
Bureau of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

First meeting

New York, United States of America

4 May 2010

Report of the first intersessional face-to-face meeting of the Bureau of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

Background

1. At its second session held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, the International Conference on Chemicals Management adopted, by resolution II/1 rules of procedure that included provisions covering the officers and operations of the Bureau of the Conference. The Bureau comprises a President and four Vice-Presidents elected by and from among the representatives of the governmental participants in sessions of the Conference. It was agreed that the representatives elected at the second session of the Conference would serve until the end of the third session in 2012. The role of the Bureau is to advise the President and the secretariat on the conduct of the business of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies.

2. In light of the multi-stakeholder character of the Strategic Approach, the Conference agreed that four representatives of non-governmental participants (from health, industry, trade union, and public interest groups) and one representative of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals would participate in meetings of the Bureau for the purpose of advising and responding to the Bureau. In accordance with a rule providing for the President to invite other participants, the Bureau subsequently decided, during a teleconference on 22 June 2010, to include Strategic Approach regional focal points in its meetings.

I. Opening of the meeting

3. The first intersessional face-to-face meeting of the Bureau was held at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, United States of America, on 4 May 2010, commencing at 10.25 a.m. The meeting was scheduled to coincide with the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Bureau members and other participants were welcomed by the President of the Conference, Mr. Ivan Eržen (Slovenia), and by Mr. Matthew Gubb, Coordinator of the secretariat.

II. Organizational matters

4. The Bureau adopted the agenda set out below on the basis of the provisional agenda which had been circulated as document SAICM/ICCM/Bureau.1/1/Rev.1:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;

- (b) Organization of work.
3. Updates by the secretariat:
 - (a) Health issues, including the health sector strategy;
 - (b) Emerging policy issues:
 - (i) Past issues;
 - (ii) Future issues, i.e. nominations;
 - (c) Reporting guidelines;
 - (d) Information clearing house;
 - (e) Financing the implementation of the Strategic Approach;
 - (f) Quick Start Programme;
 - (g) Regional and other Strategic Approach meetings.
4. Preparations for the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
5. Preparations for the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group:
 - (a) Date and venue;
 - (b) Agenda.
6. Preparations for the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.
7. Fundraising.
8. Other matters.
9. Closure of the meeting.

6. The meeting was attended by the following Bureau members: Mr. Ivan Eržen (Slovenia) as President, and Mr. Teruyoshi Hayamizu (Japan), Mr. Cheikh Ndiaye Sylla (Senegal), Ms. Ana Garcia Gonzalez (Spain). One Bureau member, Mr. Carlos Portales (Chile) was unable to attend.

7. The following representatives of non-governmental organizations participated in the meeting: Mr. Josph diGangi (Environmental Health Fund - EHF), Ms. Birgit Engelhardt (International Council of Chemical Associations - ICCA), Ms. Lilian Corra (International Society of Doctors for the Environment - ISDE), Ms. Anabella Roseburg (International Trade Union Confederation - ITUC). The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) was represented by its chair, Mr. Craig Boljkovac (United Nations Institute for Training and Research - UNITAR).

8. The following regional focal points participated in the meeting: Ms. Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica), Mr. Rafal Brykowski representing Mr. Jerzy Majka (Poland), Ms. Susan Gardner (United States of America), Mr. David Kapindula (Zambia). One regional focal point, Mr. Manoranjan Hota (India) was unable to participate.

III. Updates by the secretariat

9. The secretariat introduced document SAICM/ICCM/Bureau.1/2, providing an update on each of the issues to be covered under the agenda item, discussion of which is summarized below.

A. Health issues, including the health sector strategy

10. In opening the discussion, the President spoke of the willingness of health sector stakeholders to contribute to implementation of the Strategic Approach and the need for a better understanding of their role in that regard. The consultation held in Ljubljana on 4 and 5 February 2010 to support development of the health sector strategy called for in resolution II/8 of the Conference had been useful in improving that understanding.

11. The ISDE representative commented that while further incentives for health sector stakeholders to engage and be visible in implementation of the Strategic Approach, a lot was already been done in the health sector on chemicals management issues. Linkages needed to be strengthened, for example within the World Health Organization and other United Nations agencies, whose country offices tended not to be actively engaging on chemicals issues.

12. The EHF representative saw the work by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO on fostering synergies between environmental and health policies and programmes as helpful in strengthening health sector engagement in chemicals management issues. The profile of the initiative needed to be raised in order to attract funding commitments.

13. The regional focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that during her region's recent meeting on the Strategic Approach, held in Kingston on 8 and 9 March 2010, participants had addressed the WHO regional office/Pan-American Health Organization's perceived disconnect with international chemicals management work. There was a need, generally, to market the Strategic Approach more visibly at the regional level and in that regard it would be helpful to develop a communications toolkit. The ISDE representative added that there was also a need to engage regional financial institutions.

14. In response to comments from the EHF representative on the desirability of a more active WHO role in implementation of the Strategic Approach, the IOMC representative noted that all IOMC participating organizations, including WHO, had formally recognized SAICM and were structuring their chemicals work around it. He noted that the decentralized nature of WHO posed particular challenges and that regional offices were key. The EHF and ISDE representatives commented that, similarly, there was a need to encourage greater engagement by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The current effort to develop a health sector strategy was an opportunity to draw greater attention to occupational health and safety issues. The ITUC representative recommended involving ILO at the regional level and noted that there has been interest from health sector workers in being involved in development of the health sector strategy. The IOMC representative responded that ILO was active on issues such as the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling while FAO was leading work on pesticides. At a recent meeting of their coordinating committee, IOMC participating organizations had recognized the need to package and communicate their work more effectively.

B. Emerging policy issues

(a) Past issues

15. The secretariat outlined the substantial progress that had been achieved in relation to three of the four emerging policy issues on which the International Conference on Chemicals Management, by resolution II/4 adopted at its second session, had proposed follow-up actions. These included a series of regional awareness raising workshops on nanotechnology and nanomaterials organized by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNITAR under the framework of the IOMC, the development of a project on chemicals in products by UNEP in consultation with stakeholders, and the establishment of a global alliance on lead and paint with the support of UNEP and WHO. Discussion at the Bureau meeting focused on nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials and on the fourth emerging policy issue, hazardous substances within the lifecycle of electrical and electronic products, on which progress had been less evident.

16. The IOMC representative reported on initial awareness-raising workshops that had been organized for five regions during the past six months. These would be supplemented by three pilot projects funded by the Government of Switzerland and a second round of workshops in 2011. The ISDE representative said that stakeholders in the Latin American and Caribbean region wanted more information on the state of the science and of development and implementation of nanotechnology in their region. The IOMC representative explained that the first round of workshops had been designed to raise general awareness of issues associated with nanotechnology. The regional focal point for the Western European and Others Group expressed the interest of stakeholders in her region in having an opportunity to comment on the report on nanotechnology that the secretariat would be preparing for the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Conference in 2011.

17. The regional focal points for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean expressed concern that the workshop on hazardous substances within the lifecycle of electrical and electronic products proposed for May 2010 would not be taking place at that time. The EHF representative noted that the workshop had been tentatively rescheduled for February 2011 in Nairobi, back-to-back with the 26th session of the UNEP Governing Council, and planning for it would be discussed at a meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention that would take place in Geneva from 10 to 14 May 2010. He noted that the delay in organizing the workshop was an irritant to some stakeholders: there was a perception that while funds were available for initiatives that were a priority for donor countries, there was no support for the workshop on electrical and electronic products despite its importance for developing countries. The representative of ISDE mentioned a number of potential partners who might be approached for assistance, including the International Solid Waste Association,

the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and regional development banks. The IOMC representative commented that organizations which agreed to engage in activities on emerging issues at the invitation of the International Conference on Chemicals Management needed to take responsibility for any necessary fundraising. This was not the task of the Bureau of the Conference.

18. The Bureau agreed with a proposal made by the regional focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean that a letter should be sent by the President on behalf of the Bureau to the organizations which had been invited written by the Conference to organize the workshop. The letter would emphasize the importance attached by the Strategic Approach stakeholders to the workshop and express concern at the delay in organizing it.

(b) Future issues

19. The secretariat reminded the Bureau of the procedures for the nomination of new emerging issues which had been agreed by the Conference by resolution II/4 at its second session. In preparation for the third session of the Conference and the preceding meeting of its Open-ended Working Group, nominations of new issues were due by 30 November 2010. The representatives of ISDE and ITUC indicated that some of their constituents would be interested in revisiting a number of issues that had been raised in the past but on which agreement had not been possible. These included issues on the so called "annex C list", such as asbestos, which had been considered for possible inclusion in the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach but set aside due to lack of consensus when the Plan was discussed at the first session of the Conference held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 4 to 6 February 2006. The regional focal point for the Western European and Others Group expressed reservations with regard to reopening controversial issues while the ICCA representative cautioned against the addition of new issues when there were already a very large number of issues identified for action in the Strategic Approach. The ITUC representative did not see the fact that an issue was potentially controversial as a barrier to taking it up under the Strategic Approach, given the latter's voluntary nature. The ISDE representative concurred, noting that in some instances the International Conference on Chemicals Management was the only available body where emerging issues could be tabled for discussion. She also noted the need for funding to support activities addressing emerging issues. The President was of the view that the Conference could not ignore issues of legitimate concern to stakeholders.

C. Reporting guidelines

20. The Bureau noted the secretariat's update on its preparations for the baseline report on implementation covering the period from 2006 to 2008 and the first progress report for which information would be sought from stakeholders in late 2010. These reports would be available for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group of the Conference in August 2011.

D. Information clearing house

21. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on the recent launch of the information clearing house for the Strategic Approach. This was an ongoing project and its usefulness would depend on feedback and contributions from users. In particular, he encouraged submission of materials and website links for inclusion in the individual pages that had been created for each Government and organization. The President encouraged all Strategic Approach stakeholders to use the clearing house and make it their first port of call for information sources.

E. Financing the implementation of the Strategic Approach

22. The secretariat provided an update concerning recent developments such as the UNEP consultations on financing for international chemicals management work and the negotiations for the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The continuation of the UNEP consultative process on financing had been endorsed by the Governing Council at its 11th special session held in Bali, Indonesia, from 24 to 26 February 2010, and it was expected that its outcomes would be submitted to the Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and other appropriate forums for consideration. The GEF replenishment, which would be finalized for the GEF Assembly meeting taking place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 24 to 28 May 2010, was expected to include new provisions for modest funding of general chemicals management and mercury projects.

23. The regional focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean and the ISDE representative observed that GEF funding processes were widely regarded as being too slow and too difficult. The regional focal point saw the Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach as an important supplementary source of finance. She expressed the hope that Quick Start Programme project funds

could be used as co-financing for GEF projects, which the secretariat confirmed was possible. The ISDE representative proposed that some GEF funds be allocated to the Quick Start Programme to allow faster disbursement. The IOMC representative noted that agreement on the overall level of funding for the GEF replenishment would determine the sums to be available under the proposed new provisions for general chemicals management and mercury work.

24. The EHF representative saw a need to give greater attention to the potential of economic instruments to support chemicals management work and for contributions by industry.

F. Quick Start Programme

25. The secretariat provided an update on the Quick Start Programme. Approximately 100 projects in 89 countries, valued at over \$20 million, had been approved for support from the Programme's Trust Fund. The representative of ISDE was of the view that the Programme was functioning well and its funding was relatively easy to access. The regional focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean spoke of the need to move beyond the initial enabling activities which the Programme was established to support. She saw a need to begin discussions soon on a follow-on mechanism to succeed the Programme after 2013. The EHF representative observed that a UNEP project addressing the costs of inaction on chemical safety could provide useful arguments for such a follow-on mechanism. The IOMC representative had the impression that donors were unlikely to support a follow-on mechanism. The regional focal point for the Western European and Others Group noted that while the Quick Start Programme had been successful in accomplishing its objectives its purpose of supporting initial enabling activities should be kept in mind. There were other models and funding sources that might be relied on for follow-on work.

G. Regional and other Strategic Approach meetings

26. The secretariat and regional focal points briefed the bureau on regional meetings that had taken place since the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. Thanks were extended to the Governments of China, Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Spain and Switzerland for hosting and funding the meetings. The bureau member for the Western European and Others Group indicated that there would be a meeting of the European Union and JUSSCANNZ¹ countries in November 2010.

IV. Preparations for the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

27. The President encouraged Bureau members to use all opportunities during the current 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to highlight the contribution of the Strategic Approach to international efforts to achieve the sound management of chemicals. The representative of the regional focal point for Central and Eastern Europe informed the Bureau of a statement that he would make to the Commission on priority issues for his region including obsolete pesticides and implementation of the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The Bureau member for Asia and the Pacific underlined the need to avoid duplication by the Commission of work undertaken in the context of the Strategic Approach. The IOMC and ICCA representatives welcomed the 18th session of the Commission as an opportunity, respectively, to educate the Commission as to the significance of the Strategic Approach and to emphasize the multistakeholder character of SAICM.

V. Preparations for the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group

28. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on a proposal to hold the first meeting of the Conference's Open-ended Working Group in Belgrade in late August 2011, which was endorsed by the Bureau. This would be the first global Strategic Approach meeting to be held in the Central and Eastern European region. The draft provisional agenda for the meeting, as contained in document SAICM/ICCM/Bureau.1/4, was also supported and is reproduced in the annex to the present report. The Bureau member for Asia and the Pacific and regional focal point for the Western European and Others Group highlighted the potential to discuss synergies among the chemicals-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements under the proposed agenda item on coherence among international instruments. The EHF representative expressed the hope that due attention would be given to health issues, given the resolution of the second session of the Conference calling for a strategy to strengthen the engagement of the health sector in implementing the Strategic Approach. The Bureau also agreed on the desirability of holding regional meetings in advance of the Working Group meeting, in early 2011 and on the eve of the meeting, should funding be available.

¹ Japan, United States, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway, New Zealand.

VI. Preparations for the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

29. The secretariat advised that it was maintaining arrangements for the third session of the Conference to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 28 May to 1 June 2012. Two uncertainties remained: firstly, whether there would be linkages with the International Labour Conference to be held in Geneva the following week and, secondly, whether the “Rio + 20” review of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development would be scheduled at the same time of the year, necessitating a change of dates for the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

VI. Fundraising

30. The secretariat reported that while 23 diverse donors had made contributions to the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund, the donor base for the secretariat was much narrower. In both cases, there was a need to maintain the momentum of donor contributions.

VII. Other matters

31. It was proposed to convene a teleconference of the Bureau in June 2010 to discuss the outcomes of the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and finalization of the dates for the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.²

VIII. Closure of the meeting

32. The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.

² At the time of issuing the present report, the teleconference had not been scheduled due to the continuing absence of fixed dates for “Rio + 20”.

Annex

Provisional agenda for the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, August 2010

1. Opening of the meeting.
 2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Election of officers;
 - (b) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (c) Organization of work.
 3. Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management:
 - (a) Evaluation of and guidance on implementation and review and update of the Strategic Approach;
 - (b) Implementation of and coherence among international instruments and programmes;
 - (c) Financial and technical resources for implementation;
 - (d) Emerging policy issues;
 - (e) Information exchange and scientific and technical cooperation.
 4. Health sector strategy.
 5. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations.
 6. Activities and budget of the secretariat.
 7. Venue and date of the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Adoption of the report.
 10. Closure of the session.
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