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Progress and challenges towards the achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management: regional and sectoral achievements, strengths and challenges in the context of working towards the objectives of the Strategic Approach Overarching Policy Strategy

Summary of the trade union workshop on the Strategic Approach held on 8 and 9 July 2015

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate a summary report on the workshop supporting the engagement of trade unions in the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (see annex). The meeting was held on 8 and 9 July 2015 in Geneva. The report is reproduced as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

*SAICM/ICCM.4/1.

Annex

Summary of the trade union workshop on the Strategic Approach

8 and 9 July 2015

Improving workers health through sustainable management of chemicals. Trade union inputs towards 2020.

On the 7th and 8th of July, 2015 trade union representatives met - to evaluate and reflect on the progress and needs for further action in sound management of chemicals. The meeting had the support of the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) -

The meeting was organized by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Sustainlabour and included collaboration from IndustriAll Global Union, Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) and The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

The meeting aimed at supporting the labour sector in their preparations and mobilisation towards the Fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4), developing a workplan for enhancing labour sector engagement in implementing SAICM for the 2015-2020 period, and collecting relevant information, best practices, research updates, case studies and success stories, which would provide SAICM stakeholders an additional resource to make progress in SAICM implementation towards the 2020 goal.

This document compiles discussions at the meeting and contextualized them in the framework of trade union past and future endeavours on this theme. A final part of the document presents trade union success stories around different aspects of SAICM implementation: strengthening capacity building, increasing knowledge and information and activities on concrete prevention, reduction and elimination of worker risks.

1. Background information: Trade union participation at SAICM

The trade unions were important actors in the discussions that led to the adoption of the Dubai Declaration of Chemical Management in 2006. Their representatives had been actively participating in the negotiations and preparatory meetings since 2002 and had helped to define its program of work, the Global Plan of Action. Union representatives acknowledged the importance of an international framework for the regulation of chemicals and offered their ability and disposition for an international multistakeholder forum that could drive solutions and joint actions towards national and workplace levels.

The reason is simple enough – workers have been among the first to pay the price of poorly controlled exposures to hazardous chemicals, both at work and in their communities. Occupational cancer alone has been estimated to be claiming over 600,000 lives each year by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

In January 2006, just a month before the birth of SAICM; international unions had met under the auspices of UNEP and Sustainlabour at the first World Assembly on Labour and Environment. This Assembly discussed sustainable management of chemicals as one of key five areas for trade union work.. In its final resolution, the Assembly committed to “*(...) implement the Johannesburg goals on chemicals to make industry prove that chemicals used are safe for workers, consumers, communities and the environment; in the context of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, to ensure the substitution of the most dangerous substances; and to ensure concerted global action through the adoption of the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management and its follow-up*”¹

In the context of the negotiations that gave birth to SAICM, trade unions always pushed for a binding instrument, which was not the option retained by governments. However, trade union contributions were reflected in the Global Plan of Action which was adopted in Bali and since then has been the roadmap for SAICM implementation.

¹ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/documentos/ResolucionAsamblea.ES.pdf>

Workers and trade unions are mentioned as relevant actors in 42 of the 79 actions related to risk reduction (53.16%). They are obviously a fundamental part of all actions related to occupational health, yet they are also mentioned in waste management, emergency management, and risk reduction caused by pesticides or Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Similarly trade unions are considered a crucial part of actions related to addressing knowledge and information, taking into account that workers are one of the main users of chemicals. Workers and unions were also mentioned in almost half of GPA actions include in this area, related for example to Global Harmonized System (GHS) or international chemical safety cards (ICSCs), to promotion of national policies and national preventive inspection systems and of course with important rights such as the right to know and the right to refuse dangerous work

2. Meeting “Improving workers health through sustainable management of chemicals. Trade union towards 2020.” Summary of discussions

The meeting was held in the ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and brought together trade union representatives from different sectors and continents. The meeting also sought to exchange experiences and plans with other actors involved in SAICM, such as the secretariat itself, ILO, UNITAR and NGOs, such as IPEN, WECF and CIEL.

As previously explained meeting objectives were:

- Support the labour sector to prepare and mobilize actions for fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4).
- Develop a workplan for enhancing labour sector engagement in implementing SAICM, for the 2015-2020 period.
- Collect related information, best practices, updates in research, case studies and success stories as a resource tool to make progress in SAICM implementation towards the 2020 goal and make them available for SAICM stakeholders.

The final list of participants can be found in annex 1 and final program in annex 2.

2.1. Opening and general remarks

Jacob Duer, SAICM coordinator, stressed the need to have the labour sector on board ahead of the conference on chemicals management (ICCM4) later this year. He emphasised the need for labour to engage in current discussions and also to have increasing involvement in achieving the 2020 goal. He highlighted SAICM uniqueness as a forum for advancing on the issue: its multi-stakeholder provides everyone equal access to steer and influence the process. He invited trade unions to contribute to ICCM4 Overall Orientation and Guidance document and the discussion of the post-2020 agenda among other issues.

Pavan Baichoo from ILO underlined the participation of ILO in different SAICM and IOMC activities around issues such as the Global Harmonized System. ILO has been active also in the QSP Trust Fund. Following a demand to strengthen participation in Minamata Convention, ILO discussed the issue at the 322 session of its Governing Body.

Anabella Rosemberg, Environment & Occupational Health Officer from ITUC thanked the SAICM Secretariat for giving unions the opportunity for the exchange. She explained that occupational health and safety and environment are twin priorities for ITUC, related to rights at work and sustainable jobs. She highlighted the importance of SAICM, which bears this double mandate. ITUC operates as an information hub on health and safety for national and international union bodies, frequently extending this service to international agencies like ILO, UNEP and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The union approach is not limited to technical or regulatory issues. The objective is to ensure information on hazards at work is translated into action. She highlighted the need for trade unions to strategize towards 2020, understand opportunities, advances and gaps and identify and agree key union priorities and campaigns.

Brian Kohler, IndustriALL’s Health, Safety and Environment Director put the discussion in the context of the global reality of occupational illnesses caused by dangerous substances, with more than four-fifths of all occupation-related deaths being due to occupational diseases rather than accidents. He regretted the gradual erosion of ambition at SAICM since Johannesburg. In order to advance in this agenda, IndustriALL priorities are the realization of key rights: right to know, along with the right to participate and the right to refuse hazardous work. He also pointed out the failure of SAICM to deliver meaningful right-to-know, and the lack of transparency of risk assessment and risk management. In

addition, structural barriers to the full participation of all stakeholders, including labour, must be reduced if SAICM is to fulfil its mandate.

2.2. Trade union discussions on main concerns, priorities and strategies for action towards 2020.

The second and third sessions were exchanges on main concerns and priorities for the trade union representatives and current campaigns and programs being carried out by national unions and international federations. A full description of cases presented will follow in section 3. Discussions on priorities and main concerns follows.

Anabella Rosemberg (ITUC) stressed the need for a major push on statistics – to get a sound count of workplace injuries, diseases and deaths. In her view the absence of reliable statistics is an important omission as it hinders policy development. The objective for unions is to ensure information on hazards at work is translated into action. In order to do that, unions have to build capacity and strengthen their organisation. This requires developing the right training and tools backed up by a well-thought strategy.

Brian Kohler, IndustriALL’s health, safety and environment director took the opportunity to highlight the importance of the right to know, a right that has to be broad: the right to know wall-to-wall. Information is currently very poor; there are occupational exposure levels for around 1,000 chemical substances available on the market. “Members are unaware of the woeful quality of the information available on chemicals. MSDS is only the right to know what is known, but the absence of knowledge of harm isn’t the same as absence of harm. People don’t understand that the absence of information on a MSDS usually means that we know nothing, or next to nothing, about the environmental and human health effects of the substance.”

Workers need to be involved and participate in risk assessments and not only being recipients of information. In this sense there is a need to “revitalise” the union approach to workplace health and safety. When it comes to right to know and risk assessments, there is a need to understand the inputs, criteria and processes that determine the outputs. Only those who must eventually face a risk have the moral authority to assess it, notwithstanding that technical expert assistance may sometimes be necessary.

A big concern for IndustriALL remains cancer, and in addition there is a growing realisation that previously overlooked risks, like endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), are causing occupational diseases and developmental effects in the children of workers. The health effects on previously underrepresented groups of workers such as women, have not been adequately assessed. Preventive efforts, though, haven’t kept pace. Instead EDCs have followed the trajectory of other industrial carcinogens, with the effect at first challenged by industry, then action to stop those effects frustrated by industry lobbying. A similar effect has been witnessed with other health problems, noted Kohler. “There is an explosion in sensitisation in the workplace – but the chemical industry has fought against the recognition of sensitisers.”

Fiona Murie, Global Director Occupational Health and Safety and Construction Industry at the Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) stated that confronting health and safety issues is integral to BWI’s work. Without adequate controls, Murie says, workers face the old established killers like asbestos, wood dust and silica – all of which can cause cancer and debilitating respiratory diseases - and a host of new problems, including nanomaterials. “People don’t realise that one excavator produces the same diesel fume emissions as 200 cars; one wheel loader the same as 400-450 cars. There are often invisible hazards – it is remarkable how little people know. Our members face exposures to organic solvents, formaldehyde, isocyanates, pesticides including TBTO, PCP, lindane. There’s a really long list of carcinogens and mutagens used routinely in construction and forestry” said Murie.

Murie says a shortage of information is not the problem. There is plenty of information on toxins use reduction. A lot of union reps just need to be sure what they need to do to make work safe, priorities at the workplace for union reps should be: to create an inventory of potential exposures, to know what you are using, to obtain information or require safer alternatives and to launch participatory research techniques that allow workers to undertake their own investigations.

BWI's priority is the complete ban on asbestos. So far, 58 nations have banned asbestos, there is an ILO convention 162² - on safety in the use of asbestos and in 2006 after union pressure we got a clarification in the ILO resolution on asbestos³. This was followed in 2007 by the ILO/WHO National Programmes for the elimination of asbestos-related diseases⁴.

She explained that some ILO conventions are very good at advancing SAICM– 170 on chemicals⁵, 139 on cancer and Convention 155⁶ on occupational health and safety, but ILO is not doing enough to advance them.

Sue Longley, International Officer for Agriculture & Plantations at the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), presented the main priorities for the workers she represents. The fact is that, alongside mining and construction, this is the most dangerous industry. IUF has a clear strategy to reduce agriculture's fatal attachment to toxic chemicals, pushing instead for organic agriculture, for example integrated pest management.

The union fought hard to get an ILO convention for the sector, but this hasn't so far led to the hoped for improvements in working standards. "We got the convention, Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)⁷. But this has been a disappointment to workers as ILO follow up has not been active enough and only 15 countries have ratified the convention so far. In terms of its immediate priorities, IUF wants to secure more ratification of the ILO agriculture convention 184 and extension of the hotel convention to look at health and safety (Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991 (No. 172))⁸. Hotel workers also deal with an important number of toxic cleaning products.

It is important for IUF to focus on banning specific substances. Action on paraquat – preventing exposures either through a ban or other methods, like negotiating the introduction of alternative pest control methods - remains high on IUF's campaign priorities. Others include another pesticide, glyphosate, and the wide range of toxic substances encountered across IUF organised sectors.

Nanomaterials are an emerging issue, used in pesticides and in the food industry, both in products and packaging.

Yahya Masangi as the outgoing union-side representative on SAICM, reflected on these years of participation: "SAICM is a very useful platform for trade unions. Our participation in SAICM was low in terms of numbers but on effectiveness we fared very well."

He said unions have long pursued improvements complementary to or integral to SAICM objectives. These include ratifying ILO conventions, "particularly ILO convention 170 on chemicals, adopted in 1990, well before SAICM. But there have been few signatories [just 18 ratifications as of July 2015]⁹.

To maximise their effectiveness, unions need a bigger presence within SAICM. In the meantime, he says, unions should consider developing their own position papers spelling out their vision of a future SAICM – the current plan of work ends in 2020 – ahead of the fourth International Conference on Chemical Management scheduled for Geneva later this year.

He believes most people are unaware of the full extent of the union role in moving towards SAICM's 2020 goal to minimise the impact of hazardous substances. Unions should create a more explicit link between SAICM and their occupational health and safety initiatives.

Good examples of union initiatives include the IUF's global pesticides project. In Africa, the study cycle project trained a lot of workers in interpreting MSDSs. In the flower sector, unions worked to get rid of carcinogens.

² http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C162

³ http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/standards-and-instruments/WCMS_108556/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/asbestosdoc/en/

⁵ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312315:NO

⁶ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312300:NO

⁷ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312329:NO

⁸ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312317:NO

⁹ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312315:NO

While SAICM itself is voluntary, unions are a tool to make it binding, using collective bargaining agreements. Many unions in Africa have done that, using it as a tactic to get the 2020 target.

Participation in SAICM is particularly worth it for the developing world. All the African governments are dealing with chemicals through the SAICM process.

Tony Musu, a senior research at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)¹⁰, and a chemicals specialist, is involved in putting the union case for properly enforced, stringent chemical safety standards. He also oversees the implementation of Europe's landmark chemical safety law, REACH¹¹, and other related regulations.

REACH was adopted eight years ago because we were lacking data on the effects of chemicals. ETUI views REACH as an extremely good principle: No data, no market. The fact that anyone can access information on those companies producing chemicals, alongside health and safety data, on the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)¹² website is down to ETUI.

Occupational cancer remains a major concern. "We try to consolidate action, campaigns, and to have limit values for carcinogens. We want 50 carcinogens to have binding limit values, but at the moment the EU has only three – benzene, vinyl chloride and wood dust – and these are very old."

According to Musu, ETUI priorities around SAICM and 2020 goal, should include a strong focus on reducing work-related cancers – the biggest single cause of work-related deaths, the substitution of substances of very high concern, a global asbestos ban, training and information for workers on chemical risks, and legislation on endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs).

Anna Fendley, legislative representative with the United Steelworkers of North America (USW)¹³, explained that union campaigns started a generation ago in North America have led to a surge of interest in workplace chemical safety. But the answer to rights-based campaigns, built around the right to know, have often led to a narrower perimeter: access the right to Material Safety Data Sheets. The majority if these are inaccurate, incomplete and workers cannot read them because they are not chemists. USW has to retrain a new generation who believe the government keeps them safe, for example when there's also a 'no data' symbol. Workers think if it doesn't say carcinogen, then it's not a carcinogen."

Priorities for her organization have been the new US chemical management legislation (TSCA). The labour movement and environmental movement are trying to make improvements Both platforms are also opposing free trade agreements that mean on many occasions a race to the bottom in chemical and labour legislation.

Jorge Ramada from the Uruguayan National Trade Union explained that in his country the economic growth of last decade has caused the use of chemical products to intensify and diversify. This has been more significant in agriculture and agro-industries, due to the fact that the model of development is still based principally on the production and export of primary products: wood, soybean, meats. But also there have been sectors of manufacturing industry with important growth or modernization, such as the products and lacteal derivatives, pulp and cellulose, tanneries; and inside them, some specific areas of chemical industry, such as fertilizers and other agrochemicals, paints, auxiliaries for industry, fuels of vegetable origin, etc.

In his opinion there are four important trade union focus areas in order to advance towards a sustainable management of chemicals: first, the technical trade union training and awareness raising of an increasing number of workers. In his view, unions need to work better in the companies, by informing workers how to prevent risks. Second, it is important to lobby for improving national regulations around occupational health and safety and chemical management. In Uruguay some advances have been made through different regulations (ratification of ILO 155 and 161, implanting GHS) though the union is pursuing a new law, which would unify existing provisions to improve prevention. Thirdly there needs to be strengthened union participation at company level through the Joint Committees in Occupational Health and Safety. This is promoted by PIT CNT through the establishment of Occupational Health Committees at every union, where delegates are instructed to include health and risk reduction as an essential part of trade union demands, and through having union members elected as occupational health delegates - something questioned by some employers.

¹⁰ <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Health-Safety>

¹¹ <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Health-Safety/Chemicals-and-REACH>

¹² <http://echa.europa.eu/>

¹³ <http://www.usw.org/act/activism/health-safety-and-environment>

Lastly it is very important to build alliances with other movements, such as social and community movements, to work on broader approaches, water and land pollution, hazardous pesticides, etc

PIT CNT is willing to enhance its international involvement to take part in international common strategies to promote SAICM's goals. Towards 2020, the organization will aim to join global campaigns on the most hazardous substances like paraquat, and on global implementation of GHS to ensure that non-producing countries can still receive them with the suitable information.

Laura Martín Murillo director of Sustainlabour presented the main conclusions from the work carried out by her organization, with support from the QSP, in some Latin American countries. Basic information on hazardous substances or occupational diseases was not available at company level. Despite there being differences between countries, deficiencies were encountered everywhere. Last years' governmental capacity has increased in many countries, but shortcomings continue to exist. "We need much more information at national level. Countries are only advancing with the most dangerous substances –for example POPs and mercury," she said. "Control systems are not in place, and agreed prevention policies are not being implemented. Occupational injury and disease statistics are very incomplete". In her opinion chemical safety cards are still not available at too many workplaces.

In her opinion a few targets have to be set in order to advance towards 2020 that will need national action and concerted international action, global campaigns on banning asbestos and highly hazardous pesticides, a Global push for GHS and a push for ratification of the chemicals convention, ILO Convention 170.

Purificación Moran from the Institute of Work, Environment and Health (ISTAS)¹⁴ underlined the main objectives for her organization. Her union works with different approaches with the objective of reducing risk. First they raise awareness among workers and their representatives on possible risk. They have developed a wide range of tools to help workers identify hazardous substances at the workplaces, these range from concrete sectoral trainings, to a common database like Risctox, to online courses and so on. They also advise company reps about substitution possibilities and with other organizations have jointly created Subsport. Their most recent concrete campaigns focused on cancer origins, asbestos, or more recently glyphosate.

ISTAS has been a significant piece of trade union international action around sustainable management of chemicals, by providing international structures such as the European Trade Union Confederation with relevant tools. It has also been involved in SAICM discussions since its inception.

As it is one of the few trade union institutes with a wide technical capacity, ISTAS would like to help to optimize knowledge and resources to make this information available to more unions. A priority for 2020 should be to make better connections among trade union institutions dealing with the issue, to facilitate the sharing of problems and solutions.

2.3. Other stakeholder contributions

Baskut Tuncak, UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes shared his commitment to workplace health and safety as a human rights issue with trade unions.

He presented results from his recent visit to Kazakhstan and his next visit to South Korea and invited unions to work jointly to improve global management of chemicals. Trade unions thank him for joining 28 April campaign.

Brenda Koekkoek Programme Officer, SAICM Secretariat. UNEP presented key on-going discussions at SAICM and preparations for ICCM4.

An agreement on the Overall Orientation and Guidance towards the achievement of the 2020 goal – a key strategic policy piece- is expected to be made. 6 Core Activity Areas have been identified: enhanced responsibility of stakeholders; establish and strengthen national legislative and regulatory frameworks for chemicals and waste; mainstream the sound management of chemicals and waste in the post-2015 development agenda; increase efforts on emerging policy issues; promote information access, and assess progress towards the 2020 goal, understanding the gaps in implementation and prioritizing actions for 2020.

¹⁴ <http://www.istas.net/web/portada.asp>

Two important discussions will take place on considerations for the Sustainable Development Goals and discussion on sound management of chemicals beyond 2020. Additionally, there are two proposals for resolutions on HHP and environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants.

She invited unions to enhance their participation at SAICM and to make SAICM work for them.

Oliver Wooton from Chemicals & Waste Management Programme at UNITAR provided a briefing on the activities that UNITAR is carrying out to train SAICM stakeholders on chemicals and waste management with, the priority areas being: GHS, PRTR, Mercury, Nanotechnology, Basel Ban Amendment and POPs. UNITAR produces guidance on Understanding GHS and helps to provide training on the development of situation/gap analyses, national GHS implementation strategies, legislation, chemical hazard classification, labelling and safety data sheets (SDS).

Oliver Wooton also presented the UNITAR work around nanotechnologies. As workers are one of the most exposed groups and understanding is still being developed he invited unions to consult with UNITAR and participate in its activities.

At ICCM4 a resolution on nanotechnologies will need to reaffirm what was agreed at ICCM3.

He presented two important processes to take note of around this issue. Firstly, the GHS informal correspondence group to establish whether there is a need to amend the GHS and to make clear that nano-forms of a substance are within scope of the GHS during the biennium 2015-2016. A second key process is related to the WHO Guidelines for Protecting Workers from Potential Risks of Manufactured Nanomaterials, one of the co-chairs of the process is from ETUI.

David Azoulay, Environmental Health Programme Director, CIEL, presented the advantages of SAICM. In his opinion, engagement with SAICM is extremely positive. It has been extremely useful in raising nanomaterials, EDCs, pharmaceutical pollution – SAICM is the one place you can raise these issues. The challenge is maintaining momentum, with five years to go.

He called on unions to collaborate further in work related to nanotechnologies, EDCs, HHP and the post 2020 agenda. He called for further union involvement to push risk reduction activities in the field.

Elisabeth Ruffinengo, Health & Environment Advocacy Officer at WECF presented their activities in SAICM.

WECF is co-chair of the IPEN EDC working group, it has contributed to the chemicals in products working group and works on the nexus of women and chemicals. On chemicals and products WECF has developed standards for information sharing about chemicals in products in 4 sectors: building materials, textiles, electronics and toys.

WECF also strongly advocates against chrysotile asbestos and focuses on EECCA region.

On EDCs, WECF is part of the EDC-Free Europe coalition and it is implementing an EDC-free toys campaign. They publish policy papers and organize national activities.

3. **Some conclusions and recommendations for further action.**

Trade unions shared the belief that at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, governments endorsed a goal which is vital for workers everywhere: by 2020 all chemicals must be produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

As this objective must be enforced, SAICM as an instrument has to be enhanced and strengthened in order to provide assistance to stakeholders and to move towards the fulfilling of its mandate. Unions believe improvements can be made in the following areas:

3.1. **Better action orientation through concrete targets**

As SAICM was created as a voluntary initiative with very limited resources, its main achievements since its foundation have moved in two directions: on the one hand SAICM has been an important exchange forum on concrete risks - especially for emerging issues and for developing countries, and on the other hand, SAICM has proved to be an important tool in strengthening the capacity of developing countries to manage chemicals.

In order to become a forum that can meet specific goals by 2020, specific programs will have to be built around the Global Plan of Action and the Overall Orientation and Guidance. These specific programs should consider targeting a number of countries in risk reduction activities, including with quantitative targets for phasing out the manufacture, import, sale and use of highly hazardous pesticides, for strong public and occupational health and environmental protection policies on EDCs and for national biomonitoring and health surveillance of workers manipulating nanomaterials, on

legally-binding controls on hazardous chemicals in e-products, on illegal traffic enforcement and on workers' "right to know" policies.

Drawing up plans for a number of implementing countries could transform SAICM into a more efficient tool to drive changes beyond information sharing.

3.2. Adequate finance

The final results depend on the resources available to both countries and actors who are willing to act. Currently, funding for the problem is marginal. The GEF-6 funds of US\$13 million between 2014 and 2018, which are available for all aspects of SAICM implementation fall way short from the real needs, and will not suffice to boost action in these crucial years leading up to JOPI deadline.

Developing countries, especially the least developed, need adequate financing to control and reduce risks. Many of these are caused by illegal or legal entry through borders of toxic products which are destined for disposal, recycling or uncontrolled use. Providing adequate and sustainable financing for these countries is not only a question of development aid, but also of social justice. Funded programs have been developed in some countries; it is now time to multiply those programs in all countries, which essentially means multiplying the available funding.

Similarly if the multistakeholder approach is to be maintained it should be reflected in the financing tools. The Special Program is called on to finance future national and regional activities on sound management of chemicals. In so doing, it will have to finance the activities of those actors with greater difficulties in getting resources: NGOs, trade unions, small farmers, indigenous peoples, women's organizations, etc. If the financial instruments do not take a multistakeholder approach, the valuable contributions of these groups may never materialize.

3.3. Strengthening occupational health and safety

The Global Plan of Action gave occupational health and safety a relevant space in sustainable management of chemicals. An important number of its activities dealt with this matter. Unions consider that OHS at SAICM has not been followed up as expected. There may be different reasons for this. Firstly, there is a lack of participation of labour actors in developing national policies. Union experience suggests ministries of labour and national occupational health institutes have not been as involved as the framework dictates. At a national level, policies are being carried out in isolation. Nor has the ILOs participation been as expected. A revitalization of their participation in activities towards 2020 is needed. Those responsible for the organization, either through national offices where they exist or else country leaders, must become more involved.

Trade unions are aware that their involvement is key. Progress on better regulation of occupational health is often due to union pressure at the national level and unions have to redouble efforts to ensure that chemical risk prevention provisions in national legislation are implemented.

Furthermore, meaningful knowledge regarding progress made and the main barriers at the national level is not available- and not only for this issue, but also for others related to SAICM's plan of action. Although information on whether countries have or have not implemented measures is collected, there is little comparative information on the nature and quality of the proposed measures and little evaluation of effects. In this regard, the ILO could make a follow-up study of national occupational health regulations that deal with the sustainable management of chemicals in the coming years, and this could serve as a guide for monitoring progress towards 2020 based on objectives included in the Global Plan of Action.

Likewise unions will ask the ILO for an update of existing OHS guides, a campaign for ratification and implementation of relevant standards and a strong push for improving data collection mechanisms/OSH statistics.

3.4. Enhancing the participation of unions and other actors

The strategy of enhancing stakeholders participation is essential. However this should not be seen exclusively as strengthening internal action on SAICM discussions, but it must be seen in a broader sense. In the case of trade unions, their actions played by at the national, local, sectoral and enterprise level for the sound management of chemicals they are numerous, but sometimes can not be shared as part of SAICM discussions due to lack of resources for compilation. This document incorporates many experiences and success stories, but sustained comprehensive compilation and exchange needs adequate resources.

Unions recognise that they must offer stronger support to this awareness-raising, and that new information technologies have opened up new possibilities. However, union ability to become more involved in the sound management of chemicals at the national level will depend not only on their own

mobilization, but specifically on the national government's will to ensure that they are included in the discussions, and that they are not persecuted for trying to be involved at company level. For countries with labour legislation that recognize the workers right to be informed of the substances risks and their proper management, labour inspection has to ensure compliance. Unions will be key allies on this task. For countries that have not included this type of legislation yet, they have to speed up their approval towards 2020.

Overall Orientation and Guidance action points to call on governments to involve all stakeholders in consultations on national regulation, which includes workers and also includes other risk groups in civil society, should be properly monitored to ensure compliance.

3.5. Key areas for trade union further action

The success of moving towards 2020, beyond 2020 and integrating the sustainable management of chemicals on the sustainable development goals agenda depends on the capacity to mobilize those actors seeking progress and transformation.

In order to contribute to this mobilization trade union will strengthen current campaigns on elimination of the most significant risks for workers health, and they will join forces with groups that will seek the complete ban on production, use and commercialization of the most hazardous substances such as asbestos, and highly hazardous pesticides such as paraquat or endosulfan. The campaigns to ban asbestos or the 'Stop Paraquat' campaign organized jointly with NGOs are successful examples to build upon¹⁵.

For these substances growing international campaigns will be combined with pressure at national level, providing data on health impacts and information on alternatives.

Unions will seek also for further ratification and implementation of ILO standards at national level, from OHS conventions with provisions on hazardous substances, such as the 155, to specific standards such as the 170 on chemicals or 139 on cancer. For sectors with very important risks, there are also relevant conventions such as 184 for agriculture¹⁶, 176 for mines¹⁷ or 167 for construction¹⁸.

Likewise, unions will join national and international campaigns which work towards the program objectives as outlined, and seek comprehensive regulations that protect workers against endocrine disruptors and nanotechnologies and nanomaterial risks.

Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), are causing a variety of occupational diseases, including hormone-sensitive cancers and developmental effects in the children of workers. Many groups of workers – particularly women workers- are being affected. Awareness raising activities to target them are necessary. International endeavours for worker protection on nanotechnologies and nanomaterials have to be supported.

The global campaign developed by unions on Zero Occupational Cancer serve as a valuable example on workplace risk prevention in a holistic approach: through the identification of possible hazardous substances used at the workplaces, proper registration of cases of toxicity, better workplace health monitoring, removal and substitution of the most dangerous or better understanding on exposure limits.

Workers right to know campaigns on the identity of chemicals used at work, the hazardous properties of such chemicals and precautionary measures should be developed at international and national level, to ensure national OHS regulations include this right. The right to know and the right to participate must be understood the right to full participation in risk assessment and the development of risk management plans.

Lastly, a key union demand proposal is a major push on statistics – to get a count of the workplace injuries, diseases and deaths. The absence of reliable statistics is a real omission as it stops policy development.

¹⁵ <https://www.bernedeclaration.ch/companiesinstitutions/syngenta/paraquat/>

¹⁶ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C184

¹⁷ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312321

¹⁸ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C167

4. Unions in action: successful experiences of trade union work on sustainable management of chemicals.

4.1. Global campaign on reducing risks. ITUC and global unions for 28 April 2015: toxic work – stop deadly exposures today.

The International Workers' Memorial Day or International Commemoration Day (ICD) for Dead and Injured takes place annually around the world on April 28, an international day of remembrance and action for workers killed, disabled, injured or made unwell by their work. April 28 is recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) as International Workers' Memorial Day and it is recognised as a national day in many countries including: Argentina, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Luxembourg, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Taiwan, United States and the United Kingdom. Trade Unions in other countries including Benin, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Malta, Nepal, New Zealand, Romania and Singapore are pursuing government recognition.

Every year ITUC and the Global Union Federations pick an occupational health and safety issue for raising awareness with their members. In 2015 the theme chosen was reducing toxic exposures at the workplace. An ITUC guide, 'Toxic work – stop deadly exposures today'¹⁹, was launched to explain to worldwide members how to remove toxic exposures from the workplace. At the centre of the union strategy is active, union-supported workforce participation, through finding problems and implementing solutions.

The campaign, launched in 2015, addressed the need for:

- National centres to highlight the importance of this issue, to advocate for improvements in the law on hazardous substances and improved enforcement of the law, and to expose the preventable risks faced by workers.
- Sectoral federations to educate the membership on risks in their industries, to promote when possible sectoral agreements on hazardous substances, and to encourage unions to include the issue in collective bargaining.
- Unions at the company and workplace level to mobilize the Joint occupational health and safety (OHS) committees to address hazardous substances, to bring this issue to the union collective bargaining agenda, to improve union capacity through effect organisation and training, and to fight for workplace rights.

The campaign also included information on international tools such as Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Mercury conventions, ILO standards and SAICM.

How was this campaign followed at national or regional level?

- Belgium. Unions organised a large information campaign on the use of dangerous substances.

The ACV-CSC is a union that represents 1.7 million workers, making up approximately 16% of the total Belgian population. For the 28 April campaign, they ran a campaign in all Belgian companies with workers representatives. This also included some SME's without reps, by distributing leaflets with information on the safe use of dangerous substances, and employers and workers obligations in French and Dutch.

On Tuesday, 28th of April, together with FGTB, CGSLB and ETUC ACV-CSC (representing altogether 3.5 million workers) unions met with the Minister of Labour, Kris Peeters and asked him to defend a review of the European carcinogens directive, with a priority list of 50 binding occupational exposure limits, the integration of the reprotoxic substances in the scope of this directive and to take action at national level to integrate reprotoxics in Belgian legislation on carcinogens²⁰.

- The Netherlands: FNV demanded recognition of chronic solvent-induced disease victims.

In the Netherlands there are a group of employees who are seriously ill through exposure to solvents. Chronic solvent induced disease leads to permanent problems like memory loss, concentration problems and depression. In some cases dementia and personality changes can occur. Annually there

¹⁹ <http://www.ituc-csi.org/toxic-work-stop-deadly-exposures>

²⁰ <https://www.acv-online.be/acv-online/Actueel/Pers/persberichten-2015/overzicht/28-april-werelddag-voor-veilig-en-gezond-werk.html>

are around 20 new cases of this disease which is caused by prolonged exposure to high concentrations of volatile solvents, or after prolonged work with pesticides. In total, there are an estimated 500 OPS patients in the Netherlands²¹.

These workers have no compensation, and no recognition of their occupational illnesses. Following 28 April international campaign, the FNV, the most important union in the country with more than 1 million members, launched a campaign to recognize these workers.

- Argentina. CGT raised awareness through its assemblies.

For the 28th April, the biggest union in the country, the CGT, highlighted the impact of chemical risks for Argentinean workers in its campaign. These workers account for at least 10,000 of the 660,000 notified occupational accidents in the country. The CGT organized assemblies in workplaces, emphasizing the need for prevention measures in the handling of hazardous substances, meetings at the regional level, and distribution of information leaflets in worksites and through social media.

- The Americas. The trade union confederation of the Americas launched a guide for action.

On the 28th April the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) and Sustainlabour launched a manual on chemical risk reduction in the workplace. The guide was based on previous materials developed for QSP SAICM supported projects for national unions in Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Nicaragua.²²

- United Kingdom. The Trade Union Congress asked its members about risks.

On the date, the Trade Union Congress disseminated the results of an on-line survey on hazardous substances at the workplace which they had carried out in the previous months. There was a total of 533 respondents, with the main sectors represented being central and local government (30%), energy and water (13%), transport and communications (13%), manufacturing (12%) and other services (15%). Of those respondents, 71 per cent said they are exposed to, or at risk from, potentially dangerous substances at work. These included asbestos (49 per cent) and hazardous chemicals and gases (49 per cent)²³.

4.2. Focusing on cancer: Global Federations for Zero Occupational Cancer

In 2007, global unions, such as IndustriALL and BWI and ITUC launched a 'Zero cancer' campaign²⁴, which spawned activities and policy initiatives from Australia to Spain. It established that, far from being a battle won, exposure to industrial carcinogens was still widespread and affected workers from cleaners, to nurses to miners. The campaign involved 11 global trade union organisations who together represent over 300 million members in more than 150 countries.

In order to prevent occupational cancer, the most common work-related cause of death, a guide for reps was published: *Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention*.²⁵

The guide calls on union representatives to identify possible cancer risks in the workplace and to seek removal or substitution of substances or processes presenting a cancer risk with less hazardous substances or safer work methods. It sets trade union priorities for action dealing with risks: elimination; substitution; control; and if nothing else is possible, personal protective equipment such as masks or protective clothing. Trade union responsibilities include ensuring that workers with work-related cancers are given the support they need and receive any sickness or compensation payments to which they are entitled and seek community support by making sure the public know about air emissions and hazardous waste from the workplace that may be a cancer concern.

The campaign also highlighted the importance of workplace investigation: workplace risk mapping of substances, reviewing existing sources, like workplace sick leave, accident, compensation and pension records and reviewing studies or reports to identify existing evidence of possible problems in workplaces and industries.

²¹ https://www.fnvbouw.nl/actueel/nieuws/paginas/FNV_vraagt_om_erkenning OPS_slachtoffers_1441.aspx.

²² <http://www.sustainlabour.org/noticia.php?lang=EN&idnoticia=839>

²³ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/asbestos/chemicals-and-dust/workers-memorial-day-reminder-daily>

²⁴ <http://www.industrialall-union.org/archive/imf/preventing-occupational-cancer>

²⁵ <http://www.bwint.org/pdfs/ZeroCanceENr.pdf>

4.3. IUF Improving occupational health, safety and environmental standards on plantations and farms in Africa

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) has a clear strategy to reduce agriculture's fatal attachment to toxic chemicals, pushing instead for organic agriculture, by, for example, integrated pest management.

In 2006, the IUF started a project on Global Strategies in Health and Safety with the support of Swedish unions in Africa, particularly, in Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria and more recently Liberia and Cameroon.

The project has trained numerous workers on OHSE issues, being hazardous chemicals important part of the trainings. The methodology used has been the Study Circles. Typically, workers are invited to come together in small groups of 5-10, on a regular basis. There, a trained Leader brings information which may be new to them, but also encourages them to decide on the issues they wish to discuss, and makes sure that everyone can participate.

Results are remarkable. Affiliated unions have been getting governments to ban the use of hazardous substances, such as Paraquat, and workers are much more aware of the need to avoid using toxic chemicals wherever possible. Where this has not yet been achieved, more of them know to stay out of high risk areas and to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPT). Unions are voicing these demands much more actively with management.

For example in Malawi, the sugar plantation union SPAWUM has made the handling of chemicals a big priority. After meetings with the management, they have improved the spraying techniques for pesticides. The sprayers are being rotated every two years so that they are not over-exposed, and they are sent for medical check-ups every season. The union reports a big drop in cases of allergic reaction. Meanwhile on the tobacco estates in Malawi, the union TOAWUM also reports that chemicals are now used with much greater care.

In Uganda, over the years, the union NUPAWU has succeeded in getting companies to change the chemicals they are using. For example, at one Uganda flower farm, they were using endosulfan and other highly hazardous pesticides for killing caterpillars, and these have been replaced with less toxic products.

Reporting has become more regular. There is still a problem of nonreporting of minor accidents and hazards, but situation has improved. In Zambia, for example, the union NUPAAW now keeps a database of accidents, compiling the data that comes in from its regions and branches. In Nigeria, the AAEUN has developed a better system of data-gathering by local union structures and field staff, including on-the-spot assessments for risk analysis. In Uganda, NUPAWU has taken several cases to the courts where workers have been badly affected from toxic chemicals.

Some employers too have embraced the project. This is indicated by their support, allowing education and training activities to take place on their premises, giving time off to Study Circle Leaders to organise study circle groups, and taking actions on the recommendations of the health and safety committees

The project targets particularly women workers. IUF reports greater awareness among women workers about the impact of some chemicals, particularly on their reproductive health²⁶.

4.4. Prioritizing substances and calling companies to action: European Trade Union institute impressive work around REACH

Europe's trade unions benefit from their own safety thinktank, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)²⁷, which not only provides top level advice on chemical risks, it also keeps a keen eye on looming threats to chemical safety standards and the regulatory process. ETUI contributes to the implementation of EU legislations on chemicals (REACH, CLP, Carcinogens Directive, Chemical Agents Directive, etc).

The European Trade Union Confederation and its institute ETUI took a very clear stance in favour of the EU regulation to control the trade and use of chemicals which came into effect in June 2007, and is known as REACH. European Trade Unions supported it because REACH, by encouraging industry to develop safer substances, combines increased competitiveness for European industry with improved

²⁶ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/documentos/2015%20Safe%20Farms,%20Safe%20Workers.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Health-Safety>

protection of workers, consumers and the environment. That is why the ETUC has consistently worked to give a constructive input to REACH throughout its development via its conferences, a wide array of publications and its presence on the Management Board and all committees of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).

A very important example of this proactive participation is the creation of the Trade union priority list for REACH authorisation. The purpose of the Trade Union Priority List was to contribute to the practical implementation of REACH, in particular the authorisation procedure by proposing Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) which, from a union perspective, should have priority for inclusion in the Candidate List and potentially in the Authorisation List²⁸.

The list included 334 entries covering 585 high production volume chemicals, widely used at work and linked to occupational diseases. The aim was to phase them out and replace them with safer alternatives. 24 out of 31 substances of very high concern (SVHC) that were included in the official authorisation list were already on the trade union list beforehand.

However ETUI work is also very important in mobilizing trade unions in companies to facilitate implementation of new legislation by for example, informing management who are unaware of their obligations under REACH and CLP. Its most recent campaign calls on worker representatives to act as ambassadors for REACH in their companies to ensure timely registration for the REACH 2013 deadline. It also raises awareness about the new elements in the safety data sheets that aim to enhance the protection of workers. The campaign builds upon the success of the first joint campaign on REACH and CLP implemented in 2010²⁹.

4.5. A pioneer in all arenas: research, training, risk reduction, substitution, etc. ISTAS, the union institute of Comisiones Obreras, Spain

The union Comisiones Obreras, supported by its institute ISTAS, has been - most probably for decades - the trade union with the highest technical capacity worldwide on hazardous substances risk reduction. Their research and advisory work to trade union representatives triggered legislative improvements in Spain, giving rise to a much better public awareness of the issue and also concrete substitution experiences of hazardous chemicals in diverse companies.

Activities and guidelines for union delegates have been updated to adapt them to new risks and new opportunities for trade union action under new legislation. To give an idea of the extent of its work in prevention and sensitization, here is a list of some of the trade union representative guides developed: Trade union Guide for chemical risks prevention at the workplace³⁰, Trade union guide for the substitution of hazardous substances in the workplace³¹, Trade union guide for hazardous waste management and control³², Trade union guide to control and manage company emissions³³, Trade union guide to eliminate PCBs, Endocrine disruptors³⁴, Guide for the new Regulation on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures³⁵.

ISTAS has created interesting tools for workers such as RISCTOX, a database of hazardous substances developed to provide clear, organized and concise information about health and environmental risks caused by chemicals contained in products generally used or handled by companies. The RISCTOX database provides information on over 100,000 chemical agents on file which include data on classification of the substance according to Regulation 1272/2008 (CLP), specific health risks, specific environmental risks and environmental and health-related regulations³⁶.

ISTAS' work has also managed to obtain concrete successes in substitution. It was one of the organizations that created SUBSPORT³⁷, a free-of-charge, multilingual platform for information

²⁸ <https://www.etuc.org/sites/www.etuc.org/files/TUListREACH.pdf>

²⁹ http://echa.europa.eu/view-article/-/journal_content/f2128fee-eb37-4efd-9048-68f7d3458962

³⁰ <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=1367>

³¹ <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=1367>

³² <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=2420>

³³ <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=2262>

³⁴ <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=1452>

³⁵ <http://www.istas.net/web/abreenlace.asp?idenlace=7620>

³⁶ <http://risctox.istas.net/en/>

³⁷ <http://www.subsport.eu/about-the-portal>

exchange on alternative substances and technologies, as well as tools and guidance for substance evaluation and substitution management.

The ISTAS team and CCOO reps have managed to drive substitution experiences of hazardous chemicals in diverse companies. Their experiences include trichloroethylene in a rubber industry in Coslada, dangerous solvents in an automotive factory in Madrid, lead in a glass factory in Segovia, identification and substitution of POPs in Aragon, substitution of mutagen TGIC (1,3,5-tris(oxiranylmethyl)-1,3,5-triazine-2,4,6(1H,3H,5H)-trione) in an installation of metallic furniture, endocrine disrupting epoxy resins in a car-painting company, octamethylcyclotetrasiloxane as polisher for oranges, and a cleaning product based on didecyldimethylammoniumchloride and alcohol ethoxylate in a nursing home³⁸, among others.

4.6 Training workers: PIT CNT's goal to train more than 50% of chemical workers in Uruguay

The Uruguayan trade union (PIT-CNT)³⁹ and its affiliate of chemical sector workers (STIQ) are committed to making workplaces safer. Workers' training has been a permanent task since PIT-CNT Security and Hygiene Commission was formed, over 30 years ago.

In 2010, with the support from QSP and Sustainlabour, the union created a training course for trade union trainers on chemicals. The project trained 107 occupational health and safety trade union representatives from various sectors (Agriculture, Steel, Public Services, Pulp and Paper, Chemical Industry, Oil, Textile)⁴⁰, who were not only trained on chemical management but also on the use of different training tools for the replication of the trainings within their trade unions and workplaces.. Since this project, the trade union has multiplied activities and sustained action.

Through an agreement with the Chemical Industries Association of Uruguay (ASIQUR), they are now targeting 1,400 workers (more than 50% of total industry workers) in a program supported by the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (INEFOP)

This project can be broken down into two main strands:

- Training up technical staff for companies along with preparing safety data sheets and labels in accordance with the EMS standards; ASIQUR, in agreement with STIQ, selects teachers for these courses.
- Training up 1,400 workers from STIQ sectors (Chemical Industry, Paints, Perfumery and cosmetics, Veterinary products and Rubber) on the safe handling of chemical substances.

The course -a total of 50 hours- includes 7 modules (characterization of chemicals; effects on health and human body; general prevention principles; safe practices in chemicals managing; GHS for classification and labelling; effects on the environment; legal regulations) and it is held by workers and technical personnel from STIQ, and supported by University academics. The first stage has been already completed and included nearly 200 workers from Montevideo.

4.7 Sustainlabour QSP experiences in Latin America

Protecting workers from the potential impact of chemicals on their health, has always been one of Sustainlabour's key priorities. It requires workers representatives to have much more information and capacity than they currently have.

The variety, nature and quantity of chemicals used depend on the industrial and agricultural sectors. In the last ten years, Sustainlabour has worked with workers from all regions of the world from mining, agriculture, paper, steel, fertilizers, farming, civil servants, cleaning, personal ports and airports, waste collectors, etc⁴¹. Sustainlabour has run specific projects for hotel workers in Malaysia, track drivers in Uganda, Construction workers in Ethiopia, and cotton and sugar workers in Benin, Togo and Guinea Bissau.

³⁸ Catalogue of trade union substitution experiences. ISTAS 2009.

<http://www.istas.ccoo.es/descargas/Cat%C3%A1logo%20de%20experiencias%20sindicales%20de%20sustituci%C3%B3n.pdf>

³⁹ <http://www.pitcnt.uy/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/proyecto.php?lang=EN&idproyecto=9>

⁴¹ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/28-de-abril-contra-el-riesgo-quimico.php?lang=EN>

Its most successful experiences have been carried out with the support of the Quick Start Programme (QSP) of SAICM. Projects have shown that change at the workplace is possible by helping to train workers and their representatives in countries like Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Uruguay⁴².

Sustainlabour projects raised awareness among workers on chemical risks and provided general information and tools for more detailed information. The reasoning behind the project was that workers need to know what they are using. The project strengthened union capacity, and introduced chemical management into OHS agendas.

Another important angle was strengthening national regulation: identifying areas for regulation improvement at country level and union demands with their government.

Project outcomes were numerous: distribution of training guides for unionists, 6 National Reports on chemical management and OHS, organization of 3 big multisakeholder forums on sustainable management of chemicals, 10 trade union teams created or strengthened at the national level, more than 1.200 unionists trained, and the campaigns have reached more than 60.000 workers.

The National Reports represented a significant contribution to the government areas responsible for these issues, by helping to understand the links between safe chemical management, occupational health and decent work conditions. This was particularly useful in the Central American and Caribbean countries where institutional weaknesses are more noticeable.

The projects were also an opportunity for opening, widening and reactivating national dialogue bodies related to chemical risks, as previously explained, to make proposals for better regulation, and also for very concrete results such as the inclusion of chemical reduction risk clauses in collective bargaining or substitution experiences in specific workplaces.

The projects reached 125 trade unions, which represent 9.5 million workers. Participants came from a wide range of sectors including: agriculture, the pharmaceutical and chemical industry, paper mills, tanneries, fish farming, the rubber industry, plastic factories, ports and airports, cleaning, commerce, health, maquilas, metallurgy, mining, public administration, street vendors, waste picking and recycling.

In all countries there are OHS regulations which establish the constitution of Health and Safety Bipartite Commissions at company level. The projects contributed to improving its work on prevention by providing concrete tools for chemical risk prevention.

A project on workers and SAICM implementation ran in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay from October 2008 to September 2010 which received the QSP Award Best NGO project⁴³ in Latin America. A second phase of the Latin America project, which aimed to promote sound chemicals management by strengthening trade union capacity, ran in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic from August 2011 to September 2013.

A report⁴⁴ that recaps the main results achieved by these projects is also available.

4.8 United Steelworkers (USW) putting breast cancer out of work

A November 2012 study found that Ontario women who work in manufacturing plastic automotive components and processing food are five times more likely to have breast cancer before the menopause than other women living similar lives in the same communities.

In partnership with the BlueGreen Alliance (an alliance that unites the largest union and environmental organizations), the USW launched a campaign to Put Breast Cancer Out of Work. Through this initiative they aim to prevent breast cancer and other chronic diseases by promoting safer alternatives to the current use of dangerous chemicals.

Their approach is a new curricula for reps to talk at workplaces about the role of chemicals in breast cancer and other chronic diseases; to build coalitions with other trade unions, environmentalists and women's health groups to raise public awareness of the role of chemicals in breast cancer; to work for new policies that regulate chemicals using examples of what cities, states and leading companies are

⁴² <http://www.sustainlabour.org/programas.php?lang=EN&idprograma=9>

⁴³ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/noticia.php?lang=EN&idnoticia=661>

⁴⁴ <http://www.sustainlabour.org/documentos/SAICM%20Final%20EN%20Reduced.pdf>

doing; and to equip workers and their employers to join the do-it-yourself safer chemicals effort to prevent harmful exposures that lead to disease⁴⁵.

Unions have also created the ChemHAT.org⁴⁶ database, a Chemical Hazard and Alternatives Toolbox database designed to offer up easy to use information on how to protect workers and families against the harm that chemicals can cause. It includes a series of icons that quickly inform workers if the chemical consulted has a potential to affect your health, as well as specifics about what kind of health effect the chemical could cause. It also includes information on how a chemical is commonly used and in which workplaces and provides a link to information on safer alternatives where such information is available.

4.9. **In Rio Negro, Argentina: Unionized teachers watching out for a better health and a clean environment for their communities**

Argentina's *Río Negro* province is located north of Argentinean Patagonia. The traditional cultivation of fruit and vegetables in the valleys and sheep farming on the steppe are losing ground to the growing presence of hydrocarbon operations, metal mining, the creeping agricultural and the industrialization of the fruit sector.

Within this context, the Union of Education Workers of *Río Negro* (known by the initials unTER from their Spanish name: la Unión de Trabajadores de la Educación de Río Negro) addresses environmental issues through the Chico Mendes Socio-Environmental Department. They carry out many activities including training, campaigns, discussions, research, and so on. With a membership rate of around 90% (15,000 members) and a body of more than 700 union delegates working directly in schools, the organization has a strong presence throughout the province. In addition, as these people work in education, their ability to communicate, mobilize and bring the whole community together in action is especially significant and can reach the most isolated villages and places.

UnTER is currently carrying out a wide number of activities related to the issue of chemicals:

- A campaign demanding the remediation of a lead-contaminated site in San Antonio Oeste, along with petitioning the Lead Multisectoral. After more than ten years of different activities, the provincial and national governments are starting to undertake remediation tasks.
- Epidemiological surveys in rural schools. Results should include the detection of agrochemical contamination related diseases. The survey is being carried out by UnTER's Department of Health and in conjunction with "Health Mobility" ("Movil de salud" in Spanish)⁴⁷. To date, approximately 70% of target schools have been visited project on improving handling, removal/replacing of hazardous substances in schools (specifically for cleaning and disinfection products).
- Permanent support for communities affected by Fracking: tracking spill complaints, analysis of water samples in areas near wells, etc².
- A project on analyzing soil and water samples around schools which are close to areas where hydrocarbons and agricultural are exploited.⁴⁸

4.10. **The International Transport Workers' Federation's (ITF) Thinking inside the Box.**

Container safety is an issue for port workers, seafarers, truck drivers and railway workers - the workers are in direct contact with the containers along the transport chain. But it's also a serious concern for managers, schedulers and warehouse operators, who form part of the chain of responsibility. Accidents can be fatal. They can happen at any stage of the transport chain – and it's not just transport workers who are at risk of injury, members of the public can be hurt too.

The International Transport Workers' Federation's (ITF) road transport, railway, dockers and seafarers sections are running a cross-sectional campaign on container cargo safety which started in 2014 and will run until 2018. Its primary aim is for safety and responsibility on transportation with three main

⁴⁵ <http://www.chemhat.org/uswbga-program>

⁴⁶ <http://www.chemhat.org/about-chemhat/how-use-chemhat>

⁴⁷ 1 <http://www.unter.org.ar/taxonomy/term/5101>

⁴⁸ 2 <http://unter.org.ar/node/13319>

areas of focus: improper packing of containers; misdeclaration of goods or weights; and toxic gases and fumigation in containers⁴⁹.

Unions are taking action on container safety by: speaking up about cases of dangerous practices and sharing the evidence, lobbying governments to implement global standards on container safety and getting governments to adopt those standards into legislation, teaming up with unions in other sectors to run joint activities and raise awareness of the issue, campaigning for responsibility along the transport chain, negotiating policies and procedures to address the issue at workplace level¹.

4.11. Enhancing knowledge of union safety reps: the Hazards Magazine

Hazards magazine² is a straightforward resource for UK trade union safety reps, and is intended to provide news and do-it-yourself accessible tools to evaluate and remedy health and safety problems at work.

But Hazards⁵⁰ has a wider purpose. From the outset – it has been in existence for four decades – it recognised that examples of best practice had to be harvested from labour activities worldwide. So participatory research techniques honed in Latin America were promoted. Best chemical standards and substitution practices were sought from unions, labour groups and labour-sympathetic academics worldwide. Strategies and resources were showcased.

In the days before the internet became a powerful communication tool, Hazards built networks and information exchange channels. In 1997 it published an International Directory of Workers' Health and Safety Contacts. This described the work done and the areas of expertise and gave labour safety activists a checklist of who to contact, where and about what. Examples of struggles and achievements were publicised in Workers' Health International Newsletter (WHIN), an English language newsletter distributed to over 60 countries and provided free to unions in developing nations. A Spanish language edition was produced in association with Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO) and ISTAS, which greatly expanded its reach. Although it was only published for a decade, WHIN spurred the creation of regional and international networks which continue today, and are organised around labour approaches to health and safety in general or about specific issues – hazards, standards, regulatory approaches and organising strategies.

⁴⁹ 1 <http://www.itfglobal.org/en/transport-sectors/railways/in-focus/container-safety/>

⁵⁰ 2 <http://www.hazards.org/>