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

Second meeting

Geneva, 15–17 December 2014

Items 3 (b) and 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Progress and gaps towards the achievement of the 2020
goal of sound chemicals management: progress in
achieving the objectives of the Strategic Approach
Overarching Policy Strategy**

**Planned activities and draft budget of the secretariat
for the period 2016-2020**

Performance of information clearing house services

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. One of the functions of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as set out in paragraph 28 of the Overarching Policy Strategy, includes the provision of information clearing house services such as provision of advice to countries on implementation of the Strategic Approach, referral of requests for information to relevant sources, and facilitation of access to information and expertise in support of specific national actions.
2. It is envisaged that the clearing house will minimize the duplication of effort in the collection of digital information related to the implementation of the Strategic Approach and to assist in the coordination of data collection and research activities by standardizing the format and quality of the information presented.
3. Furthermore, in its resolution III/5, the International Conference on Chemicals Management invited the Coordinator of the Strategic Approach secretariat and the Joint Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to further increase synergies in the implementation of their respective information clearing houses.

II. Current situation

4. The Strategic Approach clearing house was established in 2009 and actively updated in 2012. The information provided in the clearing house is organized according to the five objectives of the Strategic Approach and includes resources, information on events and information about focal points and other Strategic Approach stakeholders, with login access available to subscribers. While the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its third session approved a budget – albeit without funding – for the post of Programme Officer (P-3) to undertake the function of clearing-house

* SAICM/OEWG.2/1.

officer, owing to resource constraints it has not been possible to update the clearing house since the end of 2012, although it remains in place (www.saicm.org/ich/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=162&Itemid=854).

5. In response to resolution III/5, a task force was established in early 2014, comprising members of the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Chemicals Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Strategic Approach secretariat, with a view to assessing possible areas of cooperation and coordination. The task force has discussed possible areas for progress and opportunities for collaborating on the Strategic Approach clearing house. Such opportunities include the sharing of broad information resources, a database of contacts, a shared calendar and a document management system. As the Strategic Approach website currently uses a separate operating system from that of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, it has not been possible to make significant progress on the clearing house. However, a shared calendar is in the final stages of development and will be hosted on the UNEP Chemicals Branch website, with a link provided on the Strategic Approach website. This represents a first step in collaboration and will provide information to stakeholders on meetings and events in the upcoming months organized by the Strategic Approach secretariat, the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Chemicals Branch and other stakeholders.

6. A project database for the Quick Start Programme is currently under development. Once testing has been completed, the database will be used by the Strategic Approach secretariat in its day-to-day management of the Programme, which will allow for greater access to project information. The database may be expanded for use beyond the Strategic Approach secretariat subject to available resources.

III. Existing information-sharing resources

7. While the clearing house operated by the Strategic Approach secretariat does not currently provide comprehensive, regularly updated information, many other resources are available to support Strategic Approach implementation. A sample of these resources is outlined below.

8. The emerging policy issues of the Strategic Approach, for example, each have dedicated lead organizations and operate web pages outlining their activities:

(a) Lead in Paint, led by UNEP and the World Health Organization (WHO), has a web page hosted on the UNEP website, with a focus on activities under the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paints (www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/Home/tabid/197/chemicalsandwaste/LeadCadmium/PrioritiesforAction/GAELP/tabid/6176/Default.aspx). Information is also available on the WHO website (www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/gaelp/en/);

(b) The Chemicals in Products project, led by UNEP, has a web page on the UNEP website, providing an overview of the project and details of relevant past events. Case studies on the electronics, toy, building and textile sectors are also provided (www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/UNEPsWork/ChemicalsinProductsproject/tabid/56141/Default.aspx);

(c) Hazardous substances within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products is led by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Information is available on the UNIDO website (<http://www.unido.org/en/what-we-do/poverty-reduction-through-productive-activities/business-investment-and-technology-services/competitiveness-business-environment-and-upgrading/information-and-communications-technology/programmes/electronic-waste.html>). In addition, Solving the E-waste Problem (StEP) has significant information resources available (www.step-initiative.org/), with five task forces and associated weblinks on policy, redesign, reuse, recycling and capacity-building;

(d) Nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials is led by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). UNITAR hosts a web page with information on its activities, results, opportunities and partners. OECD provides information on its website, with a web page committed to the safety of manufactured nanomaterials, and provides updates on the first six years of the project and publications (www.oecd.org/env/ehs/nanosafety/);

(e) UNEP and WHO both operate web pages on endocrine-disrupting chemicals, offering complementary information on this issue and focusing on the publication *State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals: 2012* (www.unep.org/pdf/WHO_HSE_PHE_IHE_2013.1_eng.pdf).

9. The Global SCP Clearinghouse is administered by the secretariat of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns at UNEP. It describes itself as a harmonized and dynamic information and knowledge platform that will facilitate and trigger innovation and cooperation towards the implementation of sustainable consumption and production. The information on sustainable consumption and production initiatives can be viewed by selecting various options, including geographic scope, region, country/area, themes/sectors, type of initiative, type of lead organization and status (www.spcclearinghouse.org/).
10. The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions operate a joint clearing-house mechanism. The website offers a large amount of information related to the three conventions and, by extension, to activities under the Strategic Approach (<http://synergies.pops.int/>).
11. The InforMEA learning platform harvests Conference of the Parties decisions, news, meetings, membership, national focal points and reports from Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The Strategic Approach secretariat is collaborating with the InforMEA platform to be represented in the information knowledge management initiative in the future (www.informea.org/).

IV. The future of the information clearing house

12. The overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals (see SAICM/OEWG.2/4) notes that the absence of a clearing house has major implications for and impacts on mainstreaming, implementation and capacity-building efforts and that a more developed and sustained system for sharing information is required in order to encourage all stakeholders to increase contributions and exchanges of information.
13. In moving forward, Strategic Approach stakeholders may wish to provide guidance and explore options for a fully operational clearing-house mechanism for sharing information on the Quick Start Programme and emerging policy issue projects to scale up successful approaches and further anchor results, minimize duplication of effort and improve accessibility to clear, timely and appropriate information to support decision-making in pursuit of the sound management of chemicals and waste at all levels of society. In doing so, stakeholders may wish to review existing information exchange networks and remaining information needs and consider related budgetary needs.
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