
**Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference
on Chemicals Management**

Second meeting

Geneva, 15–17 December 2014

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

**Preparations for the fourth session of the International
Conference on Chemicals Management**

Preparations for the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management

I. Background

1. In its resolution I/1, adopted at its first session, the International Conference on Chemicals Management invited the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to convene further sessions of the Conference, working in collaboration with the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, the United Nations Development Programme and other intergovernmental organizations.
2. Paragraphs 24 and 25 of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management set out the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. The Conference will undertake periodic reviews of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and its functions will be:
 - (a) To receive reports from all relevant stakeholders on progress in implementation of the Strategic Approach and to disseminate information as appropriate;
 - (b) To evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Approach with a view to reviewing progress against the 2020 target and taking strategic decisions, programming, prioritizing and updating the approach as necessary;
 - (c) To provide guidance on implementation of the Strategic Approach to stakeholders;
 - (d) To report on progress in implementation of the Strategic Approach to stakeholders;
 - (e) To promote implementation of existing international instruments and programmes;
 - (f) To promote coherence among chemicals management instruments at the international level;
 - (g) To promote the strengthening of national chemicals management capacities;
 - (h) To work to ensure that the necessary financial and technical resources are available for implementation;
 - (i) To evaluate the performance of the financing of the Strategic Approach;
 - (j) To focus attention and call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action;

* SAICM/OEWG.2/1.

- (k) To promote information exchange and scientific and technical cooperation;
- (l) To provide a high-level international forum for multi-stakeholder and multisectoral discussion and exchange of experience on chemicals management issues with the participation of non-governmental organizations in accordance with applicable rules of procedure;
- (m) To promote the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategic Approach.

II. Scheduling the International Conference on Chemicals Management

3. Paragraph 25 of the Overarching Policy Strategy provides that “where appropriate, sessions of the Conference should be held back to back with meetings of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations in order to enhance synergies and cost-effectiveness and to promote the Strategic Approach’s multisectoral nature. Sessions of the Conference should be held in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2020, unless otherwise decided by the Conference”.

4. The first session of the Conference was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 4 to 6 February 2006, back to back with the ninth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. The second session was held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, back to back with the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the sixty-second World Health Assembly. The third session of the Conference, initially intended to be held in Geneva back to back with the International Labour Conference in May 2012, was held at the United Nations Office in Nairobi from 17 to 21 September 2012 owing to the change in date of the International Labour Conference and its close proximity to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the fourth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury.

5. Accordingly, the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management has been tentatively scheduled to be held in Geneva from 28 September to 2 October 2015, nine months after the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. The dates and venue will be provisional until an offer has been made to host the Conference and workable back-to-back arrangements have been explored with governing body meetings of relevant intergovernmental organizations.

III. Preparations for the fourth session of the Conference

6. Preparations for the fourth session of the Conference in the intersessional period have been made through the organization of regional meetings¹ for all five United Nations regions and the hosting of two face-to-face meetings² and seven teleconferences of the Bureau of the fourth session of the Conference.

7. The fourth session will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Strategic Approach in Dubai in February 2006, with five years remaining to achieve the 2020 goal. The Conference is therefore a crucial milestone in assessing the achievements and successes of the Strategic Approach in paving the way towards the achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management.

8. In line with a request by the Conference at its third session,³ stakeholders in the Strategic Approach have been invited to contribute to the development of overall orientation and guidance for the Strategic Approach to facilitate the achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management and be prepared to reinforce and strengthen their individual commitment to the 2020 goal at the fourth session of the Conference.

¹ Regional meetings have been held as follows: Latin American and Caribbean region, Mexico City, 19-22 August 2013; Central and Eastern European region, Skopje, 23-26 September 2013; African region, Pretoria, 18-22 November 2013; EU-JUSSCANNZ countries, Paris, 14 February 2014; and Asia-Pacific region, Kuala Lumpur, 23-27 March 2014. Reports of the meetings are available at www.saicm.org.

² Bureau meetings were held in Geneva on 9 and 10 July 2013 and 17 and 18 June 2014.

³ SAICM/ICCM/3/24, para. 77.

9. The overall orientation and guidance (see SAICM/OEWG.2/4), which was prepared by the secretariat of the Strategic Approach under the guidance of the Bureau and with significant contributions from the Strategic Approach stakeholders, seeks to inform decision makers of the actions to take towards achieving the 2020 goal by providing guidance and identifying approaches for all Strategic Approach stakeholders.

10. Considering that the fourth session of the Conference will be the last Strategic Approach decision-making meeting to be held before 2020, unless otherwise decided by the Conference, the occasion may provide an opportunity to relive the spirit of the first session of the Conference and offer renewed commitment to the objectives set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach.

11. In view of the above, and with the aim of celebrating 10 years of the Strategic Approach, the secretariat proposes that a high-level multisectoral and multi-stakeholder event be organized for the fourth session of the Conference. The Conference will be an interactive multisectoral and multi-stakeholder platform for the exchange of experience, with thematic side events, exhibitions, information sessions, media events and other outreach and information-sharing activities, recognizing that 10 years of the Strategic Approach marks a significant milestone for stakeholders to fully examine the progress, achievements, challenges and opportunities of the Approach.

IV. Participation and organization of work

12. The fourth session of the Conference will be open to representatives of all interested Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in accordance with credentials and accreditation requirements similar to those applied at the third session of the Conference.⁴

13. Subject to the availability of resources and in line with the credentials and accreditation procedures, travel funding will be provided to representatives from eligible developing countries and countries with economies in transition and to a selected number of non-governmental representatives. In addition, in order to encourage multisectoral participation, Governments seeking travel funding are expected to nominate individuals from a variety of sectors, including agriculture, environment, health, industry and labour.

14. In the light of the experience gained from previous sessions of the Conference, the secretariat estimates that between 600 and 800 participants will attend the Conference, bringing together a diverse group of representatives from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, industry and academia, and observers.

15. The fourth session of the Conference is expected to be held over five days, from Monday, 28 September, to Friday, 2 October 2015, with regional meetings and technical information sessions to be held on Sunday, 27 September 2015.

16. During the regional meetings convened in 2013 and 2014, the secretariat was requested to explore ways to make the fourth session of the Conference more responsive to the needs of the regions. This was raised at the third session of the Conference in the context of a proposal from the African region on highly hazardous pesticides. Unfortunately, the proposal could not be discussed due to lack of time, and hence no resolution was adopted. It was therefore suggested that appropriate time should be allocated at the fourth session of the Conference to discuss practical issues related to the implementation of the Strategic Approach that are proving challenging for developing countries.

17. The Open-ended Working Group may wish to consider other ways in which the fourth session of the Conference may become more responsive to the needs of the regions and provide further guidance to the secretariat on planning for the Conference.

V. High-level dimension of the fourth session of the Conference

18. In the light of the tenth anniversary of the Strategic Approach, the Open-ended Working Group may wish to consider how a possible high-level dimension of the fourth session of the Conference should be arranged. Such efforts could include:

⁴ Governments participating in the third session of the Conference were required to provide credentials for their representatives issued either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference. The participation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the third session of the Conference was confirmed by a simple accreditation procedure based on the registration of the organizations for the session.

- (a) Prominent individuals as keynote speakers from Governments, industry, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in the opening ceremony of the fourth session of the Conference or for the opening of the high-level segment;
- (b) Extending an invitation to previous presidents of the Conference to play an active role at the session in celebrating the 10 years of the Strategic Approach and promoting further implementation;
- (c) The scheduling of a high-level segment on the last one or two days of the session to allow for speeches and participation in special events by Heads of Government, ministers, heads of organizations and other senior representatives from industry;
- (d) The organization of special events during the session such as thematic round tables for Ministers, heads of organizations, industry chief executive officers and other senior representatives;
- (e) The scheduling of a high-level media event or press conference on the first and last days of the session.

VI. Themes

- 19. At its first meeting, held in Geneva in July 2013, the Bureau of the fourth session of the Conference discussed the value of having a thematic approach to the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, recalling that the overarching theme of the third session of the Conference was “Chemical safety for sustainable development”.
- 20. The Bureau was of the opinion that a theme for the fourth session of the Conference could enhance the visibility and impact of the Conference and offer opportunities for strengthening multisectoral engagement and promoting information exchange. At the Bureau meeting, it was suggested that a theme relating to the use of chemicals in the agricultural sector would allow for discussion of issues such as highly hazardous pesticides, food safety and security and sustainable agriculture.
- 21. Furthermore, an overarching theme might also be relevant for the high-level segment of the Conference, while side events and exhibitions could explore the technical aspects of implementation of the Strategic Approach linked to the overarching theme from a multi-stakeholder and/or multisectoral perspective.
- 22. The Open-ended Working Group may wish to suggest possible themes or other approaches for the fourth session of the Conference for further consideration by the Bureau.

VII. Technical briefings, side events and exhibitions

- 23. Events such as technical briefings, side events and exhibitions allow for important opportunities to promote the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategic Approach and have been incorporated into the programme of the Conference at previous sessions. Such events promote information exchange and scientific and technical cooperation, coherence among chemicals management instruments at the international level and strengthening of national chemicals management capacities in line with the functions of the Conference.
- 24. Information on how to apply for and convene technical briefings, side events and exhibitions will be issued by the secretariat in advance of the fourth session of the Conference. These events may include presentations of projects under development or results of completed activities.

VIII. Estimated budgetary requirements for the fourth session of the Conference

- 25. The indicative budget approved by the Conference at its third session provides \$1.4 million for the fourth session of the Conference. However, taking into account the factors set out above and the expenditures at previous sessions of the Conference, the Strategic Approach secretariat estimates that the actual costs may be higher.
- 26. The estimated budget covers the five days of the meeting, allowing for one additional day for regional and group meetings and a half-day technical briefing. It assumes that two participants from 100 eligible countries would be funded together with a smaller number of non-governmental organizations. It should be emphasized that these are initial estimates that are subject to confirmation once the number of plenary sessions requiring interpretation and full conference arrangements have been determined.

27. At the time of writing the present note, the secretariat had not received any pledges for the fourth session of the Conference.
 28. The Open-ended Working Group may wish to encourage donors to contribute to the organization of the fourth session of the Conference and suggest other possible sources of funding for the secretariat in preparation and planning for the fourth session of the Conference.
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