

**Minutes of the African Core Group (ACG) third teleconference on
the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
(SAICM),
13:00 GMT, 12 September 2007**

1. Welcome.

The meeting commenced at 13:15 with the Regional Focal Point (RFP) welcoming members of the ACG to the meeting.

2. Roll call.

A roll call was taken by the secretariat. The following ACG members were present: Ms. Abiola Olanipekun (Nigeria, SAICM RFP Africa), Ms. Seloua Amaziane (Morocco), Ms. Elsabe Steyn (South Africa), Mr. Albert Yoka (Congo, Brazzaville), and Professor Oladele Osibanjo (Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre for Africa). Representatives of the SAICM secretariat were also present.

3. Adoption of Agenda.

The agenda was adopted as proposed with the suggestion to include under agenda item 8 (Other business), an update on the Quick Start Programme (QSP) business plan and activities in the ACG work plan that are yet to commence.

4. Progress report on status of tasks in the ACG work plan.

- *Brief on the GEF/SAICM Funding:* Under this agenda item, the RFP informed the meeting that prior to the meeting of the GEF Council earlier this year, she had sent by e-mail a paper on the proposal to “Establish Sound Chemicals Management as a GEF Focal Area” developed by the ACG to the African representatives whose governments are serving as members on the GEF council. The idea was for African representatives on the GEF Council to put forward the proposal at the meeting in order to initiate discussion on a possible new focal area. The RFP said she has not received any feedback since making the request and does not know whether the proposal was presented to the GEF council. She invited the secretariat to share with the meeting any information it might have on the outcome of the GEF council. The secretariat said that it was not aware of the outcome of any discussions on a possible chemicals focal area but that the Council had adopted a cross-cutting strategy on chemicals issues, which might assist in easing access to existing GEF windows for resources to support chemicals management work.

- *Comments/inputs on economic instruments:* The RFP invited the representative from South Africa to introduce the thought-starter paper on “promoting the use of national economic instruments to cover chemicals management cost”. The South African representative explained that the paper looks at the application of the framework and criteria to the chemicals industry rather than providing a summary of criteria e.g. regulatory framework for taxation and enforcement capacities, etc. The ACG agreed to further consider which direction to develop the thought starter further and what format the document could be presented at a future meeting.

- *Canadian reporting project:* The RFP informed the meeting that work has already begun on the reporting for the SAICM via the establishment of an

International Project Steering committee (IPSC) which held its first teleconference 12 July 2007. The teleconference was to review the initial draft indicator questionnaires developed by the project consultant for measuring progress on SAICM implementation. The Africa region is represented on the steering committee by Mr. Henry Williams (Liberia) and the RFP. The secretariat advised that the next steering committee teleconference would take place on 27 September and encouraged ACG members to review the revised draft documents available on the SAICM web site <http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/> in advance.

5. Options for regional meeting.

In discussing this item the RFP referred participants to the thought starter for “Possible African SAICM meetings in 2007” with options for consideration by the group. She invited members to focus on the version of the document which included comments submitted by ICCA calling for an ACG meeting to be held back-to-back with the next session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) scheduled for South Africa, in May 2008, to prepare for a full Africa regional meeting in July in Tanzania. The RFP also indicated that Tanzania has expressed the desire to host the ACG meeting in Arusha if agreed. Further deliberations on the item were mainly on the ICCA’s proposal with participants discussing the merit and implication of such an arrangement. One of the concerns raised was how to ensure that the right ACG members will be at the AMCEN meeting. The secretariat agreed that not all ACG members will be at AMCEN, however, arrangements for travel funding would aim to support those ACG members who are not in their country delegation to the AMCEN meeting. The secretariat would also provide a cost comparison for an ACG meeting held back-to-back with AMCEN and for a standalone possibly in Arusha, Tanzania. The RFP in her concluding remarks on this item noted that notwithstanding the available options, the current challenge will be to secure necessary funding to convene the ACG prior to the full regional meeting.

The Secretariat also brought to the attention of the ACG the initiation of work on a Ministerial-level health and environment initiative which would culminate in a “Pan-Africa” Ministerial-level meeting in March 2008. Planning to hold this meeting in Gabon was underway.

6. Proposed regional project:

- *Subregional and regional projects*: The RFP informed the meeting of a message received during the week from the Government of Slovenia (assumes presidency of the European Union from January 2008), for an EU-African cooperation to accelerate the process of SAICM implementation in the African region. She then pointed out that the cooperation will be focused on a regional approach to support strong based projects in the region in line with the request of QSP for enabling activities.

The ACG welcomed the offer from Slovenia and the RFP invited the ACG to begin developing ideas of projects with regional scope that can be presented to the EU. She intends to respond to Slovenian Government thanking them for their offer of support.

- *SETAC Project*. The project was well received by the group, while the meeting’s attention was also drawn to comments on the project by some of the ACG members. The representative of the Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre raised a concern that the Centre should take the lead for collaborating and

coordinating with the other sub-regional centres in view of the fact that the scope of the project was Africa as a whole. The representative of the BCRCC then promised to send the specific comments in this regard to members by email after the teleconference. The RFP will then communicate the Group's endorsement and comments to SETAC for incorporation into the proposal as necessary.

7. Participation of ACG in relevant sub regional and regional meeting.

- The RFP hoped there would be opportunities for ACG members to participate in relevant sub regional or regional meetings.

8. Other Business.

- *Activities in the ACG work plan yet to commence:* The RFP noted that one activity in the ACG work plan which is yet to commence is activity 3, i.e. to review, from time to time, the SAICM Global Plan of Action for the purpose of adapting it to national and regional priorities. It is hope that worked on this activity will commence soon.

- *Status of the Quick Start Programme business plan.* The secretariat reported that the QSP Executive Board approved the QSP business plan in April 2007. The QSP funding target range this year is from \$6,300,000 to \$6,500,000. Currently \$2,000,000 is available for disbursement.

9. Next meeting.

The date and time of the next ACG meeting will be communicated by the RFP. The secretariat drew the attention of the ACG to the availability of consultation notes on preparations for ICCM2 and the preceding meeting of the Open-ended Legal and Technical Working Group and suggested that the ACG consider these at its next meeting.