



International Conference on Chemicals Management

Second session

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**Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals
Management: evaluation of and guidance on implementation and review
and update of the Strategic Approach**

**Report on submissions received from stakeholders in response to the
questionnaire on Strategic Approach implementation**

Note by the Secretariat

1. The annex to the present note sets out the background section and executive summary of a report by the secretariat on stakeholder responses to a questionnaire prepared by the secretariat on implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.
2. The present document is being made available in the six official United Nations languages. The full report, in English only, is available in document SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/20. A compilation of submissions received from stakeholders in response to the questionnaire is available on the website of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (<http://www.saicm.org>).

* SAICM/ICCM.2/1.

Annex

Report on submissions received from stakeholders in response to the questionnaire on Strategic Approach implementation

I. Background

1. One of the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management set out in paragraph 24 of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management is “to receive reports from all relevant stakeholders on progress in implementation of the Strategic Approach”. Information obtained through such reports is necessary to enable the Conference to perform other related functions such as reviewing and evaluating progress in the implementation of the Strategic Approach, taking strategic decisions, programming, prioritizing and updating the Strategic Approach as necessary; providing guidance on implementation; and reporting on implementation progress to stakeholders.

2. The Conference has not yet adopted a mechanism for Strategic Approach reporting and is to consider at its second session the issue of reporting modalities and the participation of all stakeholders in a future reporting framework. In the absence of such a mechanism it was agreed during the process of preparing for the second session that as a provisional measure the secretariat would prepare a questionnaire that would enable stakeholders to provide the Conference at the current session with information on their progress in implementing the Strategic Approach.

3. The questionnaire was issued in two versions, one for Governments and the other for organizations. A compilation of submissions received from stakeholders in response to the questionnaire and the individual submissions, as received by the secretariat, are available on the website of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (<http://www.saicm.org>). The questionnaire sought information on progress with the implementation of activities to achieve the five objectives of the Strategic Approach set out in paragraphs 14 to 18 of the Overarching Policy Strategy:

- (a) Risk reduction;
- (b) Knowledge and information;
- (c) Governance;
- (d) Capacity-building and technical cooperation;
- (e) Illegal international traffic.

4. The present note summarizes the submissions. Where appropriate, commentary and additional information are provided by the secretariat. The summarized responses are grouped under the questions set out in the questionnaire, as originally numbered. The summaries of the responses from Governments and those from organizations are presented separately.

II. Executive summary

5. Submissions were received from 36 Governments, one regional economic integration organization, seven intergovernmental organizations and eleven non-governmental organizations in response to the questionnaire issued by the secretariat on the implementation of the Strategic Approach. Although submissions were received from developed, developing and transition economy countries, the relatively small number of responses submitted made it difficult to draw significant conclusions in relation to one region of the world or another. There are nevertheless slight indications of similar efforts at the regional and subregional levels in certain cases.

6. Responses to the questionnaire reveal that considerable efforts have been made by many Governments and organizations to implement or promote the objectives of the Strategic Approach at the national, regional or subregional level. In the case of Governments, this has often involved the integration of Strategic Approach objectives into official planning documents and relevant initiatives. Some developed country Governments indicated that existing plans and programmes relating to chemicals management adequately reflected Strategic Approach objectives. Some Governments of developing and transition economy countries appear to be relying on projects under the Quick Start

Programme as vehicles to assess needs and capacities and to integrate Strategic Approach objectives into strategies or plans.

7. All national Governments and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations that submitted responses to the questionnaire reported that they had named Strategic Approach focal points. Most Governments indicated that their focal points were located within the ministry or agency responsible for the environment. A few Governments placed their focal points in ministries for foreign affairs, health or labour.

8. Coordination arrangements for the Strategic Approach appear to be in place for most Governments and organizations, although the coordination mechanisms described reveal some differences from one another. A majority of Governments indicated that they had established inter-ministerial committees or working groups to carry out coordination functions. Most indicated that they had entrusted such functions to committees of bodies consisting of representatives from both the public and private sectors, including the academic community, non-governmental organizations and other interested civil society groups; a few indicated that coordination efforts were the responsibility of inter-ministerial committees limited to Government officials. A few developing countries have yet to establish their coordination arrangements but have submitted proposals for funding from the Strategic Approach Quick Start Programme for projects that include plans to establish such arrangements. Answers submitted by Organizations indicate that they have established various bodies such working groups, task forces, scientific committees and regional coordination groups to follow up on the Strategic Approach and its objectives.

9. According to responses received from Governments, planning meetings and priority-setting workshops have been convened in most countries to discuss the Strategic Approach or related chemicals management issues. Participating stakeholders in those meetings have included representatives from the public and private sector, non-governmental organizations, the academic community and civil society. The objectives, outcomes and frequency of the meetings vary significantly depending on the coordination arrangements, priorities and progress made.

10. Among the most common priorities identified during meetings and cited by Governments are dissemination and exchange of information on chemical safety matters and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements such as the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The need to improve engagement and cooperation efforts among stakeholders and the importance of promoting synergies to achieve the goals of the national and international chemicals agendas were also emphasized.

11. Some responses provided by Governments suggest that regional or subregional efforts have been considered to promote Strategic Approach implementation. Under the framework of the Southern Common Market, or MERCOSUR, a regional plan on chemical products has been developed under the umbrella of the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach. Another initiative considered a proposal to invite the Central American Committee on Chemical Safety to incorporate into its plans a subregional chemicals management scheme with direct links to the Strategic Approach. Among the members of the North American Free Trade Agreement, consultation meetings have been convened to discuss possible regional implementation. Member States of the European Union, as well as others in the process of acceding to the Union, stressed that preliminary discussions on a chemicals management strategy, both at the national and regional levels, are under way based on activities within the framework of the European Commission regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemical substances and its implementation.

12. Several Governments reported that they had developed Strategic Approach implementation plans, although the level of progress and expected outcomes of those plans varied. In some cases a specific plan is not envisaged; instead, existing mechanisms for chemicals management are taken into consideration to address activities contained in the Global Plan of Action. Developing and transition economy countries cited similar expected outcomes from the initial phases of their planning for Strategic Approach implementation. Responses to the questionnaire also indicated that a small number of developing and transition economy countries expect to facilitate enabling activities at the national level through the Quick Start Programme. In contrast, developed countries seemed to have a more advanced level of progress in their implementation efforts, either through the development of specific plans for the Strategic Approach or by incorporating Strategic Approach objectives in current strategies for chemicals management.

13. Responses received from organizations also indicated that work on initial planning is an ongoing process in support of the Strategic Approach. Most non-governmental organizations reported that they were participating actively in national initiatives, providing input and views on chemical safety issues, developing educational and awareness-raising campaigns and in general engaging civil society on such issues. The participation and contributions of the academic sector and research institutions seemed to be critical for national discussions and priority setting. Responses submitted by the industry sector suggest that industry is focusing its efforts to contribute to the Strategic Approach on specific programmes that promote policies within companies at the international level to improve their environmental performance indicators.

14. Participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) play a key role in the Strategic Approach implementation process. As outlined in the responses received activities are being undertaken to provide knowledge and expertise in relevant areas, including in the discussion of emerging issues of potential interest for the Global Plan of Action. These organizations also offer training and specialized capacity-building programmes, produce and disseminate technical and policy documents, offer cooperation and facilitate coordination among stakeholders. These are tools that Governments and stakeholders in general may wish to consider to assist them in their implementation efforts.

15. The reporting on implementation progress that has been sought in preparation for the second session of the Conference may provide an indication of the level of progress that has been achieved to date in the five categories of objectives set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy. Generally speaking, most countries seem to agree that risk reduction measures should focus on the assessment of occupational exposure to toxic chemicals, with further recommendations that risk assessment studies to support decision-making be conducted. Also highlighted was the importance of identifying and implementing preventive measures to reduce exposure, particularly through awareness-raising campaigns. Responses also referred to the incorporation of risk reduction initiatives into existing development plans and programmes as a good way forward.

16. In response to questions about actions to address information and knowledge, Governments suggested that there was a need to make improvements in coordination mechanisms to address chemical safety and management issues, and emphasized in particular the importance of information sharing and exchange among stakeholders. Training and educational programmes appeared to offer strategic activities to increase awareness and engage civil society. Several organizations considered that workshops and seminars on chemical safety should be conducted and that information already developed in various formats should be made available to interested sectors.

17. General agreement to work on certain governance issues was seen in responses coming from developing and economy transition countries, which elucidated the challenges that some of those countries faced with regard to chemicals management. Considerable emphasis was made on the need to review, update and, most of all, strengthen current legislation and policies related to chemicals at the national level. By contrast, in countries with appropriate legislation seemingly in place to support Strategic Approach implementation the objective appears to shift to enforcing existing coordination mechanisms with stakeholders and the provision of support in the form of technical assistance and training on enforcement and compliance issues. As for organizations, industry plans call for implementing specific sector strategies to promote pollution prevention and improvements in environmental performance, which can be seen as a proactive response aimed at complying with applicable regulations. Other organizations prefer to work directly with Governments and offer technical expertise and information on related matters, particularly in support of facilitating the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

18. Given that most Government responses to the questionnaire were submitted by developing and transition economy countries, answers related to capacity-building were of significant importance and directly linked to other objectives of the Strategic Approach. In many cases there was a preference for receiving technical and financial support to enable progress on initial Strategic Approach planning and enabling activities. Developed countries noted and described continuing support for building and strengthening capacities on a wide range of issues, including the Strategic Approach, governance, implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, pollutant release and transfer registers, the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and, at the European level, activities related to the European Commission regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemical substances. Responses received from organizations confirmed their continuous support for building and strengthening capacity, particularly in developing countries. Specialized training programmes, field and research work, promotion of cleaner production initiatives

and other advanced environmental technologies and practices were among the most common areas of work.

19. With regard to illegal international traffic, responses emphasized the need to promote strong and coordinated efforts to prevent and control the illegal trade of chemicals of concern and illegal hazardous waste transfer. This responsibility falls primarily within the purview of the customs office or department in most countries. However, cooperation with other sectors with relevant functions on chemical safety and management is seen as a key element to address this issue, particularly when it comes to compliance and enforcement actions as set out both in multilateral environmental agreements and national regulations. In general organizations acknowledged the relevance of this matter and offered support to Governments through training programmes, information collection, providing research and field data, promoting the Globally Harmonized System and other prevention practices.

20. Against the background of the Quick Start Programme being the only new mechanism specifically dedicated to supporting initial enabling activities for implementing the Strategic Approach, a large number of developing and transition economy countries responded that they have been relying on the Programme to get started on their Strategic Approach implementation. The secretariat notes that over five rounds of applications to the Quick Start Programme trust fund, held between May 2006 and October 2008, the secretariat received 166 project proposals, of which 74 were approved. The projects will be implemented by 60 Governments and seven civil society organizations and involve activities in 73 countries, including 34 least developed countries and small island developing States.

21. Additional issues raised by respondents included, among others, the need to promote global action on mercury and other heavy metals; discussions on emerging issues such as nanotechnology and nanomaterials, toys and chemical safety, alternatives and substitutes; activities to prevent major industrial accidents; ratification of relevant international instruments; and the importance of developing materials and guidelines in local languages for rural communities.
