

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

The way forward on emerging policy issues

Preparations for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM)

Teleconference of the “Friends of the Secretariat”, Thursday 27 November 2008

Secretariat summary of discussion

1. The Friends of the Secretariat held a teleconference on 27 November 2008, to follow up from the informal discussions held in Rome on 23 and 24 October 2008 to assist the preparations for the second session of the Conference. Emerging policy issues are included under agenda item 4 (f) of the provisional draft agenda for the second session of the Conference. Under this agenda item, the Conference may wish to consider recommending possible cooperative action on priority emerging policy issues as well as a longer-term procedure for carrying out its functions on emerging policy issues as set out in paragraph 24 (j) of the Overarching Policy Strategy.

Participation

2. The following stakeholder representatives participated in the teleconference:

(a) Governments, represented by five official SAICM regional focal points (in this case Japan, Nigeria, Romania, and the United Kingdom); plus up to two regional representatives per region, Jamaica, Sweden and the United States) [*Absent: Belarus, Egypt, South Africa, Thailand, Georgia and Cuba*],

(b) Non-governmental organizations, represented by the Environmental Health Fund (EHF, for public interest NGOs), the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE, for the health sector), International Trade Union Council (ITUC, for the labour sector), and the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA, for industry),

(c) Inter-governmental organizations represented by WHO and UNEP [*Absent FAO and ILO.*]

Facilitator

3. The representative of the Government of the Czech Republic also participated in the teleconference and agreed to facilitate discussions at the teleconference, following her role as co-chair of the informal discussions held in Rome 23 and 24 October 2008.

Adoption of agenda

4. The draft agenda prepared by the secretariat was adopted with the addition of an item of other business concerning the planned workshop on chemicals in products.

Preparation of annotated list of emerging policy issues

5. Participants in the teleconference reviewed the outcomes of the informal discussions contained in an advance copy of the meeting report. The informal discussions had agreed that a set of immediate actions be undertaken on emerging policy issues to further prepare for the consideration of this issue by the second session of the Conference. It was clarified that because the Rome meeting had not formalized a bureau to act in the lead-up to the second session, the secretariat had determined that the most efficient way of consulting with regional focal points, Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations (as called for in the report of the informal discussions) would be to invite the “Friends of the Secretariat” to continue to assist with the agreed follow-up, particularly in helping to select those emerging policy issues to be considered in detail at the second session of the Conference.

6. The secretariat briefed the Friends on the further development of the format for the second session of the Conference including the arrangements for technical briefings on the morning of Sunday 10 May 2009, the provision for side events in the lunchtimes, Monday 11 May to Friday 15 May 2009, and the provisional time allocated in plenary and for contact groups, should that be requested.

7. The secretariat introduced document 3 that it had prepared as a follow-up to the Rome discussions and which contained a summary table showing each submitted emerging policy issues together with information relevant to each of the screening criteria, agreed in Rome. The issues had been grouped so that similar issues could be discussed together. The aim of the document was to set out in a concise and transparent manner the information used to as part of the prioritization process for selecting issues for detailed consideration at the second session.

8. The Friends welcomed the summary table and reviewed its contents and whether any of the annotations needed amendment. In relation to the criterion “Relevance to a broad number of stakeholders,” several participants understood the annotation “national,” “regional,” or “global” to apply equally well to the scope of the proposed action as to the geographical relevance of the issue.

9. Regional focal points reported back on their consultations with Governments ahead of the teleconference. While regional focal points reported that the information from the secretariat had been distributed to national focal points in their regions, additional time was needed to ensure completion of this process and to formalize regional views. Participants had received written comments from ISDE identifying possible changes to some of the information presented in document 3 and from ITUC identifying those emerging issues especially relevant for the trade unions. It was agreed to allow additional time for the notification of omission of facts or discrepancies in how the emerging policy issues had been annotated.¹ The Friends agreed that a deadline of 8 December 2008 was reasonable for this process to be completed.

10. Participants in the teleconference proceeded to provide their views on the relevant importance of the screening criteria in assisting with the identification of priority emerging issues. The criterion “Relevance to a broad number of stakeholders” was seen as of key importance to several participants, followed by “Extent addressed by other bodies” and “Level of knowledge.” One participant drew attention to the importance of the criterion “Feasibility of proposed actions” and the fact that this could not be fully assessed without further exploration of the proposed actions. Another participant drew attention to regional priority already assigned to several of the issues, particularly at the second African regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, 14-19 July 2008. The importance of cross-cutting issues, such as health, in priority setting particularly given the proximity of the second session of the Conference to the sixty-second World Health Assembly was referred to by one participant who also

¹ The SAICM website has been updated to include information about the current follow-up process on emerging policy issues and giving the deadline of 8 December 2008 for receipt of comment <http://www.saicm.org/index.php?menuid=9&pageid=331&submenuheader=>

requested due note be taken of issues developed by the IFCS. Another participant suggested that given the support of many to the criterion “Extent addressed by other bodies” it was important to consider in the future whether an issue had been sufficiently addressed.

Actions to be requested of the second session of the Conference

11. Participants reflected on the information provided by the secretariat on the proposed format for the second session of the Conference and the time likely to be available for detailed consideration of priority emerging policy issues. It was considered that all available opportunities should be used to enable discussion of the submitted emerging policy issues. For practical reasons, however, participants expressed a common view that it would be necessary to select between three and five emerging policy issues for detailed consideration in plenary. Supplementary opportunities including technical briefings, side events, and submission of information papers should be promoted and some of these may additionally provide a means of dealing with other issues, not selected for detailed discussion in plenary. Alternatively it was suggested that these issues could be kept under review for consideration at future sessions of the Conference. Participants agreed that in further preparations ahead of the second session it would be important to further refine the options for concrete actions on the submitted emerging policy issues and that further comments on the proposed actions would be useful ahead of the next teleconference.

12. Notwithstanding that further consultation would be undertaken by regional focal points and other stakeholder representatives, participants agreed to report on their preferences for a smaller number of policy issues that could be considered as priorities. Table 1 identifies the emerging policy issues that participants highlighted as possible priorities for detailed consideration at the second session of the Conference. In addition to identifying possible priorities, a number of stakeholders also started to identify the order that they would array the priorities. It was anticipated that this would be further completed before the next teleconference.

Other business

13. The representative of the Government of Sweden, announced that due to the recent closure of the airport in Bangkok, Thailand and the changing security phase for that location, she had received advice to postpone the planned workshop on chemicals products, planned for 2-4 December 2008. A new date would be sought for this event.

Next teleconference

15. In order to allow additional time to complete consultations, it was agreed to reconvene in teleconference on Friday 12 December 2008. At this time, participants would aim to complete the assignment of priorities to enable those emerging priority issues that would receive detailed consideration by the second session to be identified.

16. The secretariat would amend document 3 to take account of any comments provided by 8 December 2008. The amended document would be circulated on 10 December 2008.

Table 1

Emerging policy issues highlighted as possible priorities by stakeholders

Stakeholder	Reference number for emerging policy issue ²																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
CEE						(√) ₃					√							√	(√) ₄		√	
Africa	√ ⁵	√ ⁶	√ ⁷	√ ⁸																		
LAC		√					√			√	√										√	
EU						(√) ₉					√							√	(√) ₁₀	√	√	
Japan							√				√		√					√				
US					√ ¹¹								√ ¹²		√			√ ¹³	√ ¹⁴			
ITUC		√	√				√									√	√	√	√			
ISDE		√																			√	
ICCA							√				√				√			√				
EHF		√				√					√						√	√				

Key to listed emerging policy issues

1: Biofuels; 2: Electronic waste; 3: Waste with heavy metals; 4: Climate change; 5: Pd and Cd; 6: Use of lead in paints; 7: Heavy metals need for further global action; 10: Obsolete chemicals/pesticides; 11: Chemicals in products; 15: Perfluorinated chemicals; 16: Applying precaution; 17: Ecologically-based IPM and IVM; 18: Nanotechnology and nanomaterials; 19: Substitution and alternatives; 20: Health-sector – additional responsibilities; 21: Comprehensible chemicals information.

² As listed in document 3 prepared for teleconference of 27 November 2008

³ If time permits

⁴ If time permits

⁵ As determined at the second African regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, 14-19 July 2008

⁶ As determined at the second African regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, 14-19 July 2008

⁷ As determined at the second African regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, 14-19 July 2008

⁸ As determined at the second African regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, 14-19 July 2008

⁹ If time permits

¹⁰ If time permits

¹¹ Suggestion made that issues 5 and 6 could be grouped

¹² Considered by this stakeholder to be an issue to be addressed through technical cooperation and capacity-building

¹³ Considered by this stakeholder to be an issue to be addressed through technical cooperation and capacity-building

¹⁴ Considered by this stakeholder to be an issue to be addressed through technical cooperation and capacity-building