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Item 4 (g) of the provisional agenda item\*\*

**Information exchange and scientific and technical cooperation**

## **Engagement of scientific organizations**

### **Note by the secretariat**

1. One of the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management is, as set out in paragraph 24 (k) of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, to promote information exchange and scientific cooperation. Science is particularly important to the implementation of the Strategic Approach in respect of risk reduction, knowledge and information and capacity-building and technical cooperation. The present note sets out the objectives of the Strategic Approach most closely linked to science and contains an update on the level of engagement attained thus far with the scientific community and with scientific organizations. The Conference may wish to take note of the progress achieved with a view to recommending actions that could be taken in the future.

### **I. Objectives of the Overarching Policy Strategy**

2. The Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach envisages the involvement of the scientific community, among others, as key to achieving the objectives of the Strategic Approach. The importance of science is highlighted in a number of objectives of the Overarching Policy Strategy, specifically those relating to risk reduction, knowledge and information and capacity-building and technical cooperation. Research institutions, laboratories, training institutions, standard-setting bodies, agricultural researchers and the academic community are identified among the suggested actors in the Strategic Approach's Global Plan of Action.

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## **A. Risk reduction**

3. Relevant objectives set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy relating to risk reduction include:

(a) “To implement transparent, comprehensive, efficient and effective risk management strategies based on appropriate scientific understanding, including of health and environment effects...” [paragraph 14 (c)];

(b) To ensure that by 2020 “chemicals or chemical uses that pose an unreasonable and otherwise unmanageable risk to human health and the environment based on a science-based risk assessment and taking into account the costs and benefits as well as the availability of safer substitutes and their efficacy, are no longer produced or used for such uses” [paragraph 14 (d) (i)];

(c) To ensure that by 2020 “risks from unintended releases of chemicals that pose an unreasonable and otherwise unmanageable risk to human health and the environment based on a science-based risk assessment and taking into account the costs and benefits, are minimized” [paragraph 14 (d) (ii)].

## **B. Knowledge and information**

4. Relevant objectives set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy relating to knowledge and information include:

(a) “To make objective scientific information available for appropriate integration into risk assessments and associated decision-making relating to chemicals policy, including in relation to assessment of chemical hazards and risks to human health, especially vulnerable sub-populations such as children, and the environment, particularly vulnerable ecosystems” [paragraph 15 (d)];

(b) “To ensure that science-based standards, risk assessment and management procedures and the results of hazard and risk assessments are be available to all actors” [paragraph 15 (e)];

(c) “To make objective scientific methods and information available to assess the effects of chemicals on people and the environment, particularly through the development and use of indicators” [paragraph 15 (f)];

(d) “To accelerate the pace of scientific research on identifying and assessing the effects of chemicals on human beings and the environment, including emerging issues, and to ensure that research and development are undertaken in relation to chemical control technologies, development of safer chemicals and cleaner technologies and non-chemical alternatives and technologies” [paragraph 15 (g)].

## **C. Capacity-building and technical cooperation**

5. A relevant objective set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy relating to capacity-building and technical cooperation is “to encourage stakeholders to develop and promote programmes on chemical safety and scientific research and analysis and to assist with capacity-building programmes in developing countries and countries with economies in transition” [paragraph 17 (g)].

# **II. Progress with engagement of the scientific community**

## **A. Establishment of non-governmental focal points**

6. A number of scientific and research organizations have nominated Strategic Approach focal points. These include the following institutes:

(a) Chulabhorn Research Institute, Thailand;

(b) Gulf Research Centre, United Arab Emirates;

(c) International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Benin;

(d) International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, Kenya;

(e) Occupational and Environmental Health, Research Unit, University of Cape Town, South Africa;

(f) Research and Education Centre for Development, Cameroon;

(g) Suez Canal University, Egypt.

7. The following global scientific organizations have also nominated Strategic Approach focal points:

- (a) International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry;
- (b) International Union of Toxicology;
- (c) Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry.

## B. Participation in the Strategic Approach Quick Start Programme

8. A project for scientific capacity-building in support of implementation of the Strategic Approach in Africa was approved for funding in the fourth round of the Quick Start Programme. A workshop for African scientists was conducted in the United Republic of Tanzania in March 2009 as part of the implementation of this project.

## C. Exchange of information

9. The secretariat has participated in activities to exchange information with relevant scientific organizations to promote the Strategic Approach. Some examples include:

(a) **The Pan Africa Chemistry Network.** This initiative led by the Royal Society of Chemistry of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was launched in London on 21 November 2007 and in Nairobi on 27 May 2008. The Network aims to support the teaching of chemistry in schools and higher education, to promote intra-Africa scientific networking and conferencing on key science issues facing the continent and to create centres of excellence for the chemical sciences to support economic and human development. The network will include a series of hubs. Professor Jamida Katima of the University of Dar es Salaam attended the launch of the first hub, located at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, on behalf of the Strategic Approach secretariat. The second hub will be located at the University of Ethiopia. At its second meeting on the Strategic Approach, held in Dar es Salaam on 16 and 17 July 2008, the African region adopted the following position in relation to the Pan Africa Chemistry Network:

“The Pan Africa Chemistry Network, launched in 2007 by the Royal Society of Chemistry of the United Kingdom, is a welcome development. This, together with other regional chemistry initiatives, will be catalytic to the further development of teaching of chemistry and innovative research in tertiary institutions in the African continent with eventual development of the chemistry profession in the region. The African region recommends that efforts should be made to:

- (i) Ensure the long term sustainability of the Network;
- (ii) Undertake research activities driven by the needs of the region, and addressing issues that contribute to sustainable regional development; and
- (iii) Open more Network hubs in African universities to encourage a wider spectrum of research activities on the continent”;

(b) **The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC).** IUPAC is a non-governmental organization established in 1919 for the advancement of chemistry. Its members are national chemistry societies. It is the recognized authority in developing standards for the naming of the chemical elements and their compounds. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management was one of the topics discussed at the World Chemistry Leadership Meeting held at the time of the forty-first IUPAC congress, which took place from 5 to 11 August 2007 in Turin, Italy. Since that time IUPAC has sought to establish an informal exchange of information with the secretariat and with other global scientific organizations such as the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry;

(c) **The International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH).** ICOH is a leading international scientific society in the field of occupational health. ICOH has over 2,000 members from 93 countries and includes a number of scientific and professional groups of direct relevance to the Strategic Approach such as industrial hygienists, experts in occupational medicine and nurses. Information about the Strategic Approach will be presented at a special session during the ICOH 2009 World Congress, which will be held in Johannesburg from 22 to 27 March 2009.

### III. Declaration of 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry

10. On 19 December 2008 the General Assembly of the United Nations at its sixty-third session adopted resolution 63/209, proclaiming 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry. The International Year of Chemistry is expected to foster improved understanding and appreciation of chemistry by the public; to enhance international cooperation and the dissemination of information for activities by national chemical societies, educational institutions, industry, Governments and non-governmental organizations; to promote the role of chemistry in contributing to solutions to global challenges; and to build capacity by engaging young people with scientific disciplines, especially the scientific method of analysis consisting of hypothesis, experiment, analysis and conclusions.

11. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is designated as the lead agency and focal point for the International Year of Chemistry and will organize activities to be carried out during the year in collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, IUPAC and its associated organizations and federations across the world. The activities of the Year will be funded from voluntary contributions, including from the private sector. A number of international events are planned, including the official launch of the year in Paris in January 2011, the IUPAC Congress in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in August 2011 and a closing event in Brussels in December 2011. Opportunities exist for the further promotion of the Strategic Approach in association with the Year, building upon the informal exchange of information with IUPAC that has been undertaken to date.

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