
**6th Central and Eastern Europe regional meeting on the
Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management**

Lodz, Poland, 19-21 February 2018

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020

**Results of the focus group discussions held with National
Focal Points (NFPs) from Africa, Latin America and the
Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific
regions in Brasilia, February 2017**

Note by the secretariat

1. The secretariat has the honour to circulate, for the information of participants, a document presenting the results of the focus group discussions held with National Focal Points (NFPs) from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific regions in Brasilia, February 2017 (see annex).
2. The Independent Evaluator has prepared a narrative that combines the perspectives of national focal points from across the Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific regions that participated in the focus groups in Brasilia in February 2017. At the end of each section are a set of reflective questions that the independent evaluator would like national focal points to consider and provide feedback on.
3. The document is presented as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

* SAICM/RM/CEE.6/1

ANNEX

Results of the focus group discussions held with National Focal Points (NFPs) from Africa, LAC, CEE and AP regions in Brasilia, February 2017

The narrative below combines the perspectives of national focal points from across the CEE, AP, AFR and LAC regions that participated in the focus groups with the independent evaluator in Brasilia in February 2017.

At the end of each section are a set of reflective questions that the independent evaluator would like you to consider and feedback to him.

What are the views of national focal points regarding the main impact(s) of the Strategic Approach

Chemicals are now firmly on the international agenda. Chemicals and waste issues have been mainstreamed within the SDGs with the SAICM goal reflected in Target 12.4. SAICM has created an international forum in which to discuss chemicals issues related to the MEAs – Minamata and BRS conventions. International organisations have taken up the SAICM agenda, for example the WHO Chemicals roadmap launched in early 2017.

At the regional level, national focal points experience a much greater degree of regional cooperation with regard to chemicals management that they attribute to SAICM.

At the national level, national focal points experience a greater degree of coordination within government, together with a greater level of stakeholder engagement in the issues including the chemicals industry.

Whilst the SAICM framework is a voluntary forum with no legal obligation on the part of governments to act, participation in the forum has inspired action plans and the engagement of stakeholders at the national level. SAICM has acted as catalyst for discussion, collaboration and action.

Questions:

1. Does the narrative above speak to your own experience?
2. Please provide specific examples of the impact of SAICM in your country of:
 - a. Regional cooperation on chemicals and waste management
 - b. Coordination within government
 - c. Stakeholder engagement and collaboration
 - d. Action plans to address chemicals and waste

What is our vision

There is a consensus across the regions that the success of SAICM will mean that countries will have more control over chemicals and waste management. At the national level appropriate and effective policy and legislation will be in place and implemented that governs the sustainable management of chemicals. In practice this will mean that chemicals and waste are a top priority in national development plans, and this priority is reflected in sectoral programmes and plans.

This will involve ensuring that chemicals and waste are addressed in an integrated fashion across all sectors and ministries – health, agriculture, industry, energy, environment, labour, household, manufacturing and so on. Policies and institutions need to be designed to harness the synergies between sectors to achieve sustainable chemicals management goals.

In order for such legislation and development plans to be effective chemical management systems will need to be in place with effective comprehensive monitoring, traceability and enforcement mechanisms with the aim of stopping dumping and illegal trade in hazardous chemicals and waste.

A management regime is needed that is flexible and adaptive to new and emerging issues as the science and knowledge becomes apparent.

Achieving the chemicals and waste management will require finance for chemicals and waste management to be internalized at the national level with finance allocated from central government budgets for chemicals management.

Achieving the sustainable management of chemicals will require political will on the part of governments and for all stakeholders to take on their responsibilities for sustainable chemicals management. This will need the cooperation and partnership with chemical producing industries as well as those downstream users of chemicals. Ultimately, there will be the need for a change in the pattern of production and use of chemicals in a way that prevents and minimizes adverse impacts on health and environment. There will be a greater emphasis on recycling of all waste and the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility policies.

A key aspect of fulfilling responsibilities will be open and transparent sharing of all relevant information related to chemicals management. There is a need for clarity in stakeholder roles within and between organisations and stakeholders avoiding duplication and in-fighting in aiming for sustainable chemicals management.

Our vision will also need capacity to identify the chemicals that have the greatest impact – this will require the right kind of science such that we have confidence in the information and risks/ hazard assessment that we are provided with. Countries will need well-functioning and upgraded laboratories to provide capacity for evaluation of products/ chemicals.

With such legislation and systems in place countries will record demonstrable reductions in levels of pollution and eradication of health impacts. Ultimately, this will

result in reduction in health budgets as mortality/ morbidity from chemicals are eradicated. Reducing health impacts will require a network of poisons centres to be established and operative. It will also require comprehensive systems for monitoring mortality and morbidity rates from chemical exposure.

For some, success will be achieved with SAICM becoming a central body for international policy making, not only an advisory body.

Ultimately what we are striving to achieve is a more coherent world in terms of creating the conditions whereby there is equality between countries in terms of chemicals and waste management reflected in internationally recognized standards for safe levels of exposure and banned chemicals common across countries. An important aspect of such equality is the prohibition of production for export of chemicals in countries where domestic use of such chemicals is banned. Such an outcome will require a comprehensive international system of data collection and sharing.

Awareness raising and education will be an important component of a strategy to achieve the sustainable management of chemicals and waste.

SAICM should be a permanent agreement without time limit.

The chemical producing industry should make a significant contribution to the financial costs of implementing SAICM.

National strategies will reflect a balance addressing the international chemicals management agenda as well as addressing national and local priorities of chemicals management.

Countries will need strengthening of their capacity to effectively manage chemical and waste. Such a capacity-strengthening strategy will involve transfers of technologies that are not obsolete.

Questions:

- 1. Is this a vision that you can support? Why?**
- 2. In your country how far are you along the road are you to realising this vision (choose one (a) to (e)):**
 - a. Haven't started the journey**
 - b. Started the journey but still a long way to go**
 - c. The journey is well underway**
 - d. Have nearly completed the journey**
 - e. We have reached our destination and vision**
- 3. Please explain why you have assessed your journey as you have.**

What is the role of national focal points in achieving this goal?

National focal points have a responsibility to raise awareness and promote the introduction of ideas generated at the international SAICM forum into national policies,

legislation and regulations. Their role is to collect information, coordinate and promote the integration of chemicals and waste management among ministries and to build capacity, share information, sensitize, raise awareness and be champions for change.

In order to fulfill this role national focal points play the role of facilitators, enablers and motivators and advocates, bringing together all stakeholders through the creation of collaborative mechanisms, encouraging buy-in and mobilizing resources and translating the international SAICM mandate at the national level.

National focal points have a role to initiate education and awareness campaigns and to sensitise and raise awareness within government and decision-makers.

National focal points have a role to play to support identification of national and local priority areas for chemicals and waste management, including the need for regulation enforcement, research and risk assessments.

National focal points have a role in promoting synergies between the BRS and Minamata Conventions and SAICM. This will require working in partnership with stakeholders to facilitate dialogue between government and non-government stakeholders including industry.

National focal points have a responsibility to monitor health impacts and contribute to the establishment of standards.

National focal points work with other national focal points from the region to develop regional agendas for chemicals and waste management and to engage with regional stakeholders.

Questions:

- 1. Does the description above reflect your understanding of your role as a National Focal Point? Please explain**

[What are the steps or pathways by which national focal points fulfil their role?](#)

National focal points are expected to prepare national strategic plans for taking forward SAICM in their countries. In preparing such plans they seek advice and guidance from the SAICM Secretariat. Moving forward these strategic plans will be aligned with the SDGs.

Such a strategic plan will include actions for further chemical legislation; mainstreaming chemicals and waste management into development plans and national strategic plans; strengthening capacity of stakeholders; allocation of roles and responsibilities; conducting a gap analysis including estimates of costs of inaction.

The production of such plans will require extensive networking with stakeholders at the national and local levels. A wide range of stakeholders will be part of the network – government, civil society, business and industry, labour, health and agriculture sectors.

Through such networking, national focal points will draw on sectoral initiatives such as the WHO roadmap.

Steps will also include national focal points engaging at the regional level, and to ensure that such cooperation and coordination is reflected in their country level strategic plans.

National Focal Points will support Regional Focal Points to integrate the sustainable management of chemicals and waste within programmes at regional and sub-regional levels.

Fundraising will be an important step for the national focal points to secure resources to address priorities identified in the action plans.

National focal points will be ardent advocates for the sustainable management of chemicals and waste, and vocal champions of change.

Questions:

1. Does the description above accurately portray your role? Please explain
2. Central to your role is the development and implementation of a national strategic plan for chemicals and waste management. How successfully have you fulfilled this role (choose one (a) to (e)):
 - a. Have not yet started to develop the strategic plan
 - b. Development in early stages
 - c. Development of plan well underway with broad engagement of stakeholders
 - d. Strategic plan completed and approved by government
 - e. We are in implementation phase of the plan
3. Please explain your assessment.

What and who are the significant influences on the ability of the national focal points to fulfil their role?

A key factor influencing the success of national focal points to deliver on their mandate is the institutional setting in which they work. The greater the degree of integration and coordination between ministries in regard to chemicals and waste management, the more effective is their role. The degree of political commitment and will for chemicals and waste management is a highly influential factor accounting for the degree of integration and coordination.

The ministry/ department in which the national focal point is situated influences the ability of the national focal points to deliver on her mandate. The greater the degree of power and influence of the ministry/ department within government, the greater the degree of influence of the national focal points. Associated with the degree of power of the ministry/ department is the level of finance available for chemicals and waste management.

The extent to which decisions made are taken through to implementation will influence the national focal point's ability to deliver.

The extent of the power of vested interests to limit the implementation of the SAICM agenda will impact on national focal points.

The degree to which national focal points engage with and collaborate with focal points from other MEAs – BRS conventions – and their work to harness the synergies will influence the ability of the national focal points to deliver on their mandate.

The relationship with the private sector and the regulatory framework governing chemicals and waste is a further influencing factor. The type of regulation, the level of enforcement and nature of sanctions for breach of regulations all have a bearing on the ability of national focal points to deliver on their mandate.

National points also lack time and capacity to deliver on their mandate. Typically they have many other duties within their ministries in addition to SAICM and chemicals management. Within ministries there are few staff equipped with the technical skills required for sustainable management.

The strength, awareness and capacity of workers and farmers, workers' unions/ associations and agendas of NGOs and civil society more broadly, and the degree of freedom to engage in the chemicals and waste agenda within the country will impact on the national focal points s ability to deliver on their mandate.

The media – print, radio and TV as well as social media - has a degree of influence over national focal points ability to deliver on their mandate. Media plays a role in shaping public opinion and the level of priority that government attaches to chemicals and waste management. Linked to this is the level of awareness within the general public, the political environment and the priority that government affords to chemicals and waste management. Attitudes of consumers and the public to chemicals and waste will also influence the ability of National Focal Points to fulfill their role. Also of influence is the role of academia and education to raise awareness and build capacity for the management of chemicals and waste within the country.

At the international level, the efficacy of the organization of SAICM and the level of international cooperation, the priorities and agendas in the field of chemicals management influence the ability of national focal points to fulfill their mandate.

The level of engagement with groups vulnerable to adverse health impacts and the capacities that they have – the young, children, women – will have a bearing on the ability of national focal points to deliver on their mandate.

Conflict within countries and at the regional level together with security challenges facing countries and people will also influence the ability to deliver.

Questions:

- 1. Which of the influences above, are relevant for you as you deliver on your role as National Focal Point? Please describe how they influence your work.**
- 2. Are there any other significant influences that you can identify? How do they influence your work?**

3. Of the influences identified in Qu. 1 and Qu 2 which are the most important for you? Why?

What barriers and limitations have National Focal Points experienced in fulfilling their role?

A key barrier identified by national focal points was the lack of funding to deliver on their mandate. This barrier is part of a wider barrier of capacity. national focal points lack the technical knowledge required as well as human resources – people. As well as a lack of numbers of qualified staff, turnover of personnel has a detrimental impact on continuity of knowledge and decisions within departments/ ministries. In addition, national focal points identified institutional capacity more broadly as a barrier.

Institutional barriers relate to a general lack of awareness of politicians and associated low political priority for chemicals and waste management. This has resulted in weak legislation governing chemicals and waste management.

Institutional weakness also manifests itself through lack of cooperation between ministries and sectors e.g. inability to share data that undermines decision-making. The lack of cooperation also reflects underlying competing and conflicting priorities (e.g. between the mining and environment sectors). Linked to this lack of political coherence is the role of different interests and lobbies and the relative influence and degree of power that these interest groups hold.

Intellectual property rights and patents together with concerns over business confidentiality limit governments' ability to innovate and transition to alternative technologies and technology transfer to developing countries.

Questions:

1. What are the most significant barriers that prevent you from delivering on your role? Please explain.

What is needed for the National Focal Points to fulfil their role more effectively?

national focal points identified resources – donor funds – for enabling them to fulfill their role effectively. In particular access to funds for capacity-building and enabling projects such as the QSP were identified as effective in supporting stakeholder engagement and strengthening institutional capacity. However, for these pilot projects to realize their full potential clear follow-up pathways are needed and sustained support for action after projects are completed should be in place. Raising chemicals and waste on the political agenda is needed before a greater share of national budget is allocated the chemicals and waste management.

Strong civil society organisations that prioritise chemicals and waste management are needed to enhance the effectiveness of the national focal point role. Such organisations serve to promote transparency, to engage with chemical users, particularly vulnerable

groups, and to communicate and raise awareness with these groups. An active media that not only disseminate information to the general public but also to policy actors, will also serve to strengthen national focal point's capacity to deliver on their mandate.

Institutional strengthening of the technical and expertise infrastructure – laboratories, databases, access to science and knowledge exchange, best practice and access to technologies – will all serve to enable national focal points to deliver on their role.

At the national level steps to increase the profile of chemicals and waste management are needed that will increase the political will within government to deal with these issues.. Steps that enhance the influence that SAICM has on the introduction of legally binding regulations will strengthen the role of national focal points.

At the international level, consistent and uninterrupted delivery of programmes and projects by IOMC organisations will contribute to greater effectiveness of national focal points' roles. Removal of restrictions on access to international donor funds for some countries will strengthen the effectiveness of the national focal point role in those countries.

Questions:

- 1. What would help you to fulfil your role more effectively? Please explain.**
