



SAICM/ICCM.4/INF/6

Distr.: General  
11 August 2015

English only



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**International Conference on Chemicals Management**

**Fourth session**

Geneva, 28 September–2 October 2015

Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Progress and challenges towards the achievement of the  
2020 goal of sound chemicals management: sound  
management of chemicals and waste in the context of the  
sustainable development goals**

**United Nations system-wide contribution to achieving the sound  
management of chemicals and waste**

**Note by the secretariat**

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, for the information of participants, a report received from the United Nations Environment Management Group about the United Nations system-wide contribution to achieving the sound management of chemicals (see annex). The report is presented as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

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\* SAICM/ICCM.4/1.

## Annex

# Contribution of the United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG) to the Sound Management of Chemicals

## Background

In response to the Rio+20 outcome and decisions of various intergovernmental processes such as the conference of the parties of the chemicals-related agreements that have called for a more systematic approach to cooperation and coordination in the implementation of chemicals-related agreements and instruments, the Senior Officials of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG), a UN system-wide coordination body on environment and human settlements<sup>1</sup>, established a time-bound Issue Management Group in January 2014 to raise the profile of sound chemicals management in the UN system, to promote integration of sound chemicals management in a broader context of economic and social development planning as well as to ensure additional synergies between the UN organizations in supporting countries in activities to achieve the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goal of sound *chemicals* management by 2020.

The Issue Management Group (IMG), composed of 16 UN and related agencies<sup>2</sup>, works in close collaboration with and builds upon the on-going work of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to bring together the expertise and experiences of the EMG members, identifying collective actions in the matter of the sound chemicals management—a vital element of sustainable development and a green economy. The IMG also contributes to enhancing the profile of the sound management of chemicals and wastes in the discussions on the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda.

The IMG met six times during 2014 and 2015 and provided updates on the progress of its work to the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the ICCM in December 2014, the May 2015 Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-4).

## Focus and deliverables so far

### 1) Joint input to indicators and targets for the SDGs on chemicals and waste

In close consultation with the IOMC, the IMG prepared a set of key composite targets and indicators in the area of sound management of chemicals and waste as a joint input by the UN system to the negotiations of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Building on the existing contributions of its members, the IMG put forward a set of targets and indicators that could underpin, as appropriate, relevant goals. The list of suggested targets and indicators was delivered to the Open Working Group on SDGs in the beginning of May 2014 and can be downloaded at [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org).

### 2) A synthesis report on enhancing synergy in achieving the WSSD 2020 goal on chemicals

The IMG undertook a mapping of activities and initiatives in the UN system that contribute to the achievement of the WSSD 2020 goal on chemicals and waste management either directly or indirectly, including conducting a survey and collecting information on UN system and other relevant agencies' contributions and perspectives on the sound management of chemicals. An important component of this work was to canvass the views of a wide-range of agencies on chemicals and waste-related issues and make use of information already generated by the IOMC or in the context of the SAICM process. The survey yielded responses from 25 agencies, including all 9 IOMC organizations and 16 non-IOMC members.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org)

<sup>2</sup> DFS, FAO, ILO, IMO, OECD, Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS), World Bank, UNDP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, OCHA, UNU, WHO.

A synthesis report, *United Nations and Sound Chemicals Management: Coordinating delivery for member states and sustainable development*, has been produced which signals the importance of sound chemicals management to the broader sustainable development agenda, showcases what has already been accomplished, and indicates how the UN system can further assist Member States in achieving sound chemicals management in the context of sustainable development.

The report:

- a) presents how sound chemicals management is a key topic for the development agenda, its close links to health and other important issues, and its links to the SDGs;
- b) outlines 30 international processes, agreements, and initiatives for chemicals management;
- c) reviews the activities of more than 30 UN and related agencies involved;
- d) presents the results of the survey of agencies undertaken in September-October 2014 by the IMG regarding a range of key issues, including activities and partnerships, visibility and engagement, and synergies and collaboration; and
- e) provides conclusions as well as recommendations (see below) on how to increase the visibility of the topic and further enhance synergies between different agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system in order to achieve the 2020 goal.

Although a broad range of agencies are involved in different aspects of sound chemicals management, the report finds a relatively low visibility of the topic in the system overall. This suggests the need to examine how the broad and diverse expertise and capacities of the UN system in the sound management of chemicals can be more effectively deployed to the benefit of Member States, particularly at the national level and for issues requiring transboundary cooperation.

The report presents opportunities for increasing the visibility and awareness of the importance of sound chemicals management within the larger sustainable development dialogues, as well as possibilities for further enhancing synergies. These can lead to increased cooperation within the UN system that translates into strengthened support to countries to achieve sound chemicals management and the WSSD 2020 goal.

Overall, the report finds that chemicals impact our daily lives in a wide variety of areas, from health and agriculture, to biodiversity and the needs of women, children and vulnerable populations. The sound management of chemicals found in products, air, soil, and water thus requires an integrated and holistic approach, helping to address the need to transition to a greener economy. Not surprisingly then, sound chemicals management is strongly linked to achieving the objectives of the broader sustainable development agenda and the SDGs.

Based on the information compiled in this report, seven key conclusions and common themes emerged regarding the importance of sound chemicals management within the broader sustainable development agenda, seen in the context of what has already been accomplished, and what remains to be done. These include:

1. Chemicals management is a cross-cutting topic. Its efficiency and success requires multi-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder participation.
2. Existing mechanisms of and approaches to inter-agency collaboration and partnerships can provide models for further enhancing system-wide synergies and building new partnerships.
3. While being multi-sectoral, sound chemicals management is also ‘multi-level’, with activities taking place not only at the international level, but at the regional, national, and sub-national levels as well.

4. As a framework for working towards the 2020 goal, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a major focus of many organizations; nevertheless, there are many other initiatives contributing to sound chemicals management.
5. While SAICM provides a relatively known framework for the activities of many organizations, participation in its key events such as the ICCMs — especially from non-environmental and health sectors — remains low.
6. While the priority of sound chemicals management as a topic appears relatively high on the agenda of many organizations, visibility of and commitment to it in the UN system is low to moderate.
7. Issues related to sound chemicals management are often over-shadowed by topics such as climate change. Sound chemicals management and the co-benefits it can bring is, however, central to achieving the objectives of the broader development agenda.

In order to better inform stakeholders, raise awareness on the topic, and promote broad and concrete multi-sector buy-in, the profile of sound chemicals and waste management must be clearly communicated as a key element of the broader sustainable development agenda.

**The following recommendations** for the UN and related agencies can facilitate achieving these ambitions and help to make better use of synergies between existing international processes, agreements, and initiatives for sound chemicals management:

- 1 Those organizations that have not already done so could issue a declaration or joint statement signalling commitment to promote the importance of sound chemicals management both within and outside of their organizations.
- 2 Identify and promote the multiple benefits of greater cross-sectoral coordination (e.g. how each sector involved in sound chemicals management can benefit from greater engagement with the other sectors) and engage as standard practice to invite other sectors/organizations to relevant meetings (WHO, as an example, invites SAICM focal points and other sectors to health sector meetings on chemicals).
- 3 Increase and broaden efforts to organize joint capacity-building workshops (regional or national) for key sectors with involvement of relevant UN and other agencies, and include chemicals modules in relevant training and capacity building workshops for ‘non-chemicals’ topics and Conventions (biodiversity, climate change, marine protection, etc.).
- 4 Build on the work of the IOMC and prepare a detailed assessment of other UN organisations’ contributions to SAICM and the 2020 goal by reviewing the full SAICM Global Plan of Action (GPA) – this would provide an opportunity to examine areas of where potential duplication could be avoided, common objectives examined, and partnerships and synergies further realised. Again, building on the work of the IOMC, other UN Organizations could also consider analysing the final SAICM Overall Orientation and Guidance (OOG) with a view to identifying the contributions they can make towards its implementation.
- 5 Examine and develop linkages with initiatives linked to the green economy and cleaner production, green jobs, greening the health sector, and other similar programmes.
- 6 Capitalize on existing opportunities to promote the importance of sound chemicals management issues at key meetings, such as the 2016 review at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) where there is a possibility that chemicals and waste may be reviewed in the holistic and cross-sectoral framework of sustainable development. Participate at or convene high-level events during major international meetings to highlight the UN system contribution to sound chemicals management and its co-benefits for sustainable development (which could include presentation of elements of this report), at, for example, ICCM-4, the HLPF, meetings related to financing for development, and Convention COPs.

- 7 Continue to coordinate, promote synergies, and work with authorities at the national level (the IOMC, for example, has developed a matrix of activities in countries to provide an overview of where individual IOMC organizations are working on chemicals issues in countries) and encourage countries to integrate sound chemicals management issues in national development plans.

The report concludes by highlighting a number of elements from key decisions taken in recent months that already provide some indication of possible ways to further strengthen UN-system wide engagement on sound chemicals management and working towards the 2020 goal.

**Further information**

Further information about the tasks and issues discussed in the IMG is available at: <http://www.unemg.org/issue-management-groups/sound-management-of-chemicals-and-waste>, where the IMG Terms of Reference and meeting minutes can be found.

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