction strategies in making their decisions, but also at chemicals management and similar policies.

30. Others said that the donor base was in fact quite broad but that the amount of money devoted to chemicals management issues was relatively small. That could be attributed to a lack of understanding on the part of those making funding decisions and it was therefore necessary to raise the profile of chemicals management so that it was seen as a higher priority issue that could attract more funding. One participant said that the Conference at its second session should discuss ways to do so, including through better explaining the importance of chemicals management and its links to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Another echoed the point made earlier that it was also necessary for developing countries to give chemicals management a higher profile in their development agendas as a means of attracting greater funding.

31. A number of participants called for efforts aimed at establishing a “chemicals window” at the Global Environment Facility and to establish the Facility as the financial mechanism for the Strategic Approach. In that regard several requested that the secretariat prepare a background paper for consideration at the second session of the Conference on the implications of the Facility serving in that capacity.

32. Several participants, however, sounded a note of caution about having the Facility as the financial mechanism. A number of them argued that the Strategic Approach should not rely on a single source of funding, especially taking into account its broad scope and, as pointed out by the representative of Sweden, the varied nature of the activities called for under the Global Plan of Action. It was also pointed out that establishing a chemicals window under the Global Environment Facility did not necessarily mean that the amount of total funding available for chemicals-related projects would increase. In that vein one participant said that whatever decision was made at the second session of the Conference it would have no effect if countries did not follow through at the Facility’s replenishment negotiations by pressing for the allocation of more funds to chemicals management.

33. Others said that qualifying for Global Environment Facility funding involved a difficult and unwieldy process, based on funding criteria that did not necessarily reflect national priorities. As the Strategic Approach was meant to be country and region driven, they called for a financial mechanism that, like the Quick Start Programme, was simpler and more responsive to country-specific needs. All who spoke praised the Quick Start Programme, although there was agreement that while it had been a success the Programme was subject to significant limitations with respect to the amounts of funding available and its planned termination in 2013. Several participants suggested that the Conference should consider renewing the Quick Start Programme or establishing a new financial mechanism modelled on it. One participant called for the secretariat to undertake a study on that option. Another said that it was important to highlight the success of the Programme as a means of inspiring donors to support any future financial mechanism established.

34. A number of participants said that further study of possible financing options should be undertaken for consideration at the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. One

called for a qualitative assessment of financing needs, which he said could be carried out by the secretariat, a study of what could be done with existing financing institutions, which he suggested could be undertaken by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, and information from donors and industry on the hurdles that they faced in making greater funding available for chemicals management. He said too that in addition to background studies a detailed document, including perhaps a draft decision, should be prepared for consideration by the Conference at its second session.

35. Several developing country participants, however, argued strongly that plenty of studies had already been done and that what was needed was decisive action. They called for a concrete decision on long-term and sustainable financing for the Strategic Approach to be taken at the second session of the Conference.

36. During the discussion on the item the representative of Norway noted that his country had pledged approximately \$1.5 million to the Quick Start Programme. His Government, he said, wished to reiterate its commitment to fulfilling its pledge and would also be making an additional contribution of approximately \$1 million in the near future.

37. Following further discussion it was agreed that the secretariat would not prepare either recommendations for action by the Conference at its second session or a draft resolution, as it was agreed that the purpose of the current meeting was to provide information rather than to prescribe action and that preparation of a draft resolution implicated policy positions of the various stakeholders that the secretariat was not in a position to anticipate.

38. It was further suggested that the secretariat should prepare a single background document combining a number of the suggestions made during the discussions. That document would be intended:

(a) To support discussion of the possible future role of the Global Environment Facility as a financial mechanism for implementation of the Strategic Approach. The document prepared by the secretariat would include information on potential interaction between the Facility and the Strategic Approach and information on whether optimal use was being made of the Facility or whether it was necessary to adjust it. In the latter case, the document would examine the procedural implications of adjusting the Facility;

(b) To support discussion on funding for the three categories of Strategic Approach activities identified in the conference-room paper submitted by Sweden on behalf of the informal group of donor countries. The document prepared by the secretariat would present a qualitative assessment of needs, taking into account regional priorities, including those identified by regional public interest non-governmental organizations, and identify sources and levels of funding already available to support activities in the three categories. It would reflect the Quick Start Programme and the baseline report prepared under the Canadian-sponsored project to develop modalities for reporting on implementation of the Strategic Approach.

39. It was also suggested that the secretariat should prepare a report on obstacles that could prevent potential donors, including industry, from contributing resources to support implementation of the Strategic Approach. It was emphasized that the report should include possible solutions to any obstacles identified, lest it be seized on as an excuse for inaction.

D. Review and update of the Strategic Approach

1. Evaluation of implementation of the Strategic Approach and possible strategic decisions to ensure effective implementation in the future

40. The co-chair introduced the item, noting that evaluating the implementation of the Strategic Approach with a view to reviewing progress against the 2020 targets was one of the tasks for the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its second session, as set out in paragraph 24 (b) of the Overarching Policy Strategy.

41. During the discussion some participants said that it was vital, initially, to set out the constraints encountered in implementing the Strategic Approach, priorities for action and the progress achieved to date, including through activities under the Quick Start Programme, in particular for developing countries. A future strategy should be based on those findings but should also take into account emerging issues. It was

suggested that the best way that the Conference could serve implementation of the Strategic Approach was through a chair's summary that captured issues important to strategic thinking. Others, however, said that a summary would not ensure that the Strategic Approach was kept up to date. Instead, a clear strategic decision with priorities for the future should be developed.

42. One participant said that current resources might be better used for implementing and revising reporting issues to be examined at the third session of the Conference rather than for revising the Strategic Approach, which had only been in place for three years. Others suggested that, before including new and emerging policy issues, an evaluation of the current status should be completed.

2. Process for the possible addition of new activities to the Global Plan of Action

43. In considering the item, participants had before them a thought-starter on possible guidelines for the identification of new activities for inclusion in the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach (SAICM/InfDisc/5), which was introduced by the representative of Spain. The document, he said, proposed a simple mechanism to enable countries and stakeholders to forge a common view on emerging issues not covered by the Global Plan of Action. He suggested that the guidelines should be introduced at the second session of the Conference for consideration.

44. In the ensuing discussion, participants commended the simple procedure outlined in the proposal to ensure that the Global Plan of Action remained a living document. It allowed for updates that would not require excessive time during the session of the Conference but rather could be accomplished beforehand.

45. Many participants emphasized that the Global Plan of Action was a living document that would require continual updating and said that a procedure for doing so should be developed at the second session of the Conference. One participant emphasized the need to avoid lengthy discussions on each activity at the session. Another participant, while expressing support for the approach outlined in document SAICM/InfDisc/5, said that the Conference at its second session should establish an advisory or subsidiary body to consider further certain proposed activities from a scientific and technical point of view. He said that that should be achieved by integrating the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety into the Strategic Approach as a subsidiary body of the Conference.

46. Another participant said that lack of time at the first session of the Conference had precluded a quality check on the activities included in the Global Plan of Action. It was important to undertake such a check if new activities were to be included. Pointing out that 273 activities were listed in the Global Plan of Action, one participant said that many or most of those activities had not been reviewed. It would be premature to embark on a process for including new activities when there was scant experience on existing activities. One participant said that the 36 emerging policy issues proposed in document SAICM/InfDisc/INF/1 would require some prioritization, while another cautioned against duplicating subjects in other areas. Emphasizing that the Global Plan of Action was intended for countries' use to make progress with their national strategies, one participant considered that the strategic objectives of the Overarching Policy Strategy, rather than the Global Plan of Action, should be used as a measure to attain the 2020 goals. Another participant noted that the Global Plan of Action was a tool for countries to undertake activities that could assist them to attain those goals. One participant said that the question of how or whether to add activities to the Global Plan of Action was completely distinct from that of how to deal with emerging policy issues and that participants should avoid confusing the two. It was concluded that the proposal contained in document SAICM/InfDisc/5 should be placed before the Conference at its second session, with amendments to reflect the above distinction.

E. Relationship of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety to the Strategic Approach

47. In considering the item, participants had before them documents submitted by the president of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (SAICM/InfDisc/6) relating to the outcome of the Forum's sixth session. The Chair introduced the item and sought participants' comments.

48. A number of participants, one speaking on behalf of a region, described what they said were the merits of the Forum, saying that it had assisted developing countries, forged synergies and built consensus and was a transparent and multisectoral body. They called for it to be integrated into the International Conference on Chemicals Management as an advisory or subsidiary body, as well as for adequate funding.

One participant suggested that the Forum could be used for informal discussions among experts without political issues being brought to bear.

49. Another participant said that the Strategic Approach could be strengthened if core Forum functions were carried out by a subsidiary body with its own working methods, and that such an arrangement would increase coherence within the chemicals management field.

50. Some other participants, however, said that they saw no value in making the Forum a subsidiary body of the Conference. They noted that the Dakar resolution adopted at the Forum's sixth session made clear that the Forum would not simply cease to exist and indeed would continue operations and be available to produce outputs on chemicals management that could be taken into account in the implementation and further development of the Strategic Approach. One participant said that the launch of the Strategic Approach implementation process obviated the need for the Forum entirely.

51. In conclusion, the Chair noted that the rich discussions had given rise to a wealth of information that would assist the secretariat in moving forward to the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

IV. Organization of the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

52. In considering the item the participants had before them notes by the secretariat containing a proposed agenda, programme and format for the second session of the Conference (SAICM/InfDisc/7), together with views of the Government of the United States of America on SAICM and the Conference (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/8) and views of the European Union and its 27 member States on the second session of the Conference (SAICM/InfDisc/INF/10). The co-chair suggested that little discussion was needed on the provisional agenda and annotated agenda for the session given the lengthy time during which the documents had been available and the extensive consultations that had already taken place.

53. The representative of the secretariat confirmed that the second session of the Conference would be held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, at the Geneva International Conference Centre. He thanked the Government of Switzerland for making the centre available free of charge. He also thanked the Government of Switzerland and the European Commission for making early contributions to help defray the cost of the session. In the light of paragraph 5 of resolution I/1 of the Overarching Policy Strategy, which called for meetings of the Conference to be held back-to-back with meetings of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental bodies, the second session of the Conference would be held during the week between the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention and the sixty-second World Health Assembly. He said that the secretariat and the Government of Switzerland had reserved approximately 500 hotel rooms for participants, but he urged those in a position to do so to book their own rooms far in advance, as the reserved rooms might not be sufficient and a number of other very large events would be taking place at the same time. He said that documents would have to be ready within 12 weeks of the current discussions to allow time for editing, translation and distribution. The official letter of invitation to the session would be issued in January 2009 and sent to official Strategic Approach focal points or, in the case of countries that had not named official focal points, to ministries of foreign affairs.

54. Participants agreed to the proposed provisional agenda and annotated agenda set out in document SAICM/InfDisc/7, with one minor amendment to expand text in the annotated agenda to reflect wording in paragraphs 13 and 24 of the Overarching Policy Strategy.

55. Regarding the draft programme of the Conference, several participants said that the high-level segment should be held at the end of the Conference to enable ministers attending the Conference to take on board the outcome of the deliberations earlier in the week. As the proposed theme of the Conference was public health, the environment and chemicals management, that would also allow the ministers to carry the outcome on to the high-level segment of the World Health Assembly, which would take place on the first two days of the Assembly. It was also suggested, however, that at least one plenary session be scheduled subsequent to the high-level segment to allow the ministers to participate in the adoption of decisions on the last day of the session. One representative proposed that the high-level segment should be scheduled in the middle of the session, arguing that, while health ministers might take advantage of the high-level segment of the World Health Assembly, many ministers attending the session would be ministers for the environment

who would likely not attend the Assembly. Holding the high-level segment in the middle of the session would allow such ministers to participate fully on matters such as technical assistance and the work programme during the rest of the session.

56. Participants endorsed the proposal to hold a roundtable discussion during the high-level segment, the conclusions from which could inform the decisions to be taken at the session. A roundtable discussion would inform ministers on such items as financial matters, including the Quick Start Programme, and ways to move forward. One participant suggested that there be one roundtable discussion on public health and one on a financial mechanism and technical assistance. Others, arguing for quality over quantity, said that only one roundtable discussion should be held. Other participants supported a theme focused on public health but said that it should be linked to the Millennium Development Goals. The representative of the World Health Organization offered, with the assistance of IOMC partners, to assist in convening a health-related roundtable discussion. Another participant suggested that having a single theme for each session of the Conference would hinder a broader coverage of chemicals management issues given the infrequent convening of the Conference. Other participants concurred, arguing that the Strategic Approach itself should be the main theme and that it should encompass sub-themes such as health and financing.

57. One participant suggested that arrangements should be made for workshops to be held in the margins of the Conference. He added that technical briefings should be shorter than those proposed and should continue during the session rather than be held only on the Sunday before the session opened. Another participant said that the ministers attending the session should adopt a declaration or resolution.

V. Other matters

58. No other matters were considered.

VI. Adoption of the report of the meeting

59. The present report was adopted on the basis of the draft report circulated at the meeting, as orally amended, on the understanding that the secretariat, working in consultation with the co-chairs, would complete the report to reflect the proceedings on the second day of the meeting.

VII. Closure of the meeting

60. The meeting was declared closed at 4.30 p.m. on Friday, 24 October 2008.

Annex

The way forward on emerging policy issues

Background

1. One of the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management set out in paragraph 24 (j) of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management is “to focus attention and call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action”. Paragraphs 14 (g) and 15 (g) of the Overarching Policy Strategy, respectively, call for “new and emerging issues of global concern to be sufficiently addressed by means of appropriate mechanisms” and “to accelerate the pace of scientific research on identifying and assessing the effects of chemicals on human beings and the environment, including emerging issues.”
2. Participants in the informal discussions had before them documents SAICM/InfDisc/2, containing an overview and summary prepared by the secretariat that identified some of the issues for consideration by participants in undertaking a preliminary review; SAICM/InfDisc/6, containing documents submitted by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety concerning the future relationship of the Forum to the Strategic Approach; SAICM/InfDisc/INF/1, containing a compilation of 21 submissions from stakeholders on possible emerging issues for consideration at the second session of the Conference; SAICM/InfDisc/INF/9, containing the proposal of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry and the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry for a contribution from the science community; and two conference-room papers on the topic of emerging policy issues, one submitted by the United States of America and the other by the European Union and its member States.

I. Nature of informal discussions

3. The rich and thought-stimulating preparatory discussions gave rise to many valuable suggestions. The principal focus was on how the Conference would best begin to fulfil its functions with regard to emerging policy issues and in particular how it would select from those issues that had been nominated for consideration as part of the preparatory discussions. The intent was to address those issues already nominated for consideration and provide some input to discussions on more durable procedures in the longer term.
4. There was overall agreement that an emerging policy issue could be appropriately defined as “an issue involving the production, distribution, or use of chemicals, which has not yet been generally recognized or sufficiently addressed, but which may have significant adverse effects on human beings and/or the environment”. To provide more clarity in the definition, the Conference would focus on emerging policy issues on chemicals management, which might include those dealing with scientific aspects, policy aspects and aspects arising in downstream use. It was understood that the term “production and use” should also enable waste management issues to be addressed.
5. In terms of its suitability and usefulness, the current nomination process, involving use of a simple questionnaire, was seen as appropriate. A simple procedure for screening and prioritizing emerging policy issues was seen as a necessary additional step to assist with preparations for the second session of the Conference.
6. The core of the discussions was therefore the filtering or screening criteria to be used. The criteria would address, in particular, the need to avoid duplication of efforts, address benefits, take into account regional needs and the quantity of stakeholders involved in a particular issue.
7. There were a number of suggestions for how the process of screening and prioritizing could be performed in the future following the second session of the Conference. This could entail, for example, using the services of a formal advisory body or an informal science-based group.

II. Immediate actions

8. The first step in preparing to consider the submitted emerging policy issues at the second session of the Conference would be screening the nominated emerging policy issues in a transparent manner. The following actions would be completed before the end of 2008:

(a) The secretariat would first ensure that a given nominated issue met basic criteria, for example that it fell within the general definition of an emerging policy issue, and that the questions posed by the simple questionnaire had been completed. Issues would be grouped so that similar issues could be considered together;

(b) The secretariat would then annotate the submissions according to a set of criteria that could provide a basis for further consideration of the priority of the issue for consideration at the second session. Those criteria would include:

- (i) The magnitude of the problem, its impact on human health and/or the environment, taking into account vulnerable sub-populations and any toxicological and exposure data gaps;
- (ii) The extent to which the issue was being addressed by other bodies;
- (iii) The level of knowledge about the issue;
- (iv) The extent to which the issue was of a cross-cutting nature;
- (v) The feasibility of the action proposed;
- (vi) The relevance of the issue to a broad number of countries or regions and stakeholders, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

9. The results of the secretariat's screening would be circulated to members of the group supporting the preparation of the second session of the Conference, which would consult with regional focal points, Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations as appropriate. The group would select a number of emerging policy issues for detailed consideration at the Conference. This would include weighing or prioritizing issues for consideration at the second session. Guidance on the number of issues that could be dealt with would, however, depend on the conclusions reached regarding the organization of the second session of the Conference (agenda item 4 of the informal discussions).

III. Actions at the second session of the Conference

10. The emerging policy issues selected for detailed consideration would be addressed as appropriate at the second session of the Conference. This could be dealt with by, for instance, including the prioritized emerging policy issues in a resolution or a chair's statement on further action to be taken. 11.

Remaining emerging policy issues could be considered in less detail and referred for advice or action to another body, kept under review by the Conference or simply noted as appropriate.

12. The Conference at its second session would also consider a longer-term procedure for the modalities of carrying out its functions with regard to emerging policy issues, which would include revised criteria for priority setting to be developed as necessary. The secretariat will prepare a paper containing a draft proposal in this regard for consideration by the Conference at its second session in consultation with regional focal points and other stakeholders. The proposal would take into account the present informal discussions and experience in the application of the procedure agreed for use in the lead-up to the second session of the Conference.

IV. Future considerations

13. These would be decided at the second session of the Conference based on the above.
