

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

Planning for regional meetings in the 2006-2009 intersessional period

Updated planning notes prepared by the secretariat following an initial informal teleconference with SAICM regional focal points and other stakeholders on Wednesday 10 May 2006

Notes from the secretariat

The teleconference was intended to commence the planning process for the first round of regional meetings following the adoption of SAICM by the ICCM in February 2006. It allowed for a preliminary exchange of information and views between the secretariat, regional focal points and other stakeholders, pending consultation with their constituencies.

Participants in the teleconference were the five SAICM regional focal points (Ms Abiola Olanipekun of Nigeria for Africa; Mr Eisaku Toda of Japan for Asia-Pacific; Ms Rodica Morohoi of Romania for Central and Eastern Europe; Mr Gonzalo Entenza of Argentina for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Ms Jane Stratford of the United Kingdom for Western Europe and Others), along with Mr Tarek El Ruby of Egypt (host country for the upcoming African regional meeting), Mr Tim Meredith of WHO on behalf of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, Mr Maged Younes of the United Nations Environment Programme and Mr Jack Weinberg of the Environmental Health Fund.

The agenda for the teleconference was:

- 1) Objectives of the SAICM regional meetings
- 2) Harmonization of agendas for the SAICM regional meetings
- 3) Scheduling of the SAICM regional meetings
- 4) Participation in the SAICM regional meetings
- 5) Funding

To assist discussion, the secretariat prepared the following notes, which were subsequently updated to reflect comments made during the teleconference.

Introduction/mandate

1. The regional meetings called for in the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy and resolution I/1 of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) will be the principal opportunity for all stakeholders to come together to discuss SAICM implementation between the three-yearly sessions of the ICCM. They will also be the single most costly of the intersessional activities which the secretariat has been called upon to organize. The regional

meetings held in the first intersessional period following the adoption of SAICM in February 2006 will be of particular significance as stakeholders begin the process of implementing SAICM. It is therefore important that maximum value is obtained from the holding of the upcoming regional meetings, with appropriate and meaningful agendas and strong participation.

2. The functions of the regional meetings are set out in paragraph 26 of the Overarching Policy Strategy as follows:

“26. It will be essential that implementation of the Strategic Approach continue effectively between meetings of the Conference, building on its open, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral methods. There will be a number of elements for achieving this:

(a) Regional meetings have played a significant role in the development of the Strategic Approach and it will be important to build on this commitment and expertise, taking into account the needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, countries with economies in transition and developed countries. Regional meetings will facilitate input on Strategic Approach activities, preparation for future meetings of the Conference and exchange of regional expertise and exchange of information. As with the Conference itself, such meetings could be held back-to-back with relevant regional or global intergovernmental organization meetings, subject to extrabudgetary funding;

(b) The functions of the regional meetings will include:

- (i) To review progress on implementation of the Strategic Approach within the regions;
- (ii) To provide guidance on implementation to all stakeholders at a regional level;
- (iii) To enable technical and strategic discussions and exchange of information to take place;...”

1) Objectives of the SAICM regional meetings

3. Bearing in mind the functions for the meetings set out in the OPS, the objectives of the first round of regional meetings following the adoption of SAICM could include the following:

- a) *Maintain the political momentum behind SAICM* that has been generated by the September 2005 World Summit, the successful adoption of SAICM at the first session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and endorsements by IGO governing bodies during 2006;
- b) *Facilitate stakeholders’ transition to a focus on implementation* following the completion of negotiations to develop SAICM;
- c) *Catalyse regional and national planning for SAICM implementation*, for example by:
 - (i) providing a forum for discussion of national and regional priorities and needs, and potential regional approaches;
 - (ii) presenting available guidance materials and possible models for national implementation;
 - (iii) introducing the Quick Start Programme;

- (iv) bringing together Governments, IGOs, regional organizations and NGOs to exchange information on needs and opportunities for technical assistance in implementing SAICM;
- (v) reviewing such initial progress in SAICM implementation that has been possible since SAICM's adoption in February 2006;
- (vi) encouragement and facilitation of regional coordination;

d) *Promote the engagement of regional organizations (e.g. the African Union, UNECA, NEPAD etc in the African region) and offices (e.g. regional and country offices of UNEP, WHO, FAO, ILO etc) in the implementation of SAICM.*

2) Harmonization of agendas for the SAICM regional meetings

4. Each region is different and has its own priorities. It may nevertheless be beneficial for the regional meetings to share a common core agenda, supplemented by items of particular interest for each region. Such harmonization would facilitate a structured approach to intersessional work, ensuring that each region takes the opportunity to consider certain key issues and contribute to the development of tools on which the views of all stakeholders should be sought (such as reporting formats for monitoring SAICM implementation progress). The notion of harmonized agendas, allowing for regional variations as necessary, was supported, in principle, by the regional focal points.

5. Common elements for the agendas of the first regional meetings might include some of the following:

- (a) Formalities (opening of the meeting, election of officers, adoption of the agenda, adoption of the report, closure of the meeting).
- (b) Regional coordination mechanisms.
 - (i) Role and responsibilities of the regional focal points, including liaison with national focal points;
 - (ii) Role and responsibilities of regional representatives serving on the QSP Executive Board;
 - (iii) Possible regional committees to support regional focal points;
 - (iv) Synergies with and between other relevant processes.
- (c) National implementation of SAICM.
 - (i) Reports by and exchange of experience among Governments on initial planning for SAICM implementation, including the establishment of national focal points and coordination committees engaging all stakeholders;
 - (ii) Presentation by IOMC and others on available guidance materials and discussion of priorities for the development of additional materials;
 - (iii) Roles and responsibilities of SAICM national focal points.
- (d) Regional implementation of SAICM.
 - (i) Discussion on what aspects of SAICM implementation would benefit from a regional approach;

- (ii) Consideration of the development of a regional action plan;
 - (iii) Consideration of available mechanisms to facilitate implementation activities and assistance at the regional level, including regional technical assistance centres and regional offices of IGOs;
 - (iv) Engagement of regional organizations, including regional economic integration organizations and regional development banks;
 - (v) Exploration of the potential for region-to-region exchanges of experience and assistance.
- (e) SAICM Quick Start Programme (QSP).
- (i) Introduction to the QSP trust fund;
 - (ii) Discussion of possible project proposals, including for regional projects;
 - (iii) The broader QSP and its relationship with ongoing programmes of bilateral and multilateral donors and other contributors.
- (f) Preparation for the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM).
- (i) Mechanisms, guidelines and formats for stakeholders' contributions to the secretariat's reporting to the ICCM on progress in the implementation of SAICM;
 - (ii) Further development of the SAICM Global Plan of Action (identification of possible amendments or additions to be proposed to the second session of the ICCM);
 - (iii) Rules of procedure for the ICCM.
- (g) Update from the SAICM secretariat on the establishment of secretariat services.
- (h) Future regional or sub-regional meetings during the intersessional period (if regions are ready to discuss this).
6. Individual regions may wish to add (or omit) agenda items and to schedule side events and additional activities in association with their regional meetings. Side events and additional activities could include
- (a) a forum for intergovernmental organizations to exhibit materials related to their work programmes and engage with SAICM stakeholders to discuss needs for and availability of assistance;
 - (b) exhibitions and/or presentations by regional organizations, offices and centres;
 - (c) exhibitions and/or presentations on relevant programmes, projects and initiatives such as the Global Harmonized System for Labelling and Classification of Chemicals (GHS), chemicals-related Conventions, the Africa Stockpiles Project, NGO initiatives, the Chemicals Information Exchange Network (CIEN), REACH, Responsible Care, the Green Customs Initiative, etc.;
 - (d) exhibitions and/or presentations by the host country;

- (e) workshops or panels, for example on best practices, or other substantive events addressing practical matters associated with the sound management of chemicals.

3) Scheduling of the SAICM regional meetings

7. In reiterating the call for regional meetings in its resolution I/1, the ICCM did not specify how many such meetings should be held during the first intersessional period, 2006-2009. Subject to demand and the availability of funding, the secretariat proposes to plan for three rounds of meetings:

- (a) the first round would be held in late 2006 and early 2007 (or later in some cases, if regions prefer to take more time to prepare) to launch the SAICM implementation process at the regional level;
- (b) the second round would be held in 2007-2008, potentially with sub-regional options, and serve as an opportunity for stock-taking and preparation for the second session of the ICCM; and
- (c) the third round would take the form of pre-meetings on the eve of the second session of the ICCM in May 2009 (to be confirmed).

8. The immediate planning focus is scheduling of the proposed first round of regional meetings. Notes on their current status, possible timing factors and other issues are set out below.

- (a) Africa. Tentatively scheduled for Cairo, 11-14 September 2006. To be preceded by a meeting of the African Core Group in Cairo on 13-15 June 2006. It is expected that the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) will have taken a further decision endorsing SAICM at its 11th meeting in Brazzaville in late May. The African region has already developed (with the Arab region) a draft action plan for SAICM implementation, which is subject to further elaboration. It has been suggested that West Asian countries might find it beneficial to participate in the African meeting instead of or in addition to the Asia-Pacific meeting. The African and Asia-Pacific regional focal points will seek the views of their constituents on this matter.
- (b) Asia-Pacific. No proposals for dates or venues have been received. Subject to the views of the Governments concerned, it may be appropriate to explore the possibility of scheduling the Asia-Pacific meeting ahead of the ASEAN (plus) Ministerial meeting on health and the environment which will take place in Bangkok in early November, so that the outcomes of the SAICM regional meeting can be taken into account by the (sub-set) of regional Ministers. The potential for coordination between any Asia-Pacific regional action plan on SAICM and the sub-regional paper on chemicals and hazardous wastes that is being developed in preparation for the Ministerial meeting might also be worth considering.
- (c) Central and Eastern Europe. No proposals for dates and venues have been received. As in the Asia-Pacific region, there is a sub-regional planning process under way in the Central and Eastern European region with which it may be desirable to seek coordination. That process involves a report, including a chapter with chemicals policy recommendations, that is currently being developed under OECD leadership for the 14

Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia countries (EECCA) in preparation for the Environment for Europe Ministerial conference due to take place in Kiev in late 2007.

(d) Latin America and the Caribbean. No proposals for dates and venues have been received.

(e) Western European and Others. No proposals for dates and venues have been received. The agenda for this region's meeting may be significantly different than that of the other region due to factors such as the high degree of regional coordination on chemicals management issues that already exists among some members of the region, i.e. the European Union, and the role of many members as donors.

9. Assuming a timing of late 2006 or early 2007 for the SAICM regional meetings, the following other chemicals-related conferences and meeting should be kept in mind when considering dates for the SAICM meetings:

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| (a) | 24-29 September 2006 | IFCS Forum V, Budapest |
| (b) | 9-13 October 2006 | 3 rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, Geneva |
| (c) | 18 October 2006 | 2 nd meeting of the SAICM QSP Trust Fund Implementation Committee, Paris ¹ |
| (d) | 30 October-3 November 2006 | 18 th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, New Delhi |
| (e) | 6-8 November 2006 (<i>tbc</i>) | ASEAN (+) Environment and Health Ministers Regional Forum, Bangkok |
| (f) | 15-17 November 2006 | OECD Joint Meeting, Bonn |
| (g) | 20-25 November 2006 | 131 st session of the FAO Council, Rome |
| (h) | 5-9 February 2007 | 24 th session of UNEP Governing Council, Nairobi |
| (i) | 26-27 April 2007 (<i>tbc</i>) | 2 nd meeting of the SAICM QSP Executive Board, Geneva (<i>tbc</i>) |

10. The possibility of facilitation by UNEP and WHO regional offices is a factor that may be taken into account when considering possible venues for SAICM regional meetings.

11. Regions may wish to consider establishing a coordination mechanism to facilitate preparations for their meetings, including the drafting of key documents. As noted above, to serve that purpose the African region will use the "core group" established during the SAICM development process.

¹ At this meeting the committee will consider the first round of applications to the trust fund for project funding. Applications will be due by 18 August 2006. Details including the application form and guidelines will be posted on the SAICM web site shortly. The committee will meet twice a year.

12. A number of sub-regional entities (for example, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme) have expressed interest in being associated with sub-regional meetings and cooperating with the SAICM secretariat in implementation activities.

4) Participation in the SAICM regional meetings

13. Given the high-level endorsements that SAICM has already received, including from African, Arab, Latin American and Caribbean Environment Ministers and the Council of the European Union, and the desirability of maintaining this profile, it may be appropriate to encourage host Governments for the regional meetings to seek participation of a Minister or other senior representatives, for example in the opening.

14. Recalling the emphasis on multi-sectoral participation that was a feature of the SAICM development process, it would be desirable to encourage similarly broad participation in the upcoming regional meetings. For budget reasons it is unlikely that the secretariat will be able directly to facilitate travel funding for more than one representative from each developing and transition economy country Government and a small number of NGOs. Boosting such funding to cover additional participation would likely depend on supplementary efforts by host Governments and other interested parties. The secretariat will explore possibilities to increase participation by securing resources or partner sponsors outside the core budgets for the meetings.

15. Multi-stakeholder participation has similarly been a high priority throughout the SAICM process. During the development phase, Governmental regional groups were encouraged to make their major consultations open to participation by IGOs and NGOs, which, by and large, was the case. It would be helpful if regional focal points could confirm as early as possible whether their upcoming meetings will be open in this way.

16. It may be appropriate for regional focal points to attend meetings of other regions in order to report on outcomes of their own regional meetings and to observe proceedings on behalf of their regions.

5) Funding

17. The secretariat expects that a small surplus from the SAICM development process will be available and this could be used to fund at least one regional meeting. Discussions are under way with potential donors to secure funding for the other meetings.

6) Further consultations

18. Participants in the teleconference agreed that it would be useful to talk again, after regional focal points and other stakeholders had had the opportunity to consult their constituents. A further teleconference would be scheduled for late June following the meeting of the Africa Core Group. The secretariat would propose date options.