

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT ITS SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM, 15 FEBRUARY 2002

SS.VII/3. Strategic approach to international chemicals management

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decisions 18/12 of 26 May 1995, 19/13 of 7 February 1997 and 20/23 of 4 February 1999, as well as its decision 21/7 of 9 February 2001 concerning global policies related to chemicals management,

Conscious of the essential role of the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle, including the management of hazardous wastes, in achieving sustainable development,

Welcoming the important ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the identification of priorities for action in its October 2000 Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action beyond 2000,¹

Taking note of the progress made by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in preparing for the entry into force of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade,

Taking note of the activities being undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility and other partners in preparing for the entry into force and implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants,

Taking note of the activities carried out under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal to strengthen international cooperation in environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and its contribution to the effective implementation of chapters 19 and 20 of Agenda 21,²

Acknowledging the increasing need for effective capacity-building and technical assistance to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing existing international legal instruments for management of chemicals and hazardous wastes and to meet future challenges in chemical safety, including the protection of human health and the environment,

Reaffirming the commitment to decision 21/5 concerning the global assessment of mercury and decision 21/6 concerning lead in gasoline, of 9 February 2001,

Reaffirming its commitment to decisions 21/3 and 21/4 of 9 February 2001 calling for the ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions with a view to their entry into force as soon as possible,

Recognizing the need to promote the expeditious implementation of existing international, including regional, treaties and agreements concerning chemicals management by the Parties thereto,

¹ Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety third session Forum III final report (IFCS/Forum III/23w), annex 6.

² Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992. A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol.I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.1.8 and corrigenda), Vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

Recognizing the need for all countries to have access to alternatives to hazardous chemicals that are safer, efficient and cost-effective as well as to related technology and to easy access to the latest developments and knowledge regarding hazardous substances and their alternatives,

Having reviewed the report of the Executive Director on a strategic approach to international chemicals management,³

Noting the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg from August 26 to September 4, 2002, and the opportunity that it presents for further progress in implementing chapters 19 and 20 of Agenda 21,

1. Decides that there is a need to further develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management and endorses the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 as the foundation of this approach;
2. Requests the Executive Director in pursuing this decision to take fully into account the special circumstances of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
3. Requests the Executive Director, together with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, in consultation with Governments, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, the Global Environment Facility and other major agencies responsible for the funding and delivery of international development cooperation, other relevant organizations and stakeholders, to identify actions currently underway or planned at the international, regional or national levels to advance the sound management of chemicals, with particular reference to the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000;
4. Requests the Executive Director to work within the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, with the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, Governments and other relevant organizations and stakeholders, to identify any gaps in the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 or in the implementation of these priorities and suggest remedies for any identified gaps;
5. Requests the Executive Director to identify concrete projects and priorities in the context of a strategic approach to international chemicals management, working with key partners such as the secretariats of the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention and the Basel Convention, and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety;
6. Requests the Executive Director, together with the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety and with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, to convene an open-ended consultative meeting involving representatives of all stakeholder groups, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to contribute to the further development, based on these analyses, of a strategic approach to international chemicals management;
7. Underlines that the strategic approach to international chemicals management should promote the incorporation of chemical safety issues into the development agenda and identify concrete proposals for strengthening capacity for the sound management of chemicals and the related technologies in all countries, taking into account the vast difference in capabilities between developed and developing countries in this field;
8. Calls upon Governments and other actors to make available information, especially on alternatives to hazardous chemicals, technical assistance, information on arrangements for promoting access to and the transfer of environmentally sound technology, capacity-building, and funding necessary to assist developing countries, especially least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition to take active part in this endeavour;

³ UNEP/GCSS.VII/INF/1 and INF/1/Add.1.

9. Urges Governments, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety and other relevant organizations and stakeholders to participate actively in this process;

10. Invites the World Summit for Sustainable Development³ to:

(a) Endorse the further development of a strategic approach to international chemicals management and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 as the foundation of this approach;

(b) Urge the active engagement of the major agencies responsible for the funding and delivery of international development cooperation and other relevant actors;

(c) Call upon all Governments and other relevant actors to take immediate action to implement the identified priority activities;

11. Requests the Executive Director to report to it at its twenty-second session on progress made in implementing this decision, including options for taking the process forward, and on the contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme towards the implementation of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000.

6th meeting
15 February 2002