

18 October, 2007

Subject: Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), Panama City, Panama, 14-16 February 2008

Dear Madam/Sir,

Following the adoption of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) in February 2006, the regional meetings called for by the International Conference on Chemicals Management in its resolution I/1 will be a key element in the collective efforts to commence implementation of SAICM.

The SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy notes in paragraph 26 that “it will be essential that implementation of SAICM continue effectively between meetings of the Conference, building on its open, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral methods”. Among the elements identified for achieving this are regional meetings. The Strategy observes that “regional meetings have played a significant role in the development of SAICM, 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 SAICM activities, preparation for future meetings of the Conference and exchange of regional expertise and exchange of information.” The Strategy envisages that “the functions of the regional meetings will include to review progress on implementation of SAICM within the regions, to provide guidance on implementation to all stakeholders at a regional level and to enable technical and strategic discussions and exchange of information to take place”.

Accordingly, I am pleased to advise that the SAICM secretariat in collaboration with the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNEP ROLAC) is organizing a **Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting on SAICM**, which will be held in **Panama City, Panama, from 14 to 16 February 2008**. Financial Support for the meeting and associated workshops (see below) has been provided by the Governments of Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

I would therefore, like to invite your Government to participate in the Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting on SAICM. If possible, we would welcome the participation of representatives of your Government from more than one Ministry in keeping with the multi-sectoral nature of SAICM. **However, we can only cover travel expenses for one participant per Government. Please note that Governments that are in a position to fund themselves are strongly encouraged to do so in order to conserve scarce resources for the meeting.**

To ensure optimal representation, we encourage you to coordinate with interested Ministries and other stakeholders before you select your representative(s) for the meeting. Please note that your nominated participant(s) must be communicated to us by the SAICM National Focal Point where such focal points have been designated or through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs if your government has not yet nominated a SAICM National Focal Point. (Governments which have not already done so are strongly encouraged to nominate a SAICM National Focal Point, see <http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/focalpoints.htm>.) It is also recommended that prior to the regional meeting, there be a meeting with national stakeholders from the interested sectors to develop a common strategy on the implementation of SAICM.

Please note that, in addition, two UNEP Chemicals workshops will be held before the SAICM regional meeting. A workshop on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) sponsored by the Government of the United States, will be held on the 11 February and morning of 12 February 2008. Further details are available at http://www.chem.unep.ch/pops/pcb_activities/. A workshop on chemicals management

infrastructure sponsored by the Government of Sweden will be held on the afternoon of 12 February 2008 and on 13 February 2008. Further details are available at <http://www.chem.unep.ch/unepsaicm/riga06/default.html>. Participants in the SAICM meeting are welcome to attend one or both of the UNEP Chemicals workshops. Extra daily subsistence allowance to cover the additional days will be provided by UNEP Chemicals for those participants whose travel is being sponsored for the SAICM regional meeting above. Support for other participants is also available from the workshop organizers.

Invitation letters and organizational details for the PCB workshop will be issued separately by UNEP Chemicals and it will be necessary for intending participants to register for the workshop. For the chemical management infrastructure workshop there will be no separate invitation and registration process and it will suffice to indicate interest in the workshop when registering for the SAICM regional meeting.

In order to inform discussion at the SAICM Latin American and the Caribbean regional meeting, Governments are invited to submit information on their initial national activities on the implementation of SAICM. The secretariat has developed the attached questionnaire to assist with providing this information. The questionnaire should be completed and returned to the SAICM secretariat by the date indicated.

Please advise us of your representative(s) by completing and returning the attached meeting pre-registration form **before 19 November 2007** at the latest by fax to the **SAICM Secretariat, attention Muhammed Omotola (+41 (22) 797 34 60)**. Funded participants should note that because of the IMIS administrative system used by UN Office in Geneva, we need your nominations by the deadline to be able to arrange your travel and DSA in time for the meeting. Please note that after 19 November 2007, we will be unable to change the name of the registered participant or to do any last minute changes in travel dates.

Instructions regarding travel arrangements for funded participants will be issued upon registration. Air travel for funded participants will use the least costly fare and most direct route. Details of the venue for the meeting, and other practical information will be sent separately to registered participants. The working languages of the meeting will be English and Spanish.

Further information on the regional meeting and associated workshops and the SAICM process may be found at the web site www.chem.unep.ch/saicm.

I look forward to your Government's participation in the Latin America and the Caribbean regional meeting on SAICM.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]
Per Bakken
Head
Chemicals Branch, DTIE
United Nations Environment Programme

SAICM National Focal Point
