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

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Item 5 (a) (v) of the provisional agenda*

**Emerging policy issues and other issues of concern:
report on progress on emerging policy issues:
endocrine-disrupting chemicals**

**Summary of regional workshop outcomes and responses to
questionnaires relating to endocrine-disrupting chemicals**

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, for the information of participants, a summary paper on the outcomes of regional workshops and responses to questionnaires sent out by the United Nations Environment Programme related to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (see annex). The summary paper is reproduced as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

* SAICM/OEWG.2/1.

Annex

Summary of regional workshop outcomes and responses to questionnaires relating to endocrine disrupting chemicals

Background

1. The International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) at its third session in September 2012 agreed that endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) met the criteria of a Strategic Approach emerging policy issue, and adopted resolution III/2 calling upon the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to develop a plan of work for the cooperative actions on EDCs. A joint work plan for UNEP, WHO and OECD was developed and presented at the Strategic Approach regional meetings, held in 2013 and 2014.
2. Within the framework of UNEP's work plan in response to the ICCM3 resolution, four regional awareness raising workshops were conducted back-to-back with the 2013-2014 Strategic Approach regional meetings and questionnaires were distributed to participants in advance of the workshops. These activities relate to specific action points in paragraph 6 of resolution III/2 part F and is part of the joint IOMC work plan.
3. Four regional awareness raising workshops on endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) were organised by UNEP Chemicals, in collaboration with WHO and OECD, back-to-back with the regional meetings of the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM) in 2013–2014:
 - a) Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, in Mexico City, Mexico, 19 August 2013;
 - b) Central and Eastern European (CEE) region, in Skopje, Macedonia, 23 September 2013;
 - c) Africa Region, in Pretoria, South Africa, 22 November 2013;
 - d) Asia and Pacific (AP) region, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 23 March 2014.
4. At the regional awareness raising workshops on EDCs, presentations were given as follows:
 - a) Introduction on the scope and content of the UNEP/WHO report “State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals 2012” as well as the process for developing the report (by UNEP Chemicals representative);
 - b) Technical content of the report, including information on actions of hormones in the body, the mechanisms of action of EDCs, human health effects, wildlife effects and issues of exposure to potential EDCs (by the authors of the report and/or other experts);
 - c) Information on testing methodologies (by OECD representative and/or other experts);
 - d) Perspective from the pesticide industry (by Croplife representative);

- e) NGO perspective on the scope of the problem (by PAN/IPEN representative).
5. Following the technical presentations, the participants were divided into several small working groups to address the following questions:
 - a) Identify the more important needs in the sub-region (information, actions, etc.);
 - b) Discuss needs for cross-sectoral cooperation (including government, academia);
 - c) Discuss possible cooperative activities in and among countries in the (sub)-region(s);
 - d) Identify needs for international support and activities.
6. Additionally, the participants were requested to fill in a questionnaire prepared and sent out by UNEP in advance of the regional workshops. The objective of the questionnaire was to gather more region-specific information on the EDC issue.
7. Furthermore, at the SAICM regional meetings, a resolution on EDCs was discussed, modified and adopted by three regions (Africa, AP and LAC; adopted resolutions see Annexes II–IV). The CEE region did not adopt a regional resolution on EDCs, but acknowledged the elements of the proposed resolution by IPEN as important to the region.
8. The present document is a summary of the regional awareness raising workshops on EDCs and the regional resolutions adopted by the regions. It consists of three sections: [i] overall feedback on the regional awareness raising workshops on EDCs, [ii] outputs of group discussions at the workshops, and [iii] responses to the questionnaires.

Overall feedback on the regional awareness raising workshops on EDCs

9. The workshops on EDCs were well received by the regions; they were recognized as helpful support to awareness raising and generated important dialogue.
10. The resolutions adopted by the African, AP and LAC regions reinforce the ICCM3 resolution on EDCs. Amongst other things, the resolutions invite UNEP and WHO, subject to availability of resources, to [i] develop a report on EDCs in each region with regional input that is targeted to the situation and needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and [ii] recommend a robust series of awareness raising activities on EDCs to take place in respective regional languages.

Outputs of group discussions at the workshops

11. In general, the complexity of the EDC issue and the importance to confront and overcome the current lack of awareness and knowledge on EDCs are acknowledged by the participants at the four regional awareness raising workshops. To do so, the workshop participants have called for a broader and more intense dialogue and cooperation among nations, (sub)-regions and continents and among sectors (government, industry, civil society and academia, etc.). In addition, a number of activities to enhance the current understanding of the EDC issue have been suggested: [i] critical review and harmonisation of the current knowledge and policy on EDCs in and among the (sub)-regions; [ii] capacity building and technical and financial support of relevant stakeholder groups to assess and address the EDC issue; [iii] intensified research on exposure and potential impact of (potential) EDCs. Furthermore, development of instruments (e.g. a

repository of information on (potential) EDCs), guidance and recommendations on the assessment and management of (potential) EDCs have been suggested by the workshop participants. Detailed answers to each individual area as follows.

- 12. Topic 1:** Identify the more important needs in the sub-region (information, actions, etc.)
 - a) Facilitating effective information dissemination, awareness raising and training of policy makers, stakeholders and the public on the EDC issue [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
 - b) Promotion and strengthening of inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary (government, academia, NGOs, industry, media, etc.) dialogue and cooperative activities (capacity building, research and monitoring) [*Africa, AP, LAC*];
 - c) Raise the political status of the EDC issue and development of one integrated policy or framework to manage EDCs [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
 - d) Capacity building in relevant stakeholder groups (government, academia, NGOs, industry, etc.) to assess and address EDCs [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
 - e) Critical review and compilation of existing knowledge on (potential) EDCs in the region, including both exposure and effects, and identification of gaps and needs [*Africa, CEE, LAC*];
 - f) Development and prioritization of strategic and operational plans based on the regional analyses, containing method for implementation of actions (including research on the exposure and impact of (potential) EDCs, development of national inventory of (potential) EDCs, promotion of alternatives, among others [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
 - g) Technical and financial resources for proper management of EDCs by stakeholders [*LAC*];
- 13. Topic 2:** Discuss needs for cross-sectoral cooperation (including government, academia)
 - a) Promotion and strengthening of inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary (government, academia, NGOs, industry, media, etc.) dialogue and cooperative activities (capacity building, research and monitoring) at national and regional level [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
 - b) Creation of a body/working group/framework to facilitate inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary information sharing and action coordination at national and regional level, in order to avoid compartmentalized management [*Africa, AP, LAC*];
 - c) Critical review and harmonisation of existing knowledge, policies and regulations on EDCs at national and regional level [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*].
- 14. Topic 3:** Discuss possible cooperative activities in and among countries in the (sub)-region(s)
 - a) Promotion and strengthening of dialogue among sectors and countries [*Africa, AP, LAC*];

- b) Identification and compilation of past and ongoing activities, needs and existing resources in the region [*Africa, CEE, LAC*];
- c) Critical review and harmonisation of existing policies and regulations on EDCs in the (sub)-region(s) [*Africa, AP, LAC*];
- d) Development of a body/working group/framework/system to facilitate information sharing and technology transfer among sectors and countries [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
- e) Development of (sub)-regional activities and projects (including awareness raising, scientific research, training activities and workshops) in the presence or absence of readily available funding to the region [*Africa, CEE, LAC*];
- f) Promotion of bilateral cooperation and coordination [*CEE*];
- g) Establishment of database on chemicals, particularly on (potential) EDCs [*AP*];
- h) Development of declarations and instruments of the Ministers of Health and Environment to be part of the (sub)-regional agenda [*LAC*].

15. Topic 4: Identify needs for international support & activities

- a) Provision of space for international dialogue, e.g., through SAICM [*AP, LAC*];
- b) Need for including EDCs into agendas of UNEP and WHO governing bodies as a specific issue to be addressed, i.e. need of political will at a high level [*Africa, CEE*];
- c) Critical review and compilation of existing knowledge and tools on EDCs [*CEE, LAC*];
- d) Recommendations for step-by-step implementation of activities related to EDCs (e.g., risk assessment) [*Africa, CEE*];
- e) Financial and technical support of capacity building and research, including internationally coordinated activities relevant to particular countries [*Africa, AP, CEE, LAC*];
- f) Establish pilot projects [*AP*];
- g) Promotion and strengthening of South–South cooperation [*LAC*];
- h) Better use of GHS [*Africa*].

Responses to the questionnaires

- 16.** In total, responses to questionnaires from 16 countries and one organisation were collected, with ten from the LAC region, one from the CEE region, four from the Africa region and two from the AP region, respectively.
- 17.** In general, the responses to the questionnaires indicated a lack of specific knowledge and studies on the exposure and potential impact of (potential) EDCs; available studies are conventional and focus primarily on heavy metals (lead and mercury), certain pesticides and POPs. Consequently, control actions in these countries on (potential) EDCs are mostly initiated through their commitment to the MEAs such as the Stockholm

Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness on exposure and potential impact of (potential) EDCs among the general population in most of the countries participated, although the scientific community in some of those countries are aware of the EDC issue and conduct studies on (potential) EDCs. But almost all representatives from the countries participated recognised strong needs and suggested activities to confront and overcome the current lack of awareness and knowledge on EDCs: [i] awareness raising on the EDC issue among the general population and policy makers in the region; [ii] intense studies on the exposure and potential impact of (potential) EDCs in the region. In addition, several countries kindly requested capacity building as well as technical and financial support to conduct the suggested activities. Detailed responses to individual questions #1–7 are elaborated as follows and an overview can also be seen in Table 1, whereas responses to question #8 are aggregated in Table 2.

- 18. Question 1:** Is there information about effects in wildlife that can be possibly related to endocrine disruption? **Question 2:** Is there information about effects or health trends in the human population that can possibly be related to endocrine disruption?
Responses: Most of the countries do not have information on effects in wildlife (10 out of 16) or humans (11 out of 16) that can be possibly related to endocrine disruption, whereas five countries and IPEN do have such information, which is mainly on effects possibly related to POPs [*Belarus, Caribbean, South Africa*].
- 19. Question 3:** Is there information about exposure to particular EDCs or groups of EDCs?
Responses: More than half of the countries participated (10 out of 16) and IPEN do have information about exposure to certain EDCs; similarly to questions #1 and #2, the information on exposure to EDCs focuses on heavy metal [*Belize, Haiti, Togo*], pesticides [*Costa Rica, Egypt, Lao, Nicaragua*] and POPs [*Belarus, Caribbean, Costa Rica, Haiti, Nicaragua, South Africa*].
- 20. Question 4:** Are there studies (completed, on-going or planned) on particular EDC related effects or on particular EDCs?
Responses: About half of the countries participated (7 out of 16) and IPEN reported their studies on particular EDC-related effects or on particular EDCs; most of the studies focus on heavy metals [*South Africa, Togo*] and POPs [*Belarus, Caribbean, South Africa, Venezuela*].
- 21. Question 5:** Is there awareness about EDC issues among general population or among certain stakeholder groups?
Responses: There is, in general, a lack of awareness about the EDC issue in most of the countries participated, whereas only six countries participated consider that there is awareness about the EDC issues among general population [*Belarus*] or among certain stakeholder groups, mostly the scientific community [*Belize, Caribbean, Costa Rica, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela*].
- 22. Question 6:** Have there been any actions in your country to address potential risks from EDCs?
Responses: Half of the countries participated have conducted actions to address potential risks from EDCs, mostly on heavy metals [*Nicaragua*], pesticides [*Belarus, Nicaragua*] and POPs [*Belarus, Caribbean, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Venezuela*].

- 23. Question 7:** Do you consider that there are sufficient activities in the country to address issues and risks related to EDCs?
- Responses:** Almost all countries and IPEN think that there are insufficient activities in the country to address the EDC issue. However, it should be noted that the representative from Costa Rica considers that there are sufficient activities in Costa Rica and does not see the need to address issues and risks related to EDCs with “the secretariat”, mentioned several times by the country. Details on this special case are yet to be identified.

Concluding Remarks

- 24.** Based on the feedback from group discussions at the workshops, the responses to the questionnaires and the adopted regional resolutions, UNEP will prioritize activities and possibly embody in UNEP’s future project on EDCs under UNEP’s Programme of Work subject to the availability of funds. Development of the project will be an open and transparent process in consultation with Partners and stakeholders and will focus on the environmental exposure and impact of EDCs.
- 25.** UNEP is establishing an Advisory Group that will provide strategic and policy advice to UNEP on the environmental exposure and impact of EDCs. The EDC Advisory Group to UNEP will review the outcomes of the regional workshops and responses to the questionnaires and will provide guidance on the future activities to be undertaken by UNEP on EDCs.
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