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Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

Report by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety on contributions to the implementation of the Strategic Approach

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, in the annex to the present note, a report by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety on contributions by the Forum to the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. The submission is being circulated as received for the information of participants and has not been formally edited.

* SAICM/ICCM.2/1.

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Annex



Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
Global Partnerships for Chemical Safety

Contributing to the 2020 Goal

Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety

**Contributions to the Implementation
of the
Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management**

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At the first session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-1, February 2006) governments and other stakeholders adopted a resolution inviting the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) "to continue its important role in providing an open, transparent and inclusive forum for discussing issues of common interest and also new and emerging issues, and to continue to contribute through this to the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the work of other chemicals-related international organizations and institutions".

I/3. Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety¹

The Conference,

Recognizing the unique, multifaceted and significant role which the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety has played in the area of sound chemicals management at the international, regional and national levels,

1. *Invites* the Forum to continue its important role in providing an open, transparent and inclusive forum for discussing issues of common interest and also new and emerging issues, and to continue to contribute through this to the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the work of other chemicals-related international organizations and institutions;

2. *Requests* the Strategic Approach secretariat to establish and maintain a working relationship with the Forum in order to draw upon its expertise.

IFCS with its broad mandate regarding chemicals management and its participatory, multi-sectoral approach, has continued to engage and respond to all sectors of society with an interest in chemical safety, including environment, health, agriculture, labour, industry and development. The work of IFCS complements and supports the ICCM in its role as a high level political forum overseeing the implementation of SAICM. IFCS serves as a "think tank" for a range of emerging and priority issues, particularly those identified by developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Through its contributions, IFCS provides especially a platform for developing countries and non governmental organizations to fully express their concerns and interests, notably "to be heard". This, in turn, has fostered a better understanding of the issues, including a number of a sensitive nature, and built bridges among stakeholders resulting in the preparation of possible pragmatic approaches to specific areas of chemicals management. The outcome of its work contributes to the necessary information base for ICCM to consider and act in a timely manner on emerging and priority topics.

Following the invitation of the ICCM in February 2006 and guidance provided by IFCS participants, two sessions of the Forum have been organized. The sessions provided countries and other stakeholders the opportunity to consider their priority topics and emphasize their special needs and concerns with respect to improving chemicals management and the implementation of the Strategic Approach. Representatives of all IFCS participant groups - countries, international organizations, industry, labour unions, public interest groups, science associations – were involved in preparing the agenda and programmes.

The Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum V) was hosted by the Government of Hungary in Budapest from 25-29 September 2006. The theme of Forum V was **Chemical Safety for Sustainable Development**. At Forum V governments and other stakeholders considered and made recommendations on:

- the sound management of chemicals and poverty reduction;

The Forum considered the role of the sound management of chemicals as a fundamental component of poverty reduction strategies, important challenges to integration of sound management of chemicals in poverty reduction efforts, and actions that could be taken to integrate sound management of chemicals in poverty reduction efforts.

- applying precaution in the context of chemical safety;

¹ Report of the International Conference on Chemicals Management on the work of its first session, Annex IV Resolutions I/3. SAICM/ICCM.1/7, 8 March 2006 <http://www.saicm.org/index.php?menuid=8&pageid=7>

The plenary session was organized to advance open dialogue and understanding about how precaution is applied in practice with regards to chemical safety to protect health and environment and support implementation of goals identified in IFCS declarations and recommendations and the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS). Through a series of practical case examples and avoiding ideological debate, tools and approaches for applying precaution in chemical safety decision-making as well as commonalities and differences in these approaches were explored. Background information was collected and presented on how governments and other organizations domestically apply precaution in chemicals management, lessons learnt and views on the challenges and most important needs for more effectively applying precaution (or making decisions in the face of uncertainty) and overcoming barriers in chemicals management decision-making.

- heavy metals - need for further global action?;

During the preparation of IFCS Forum V, several developing countries proposed to discuss the challenges in addressing the management of heavy metals at IFCS Forum V. Switzerland, in response to the request of developing countries, sponsored a side event in the form of a conference on heavy metals prior to Forum V, the Budapest Conference on Heavy Metals. The Conference was organized to respond to work and actions identified by WSSD and in SAICM and support and contribute to ongoing efforts by UNEP and other intergovernmental organizations. The compilation of views from the Conference was presented to Forum V. The information on common challenges posed by heavy metals, the obstacles countries – especially developing countries and countries with economies in transitions – face, their needs and the views concerning a global need for further action, supported the Forum to identify and adopt recommendations on several options available for complementing existing, but still not yet sufficient, frameworks and activities.

- toys and chemical safety

As a follow up to the Forum IV session on children and chemical safety, the Forum considered potential risks from toys linked to chemical exposures, the question of prevalence of chemical related harms, the current approaches taken to assess potential chemical risk, and actions to protect children from chemical harms from toys. The information, discussion and outcome on this topic provided timely support and guidance for cooperative actions responding to incidents through out the world concerning toys containing hazardous chemicals.

In addition, Forum V identified a list of potential topics for future forum sessions.

The Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum VI) was held 15-19 September 2008 in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by the Government of Senegal. The theme of Forum VI, ***Global Partnerships for Chemical Safety Contributing to the 2020 Goal***, was chosen to bring renewed focus to the integral role partnerships have in achieving the World Summit on Sustainable Development goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. At Forum VI governments and other stakeholders considered and provided summary reports and/or made recommendations on:

- nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials: opportunities and challenges;

Nanotechnology is a rapidly emerging technological approach that is expected to result in major changes across many industry sectors. This may bring many advances to society and benefits for the environment, but also poses new challenges, especially in health and safety. To date discussions on the potential benefits of nanotechnology have, for the most part, taken place separately from those on the potential risks to human health and the environment of nanomaterials. As a result of nanotechnology's rapidly burgeoning growth, it is important that all stakeholders concerned (governments, international, regional and national organizations, industry groups, public interest associations, labour organizations, scientific associations and civil society) engage in discussions to identify and address issues that may impact health and safety in positive or negative ways. Governments around the world are looking at the new opportunities offered by nanotechnology and are keen to understand, avoid, reduce and manage risks associated with this new technology and nanomaterials. Forum VI provided the mechanism for stakeholders, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to exchange information on the potential new opportunities, the new challenges and the new hazards and risks posed by nanotechnology and manufactured nanoparticles. The meeting provided a forum to share information on known and emerging issues, on the work of the OECD, ISO and other international bodies on nanotechnology and manufactured nanoparticles and to foster an understanding of concerns and issues (applications and implications). The Forum also provided an opportunity to discuss the

potential contributions of nanotechnology to sustainable development and to discuss how to achieve an equitable distribution of benefits and risks and role of responsible stewardship in addressing nanotechnology.

- substitution and alternatives;

To replace harmful substances and processes with less harmful ones or with non-chemical alternatives, can be an effective strategy to reduce risks to human health and the environment. Substitution is thus a strategy of risk reduction through implementing solutions to prevent human and environmental exposure to certain chemical hazards while still achieving the intended goal. Moreover in most cases of chemicals management there are several paths for achieving a specific goal or service which offer the possibility to choose among various alternatives according to specific criteria. Substitution is a common and inherent process of technological development, industrial business and innovation. The ability to substitute one chemical product should be approached on a life-cycle basis with a consideration of the risks, costs and benefits of substitution. It is important to assure that recommendations on substitution include a focus on performance of alternatives, and possible use of incentives as options to encourage a transition, particularly to encourage an understanding of what societal tradeoffs are to be expected. Beside the economic drivers, such as increase in resource-efficiency, improvement of the environmental and toxicological profile of industrial activities should be a reason to substitute a chemical substance or its application with more favorable substances/technologies. Alternative solutions are not be seen as being restricted to chemical-based options. Forum VI provided the opportunity to raise awareness and discuss substitution (both chemical and non-chemical alternatives) as a proven and effective instrument to lower risks, in a multi-perspective, multi-stakeholder way; to identify and analyse potential triggers and drivers of substitution processes including analytical tools supporting prioritization and subsequent decision making; to determine ways and approaches to implement substitution, and to discuss process mechanisms for substitution, particularly for resource poor countries.

- elimination of the use of lead in paints;

In conjunction with its consideration of the topic of substitution and alternatives, Forum VI considered the topic of lead in paint. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) called for action to phase out lead in paints and in other sources of human exposure (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the WSSD paragraph 57). International trade in paints containing lead contributes to the widespread availability of paints containing lead in many countries. Most highly industrial countries have already mandated the phase out of lead from paints and its substitution with less hazardous pigments. Forum VI decided that a global partnership to promote the implementation of the measures contained in paragraph 57 is essential, especially for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Forum VI requested the Forum Standing Committee to establish an ad hoc Working Group following the lead sponsor approach to prepare draft Terms of Reference for a global partnership to be submitted to the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-2) for it to consider taking a decision to support concerted action to implement to promote the implementation of the measures contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the WSSD paragraph 57 .

- international transport of lead and cadmium via trade: an international concern?;

The toxicity and eco-toxicity of lead and cadmium and their routes of exposure have been extensively studied and described by national governments and international bodies. Lead and cadmium can be toxic at very low exposure levels and have both acute and chronic effects on human health and the environment. Health and environmental harms caused by exposure to lead and cadmium throughout their lifecycles occur every day around the world. Global trade in products and materials is expanding dramatically. The trade flows of lead and cadmium and products and wastes containing them are complex due to rapid globalization. Global use of ores, compounds, products, and wastes continues apace for cadmium, and is increasing for lead. Electronic wastes, the fastest growing component of municipal waste worldwide, are exported to countries that are unable to manage them in an environmentally sound manner. The Forum VI session on lead and cadmium examined whether the dispersal of lead and cadmium through international trade of these metals as commodities and in products and wastes may warrant coordinated international action to protect human health and the environment. The Forum considered whether such trade may lead to problems that cannot be addressed by countries acting alone, whether those problems may rise to the level of an international concern, and thus whether they call for a coordinated international approach to addressing them. The Forum examined this question from the point of view of both producing and consuming countries, and especially developing countries and countries in transition.

The Forum VI session on lead and cadmium responded to the requests of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), UNEP Governing Council and Forum V to identify effective ways to reduce exposure and to promote reduction of risks. The session was organized to complement other ongoing United Nations work on lead and cadmium which identified gaps in the information and knowledge on trade flows. It provided input to discussions on the subject at the Twenty-Fifth Session of the UNEP Governing Council in February 2009 and that may take place in at ICCM-2.

- ecologically based integrated pest management and integrated vector management: key elements of pesticide risk reduction strategies.

There is strong and broad evidence that Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Vector Management (IVM) offer valid alternatives for conventional pest and vector control that tend to rely on use of pesticides. As such, these approaches can make substantial contributions to reduction in the use of pesticides and associated risks. IFCS participants identified a need for global support to strengthen IPM and IVM through policy reform, capacity building, and education to achieve pesticide risk reduction. The session at Forum VI aimed to support and encourage governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to strengthen the role of IPM and IVM in pesticide risk reduction strategies, while maintaining the potential for agricultural pest and vector-borne disease control. The session identified opportunities and challenges for broader application of IPM and IVM; considered policy and institutional impediments and how these could be addressed; and considered ways and means to strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration and regional and international cooperation.

The preparatory process itself together with the sessions of the Forum contribute to the implementation of SAICM through a complementary supportive process providing a bridging mechanism for considering scientific evidence, technology, benefit assessment, and socio-economic issues; for fostering an understanding of the issues; and for providing analytical support and guidance for the development by ICCM of policies and programme strategies. The contribution of all relevant groups of stakeholders is important to formulate practical solutions, actions and strategies to address issues and concerns arising from the use of hazardous chemicals. The collaborative, participatory process of considering, developing, and finalizing the Forum “thought starters”, other meeting documents and session reports uniquely contributes to implementation of the Strategic Approach by supporting the achievement of several SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy objectives, especially those related to knowledge and information and capacity building, and through those, governance and risk reduction. Detailed information relating the topics and areas addressed by Forum V and Forum VI to the SAICM objectives and work areas set out in the Global Plan of Action is provided in the meeting document compiling responses to the SAICM implementation questionnaire (SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/20) and on the IFCS web site at: <http://www.who.int/ifcs/saicm/en/index.html>. Forum V and Forum VI meeting documents, contributed papers and presentations are available on the IFCS web site at <http://www.who.int/ifcs/forums/five/en/index.html> and <http://www.who.int/ifcs/forums/six/en/index.html> respectively.

More particularly, the output of sessions of the Forum - the Forum reports, conclusions, recommendations, agreed actions – are timely and relevant information developed within an international, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral framework and submitted to ICCM in its exercise of function 24 j) “to focus attention and call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action”. The outcomes of Forum V and Forum VI have been submitted to the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management for its general consideration and further action and as emerging issues.² The preparatory work for and outcomes of Forum V and Forum VI have resulted in IFCS being a proponent of three (3) of the four (4) selected emerging policy issues to be considered in detail by ICCM2 (nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials, lead in paint, chemicals in products relevant to toys and chemical safety)). In addition its materials on electronic waste considered under the Forum VI agenda item on international transport of lead and cadmium via trade: an international concern? contribute information to support the fourth topic addressing electronic waste. The IFCS work and recommendations on substitution and alternatives and its work on applying precaution in the context of chemical safety are directly relevant to and support of one or more of the emerging issue topics to be considered by ICCM2 in detail.

The programme of Forum sessions includes the opportunity for stakeholders to organize side events on special topics. Side events provide an important mechanism to exchange information, network, explore or launch new initiatives and build partnerships. They provide a time period to engage all relevant stakeholders in a dialogue with an aim to understand everyone’s issues and concerns on a topic. Detailed information on the side events held at Forum V and Forum VI is available on the IFCS website.

² SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/4, SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/5, SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/29, SAICM/ICCM.2/10, SAICM/ICCM.2/INF/33

Since ICCM1, IFCS has continued to serve a unique integrating role giving all stakeholders, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition, an opportunity to share and acquire information through open non politicized discussion and debate. The IFCS has provided a means for obtaining independent, objective source of synthesized information on priority topics identified by stakeholders and it has prepared and disseminate documents that reflect a state-of-the-art understanding of key subjects ensuring a balance of existing view points and written in accessible language that educates and informs. The reports on priority and emerging issues provide substantial input on specific situations and interests, in particular those of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, for the consideration of ICCM in its function overseeing the implementation of SAICM.
