Virtual Working Group – Process to Address Issues of Concern

I. Introduction

The proposal is prepared by the Virtual Working Group (VWG) co-facilitators for consideration by the Virtual Working Group and is based on inputs received through electronic feedback and the virtual meetings.

It responds to part (i) and (ii) of the mandate of this VWG:

(i) Review Annex B of SAICM/IP.4/2 and identify possibilities for compromise; or alternative text in areas of divergence; or identify gaps;
(ii) Develop proposals for draft procedures for the identification, nomination, selection, review and prioritization of the issues of concern; determining the need for further work on an issue of concern; and duration for considering issues of concern, drawing on experience.

Furthermore, a process for addressing the existing emerging policy issues (EPIs) and other issues of concern under the future instrument was discussed by the VWG on 14 December 2020 in addition to the call for related written submissions. This discussion is linked to the present review of Annex B as a common view was expressed that the existing EPIs and other issues of concern should be reviewed for continued relevance and be integrated as ‘issues of concern’ under the new instrument.

II. Reflections and overview

a) General reflections

• Overall, the process should be simple, inclusive and transparent.
• In moving forward, the process needs greater ownership and enhanced implementation.
• The process needs to include consideration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
• Consideration will still need to be given to the linkage to:
  i. any science policy interface;
  ii. proposed Strategic Objective C on issues of concern and related targets and indicators. Stakeholders have also provided their inputs on Strategic Objective C on issues of concern via written submissions. These submissions are available on the VWG webpage.
  iii. reporting under mechanisms to support implementation. Section G states ‘Every third year evaluate progress on Issues of Concern and recommend changes to the programmes of work if necessary’.

b) Co-facilitators’ proposal for the outline

• Based on the feedback received in the written submissions and the VWG meetings held to date, the co-facilitators have made a proposal to revise and realign the text for issues of concern, building on the text proposed in Document SAICM/IP.4/2 as well as ICCM Resolution II/4 and considering the discussions and submissions. The co-facilitators’ proposed outline is set out in Box 1.
11 January 2021 – Proposal from the co-facilitators of VWG3

- The outline of both the issues of concern text proposed in Document SAICM/IP.4/2 as well as ICCM Resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues are included in the Annex to the present document for ease of reference.

Box 1: Proposed outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Submission of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Nomination, selection and adoption process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Nomination of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Initial review and publication of submissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Decision-making and adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Mechanisms for implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Workplans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Tracking progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Determining the need for further work on an issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Section III below provides proposed text from the co-facilitators based on the proposed outline above.
- It is proposed that the focus of the 18 January 2021 discussion will be on Box 1 above and section III below.

III. Text proposal from the co-facilitators for ANNEX B

**Issues of [international] concern**

**Rationale**

The group expressed different views on the title. As the views expressed went in different directions, the co-facilitators have not proposed a new title, but kept the one from the compilation document (SAICM/IP.4/2).

The co-facilitators would like to note that it could be difficult to address an issue which is not of concern under this title and would seek stakeholders' views on whether other issues than those of concern should be addressed, and if so, how this could be done under this title.

Commented [CANADA1]: Canada prefers the simpler "Issues of Concern" as the title for this section.

Canada agrees that the scope should be broad enough to include positive, forward looking, solution/prevention focused issues (e.g. green chemistry or safe by design), and suggests that, rather than changing the title, the submission of information section (B) could be tweaked to allow for this broader perspective. See our suggested changes below.
11 January 2021 – Proposal from the co-facilitators of VWG3

A. Definition

1. An issue of concern is an issue involving any phase in the life cycle of chemicals and which has not yet been generally recognized, is insufficiently addressed or arises from the current level of scientific information and which may have significant adverse effects on human health and/or the environment.

Rationale

Based on the discussions and feedback, the definition used in ICCM Resolution II/4 is proposed as it is already agreed, simpler and viewed as more inclusive.

B. Submission of Information

1. To nominate an issue, the following information should be provided:

   a. Why the beyond 2020 framework is best placed to advance the issue.

   a bis. Adverse effects Impacts on human health and/or the environment, taking into account inter alia women, children and other vulnerable populations, biodiversity ecosystems and any toxicological and exposure data;

   b. How the issues are integral to the vision of the Beyond 2020 Framework, are ongoing, and need to be addressed to enhance basic chemicals and waste management;

   c. Extent to which action is needed on the issue in order for countries to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030;

   d. Extent to which the issue is being addressed by other bodies, at the regional or international level, and how the proposed action is related to, complements, or does not duplicate such effort;

   e. Extent to which the problem issue is relevant to stakeholders, particularly taking into account the needs of developing countries/countries with economies in transition;

   f. Extent to which the issue is of a cross-cutting nature including at the sectoral level;

   g. Existing knowledge and perceived gaps in understanding about the issue;

   h. A list of priority actions and related timelines to guide implementation and the elaboration of a proposed workplan.

Rationale

There was general support for the information requirements set out in Annex B in the compilation document, and this text proposal follows Annex B as a starting point. Some attempt has been made to simplify the text and identify possibilities for compromise or alternative text in areas of divergence as per the mandate of this virtual working group.

Commented [CANADA2]: The definition proposed is the original definition from the Annex to resolution II/4 which was for “emerging policy issues” and so is not transferable to “issues of concern” and could omit appropriate issues for the instrument to consider/address. Given that the submission of information section sets out sufficient descriptions of what kinds of issues should be proposed for consideration, we suggest using something simpler, such as: “An issue of concern can be any issue within the scope of the beyond 2020 framework that is not being addressed in another forum and for which the beyond 2020 framework is best placed to make progress.”

This also allows negotiations on the scope of the instrument to occur as part of a broader discussion, and incorporated here by reference to the “scope of the beyond 2020 framework”.

Commented [CANADA3]: Rationale for nominating an issue should also convey why this framework would be the most appropriate forum to address that issue, and what this framework could uniquely offer. See new (a bis), for consideration.

Commented [CANADA4]: We support the suggestion made by others to replace “adverse effects” with “impacts” for more flexibility to allow broader/positive issues to be considered.

We would also suggest replacing “problem” in (e) with “issue”.

Commented [CANADA5]: By referencing a time-specific goal, would this paragraph need to be updated by/in 2030? Also note the SDG 12.4 reference to a 2020 timeline. To avoid having this become out of date, we suggest simplifying (e.g. remove “by 2030”) or add “or its successor”.

Commented [CANADA6]: We suggest that this element needs a qualifier, relevant to whom? Relevant to stakeholders would be our suggestion.

1 Consideration should be given to how the proposed action will further basic chemicals management as per the 11 basic elements in the Overall Orientation and Guidance.
11 January 2021 – Proposal from the co-facilitators of VWG3

The title of this sub-section ‘Submission of Information’ has been revised to align more with the title from ICCM Resolution II/4. The information should be included in the submission and not necessarily viewed as an information requirement.

With respect to criteria, many participants noted that the criteria originally set out in Annex B of the compilation document (a. adverse effects; b. coverage of the issue under other bodies; c. relevance; and d. recognition) were duplicative of the text above and were generally captured under the information requirements. Furthermore, criteria would not be foreseen as prerequisites to be fulfilled for consideration as an issue. With this in mind, the criteria section has been removed from the co-facilitators’ proposal.

C. Nomination, selection and adoption process

i. Nomination of issues

1. The process for nominating issues is open to any stakeholder. The nomination procedure will be made available on the Strategic Approach website.

2. To promote ensure broad communication about the nomination of issues being nominated:
   a. nominations should be communicated to all Focal Points.
   b. regions may wish to add the subject to relevant regional meeting agendas.

3. Nominations must be submitted six months prior to a meeting of the Conference.

   ii. Initial review and publication of submissions

1. The secretariat will check nominations for completeness with the aim of assisting proponents in completing their nominations. Proponents will be contacted to provide any missing information.

2. The secretariat will compile a list of nominations, annotated with a summary of information from the submission. Similar nominations will be clustered so that similar issues can be considered together, as appropriate and relevant. Comments received from stakeholders on the nominations will be made publicly available by the secretariat.

3. The proponents of an issue will have an opportunity to revise their nomination to take into account comments or to clarify information provided and to work with other proponents to consolidate nominations that may be similar or complementary.

4. The secretariat will consolidate a final list of nominations, annotated with a summary of information.

   iii. Decision-making and adoption

1. Issues should be selected and adopted by a resolution of the Conference. In adopting an issue, the Conference should:
   a. agree to a list of priority actions and related timelines;
   b. establish a multi-stakeholder committee to guide efforts and implementation on the issue.
2. The multi-stakeholder committees will undertake the following tasks:

a. develop and implement a workplan including propose indicators for relevant targets under different Strategic Objectives of the instrument;

b. coordinate with other relevant bodies, such as the IOMC organizations and others (e.g. the convention secretariats) on cross-cutting issues to avoid duplication;

c. monitor and evaluate the progress against the indicators; and

d. make recommendations to the Conference as appropriate.

Rationale

i. Nomination of issues

- There was general support for the nomination procedure set out in Annex B in the compilation document while noting there is a significant amount of bracketed text.
- Issues of concern will arise and evolve over time, and nominations will be allowed at any point. A six month deadline to submit nominations for consideration of the Conference would allow for sufficient time for thorough consideration of the nomination by stakeholders. The timeframe is identical to that of amendments to conventions.
- Some attempts have been made to simplify the text and identify possibilities for compromise or alternative text in areas of divergence as per the mandate of this virtual working group.

ii. Initial review and publication of submissions

- It was noted in the submissions that there is some additional need to include a role for initial review and publication of the nomination, as was the case in Resolution II/4.
- The basis of this text has been extracted from the agreed text in ICCM resolution II/4. Some attempt has been made to simplify the text and update it to align it with Annex B.

iii. Decision-making and adoption

- Multi-stakeholder committees are proposed to guide efforts and implementation on the individual issues of concern.
- If a decision is taken at a future Conference to continue the work of the current emerging policy issues or issues of concern under SAICM, it is proposed that efforts on these issues will also be guided by the process set out in section (iii).
- Furthermore, proposed text within the main body of the future instrument discussed in the Governance group should be reviewed in consideration of the Virtual Working Group 3 discussion. Section VI. Mechanisms to support implementation, part E. Subsidiary and ad hoc expert bodies is also relevant.

Commented [CANADA10]: Will the work plans be endorsed by the Conference, and if so, when? Will the work plans be broadly consulted on prior to finalization, in order to have some added reassurance that work plans will be reviewed beyond just the committees developing them? If so, then perhaps a consultative step should be added to the committees’ tasks.

Commented [CANADA11]: If the committees “propose” indicators, then who approves them? This is not specified in the text.

There is still a need to agree on who develops targets for IOCs first and where they fit (it hasn’t been agreed whether targets for IOCs would be included under SO C or be incorporated by reference and included within work plans directly). Canada has a preference for the latter option, which we believe would allow for targets that are more relevant and effective in assessing progress on specific IOCs.

Commented [CANADA12]: For additional clarity
D. Mechanisms for implementation

i. Workplans

1. Implementation of actions to address issues is guided by a work plan with clear targets, indicators, and timelines and milestones.

2. All stakeholders [in a position to do so] are encouraged to take the necessary actions and/or provide [required] funding and necessary assistance towards the implementation of the workplan.

ii. Tracking progress

1. The multi-stakeholder committees, with support of the secretariat, will oversee monitoring and reporting back from stakeholders, and guide progress towards implementation of the workplan, through:
   a) reports to meetings of the relevant body, and at regular intervals as identified in the proposed workplan prepared in accordance with section (i), above;
   b) periodic reviews within intersessional periods, and/or as requested by the Bureau; reporting on progress as outlined in the proposed workplan.

iii. Determining the need for further work on an issue

1. The Conference may decide to conclude work on a particular issue undertaken under its framework. This decision shall however not impact ongoing work performed on this issue in other fora.

2. Determining the need for further work under the framework of the Conference on an issue of concern will be based on a full explanation of the rationale on a way forward, provided by the secretariat, in consultation with the multi-stakeholder committees, to the Conference following the progress evaluation of the activities carried out in accordance with the workplan.

Rationale

i. Workplans

The need to develop a work plan for concrete and time-bound implementation was highlighted in the discussions and is reflected in this proposal from the co-facilitators.

ii. Tracking progress

This text is drawn from Annex B. Some attempt has been made to simplify the text and identify possibilities for compromise or alternative text in areas of divergence as per the mandate of this virtual working group.

iii. Determining the need for further work on an issue

This text is drawn from Annex B. Some attempt has been made to simplify the text and identify possibilities for compromise or alternative text in areas of divergence as per the mandate of this virtual working group.

Commented [CANADA13]: To be confirmed based on decision on process to develop targets for IOCs, and who does it.

Commented [CANADA14]: What is the difference between (a) and (b)? This should be made clearer.

Regarding the process for evaluating progress, reporting/evaluation of progress for IOCs should be part of the reporting/evaluation of the overall progress of the framework (achievements towards vision, targets and indicators).

Commented [CANADA15]: Could benefit from further clarity that ongoing work by organizations may continue, but that the framework will no longer focus on this issue.
ANNEX

Comparison of the proposed text (compilation document) and current SAICM text (resolution II/4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Process under SAICM</th>
<th>Compilation document proposal for beyond 2020 framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title: Modalities for considering emerging policy issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Call for nominations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Submission of initial information by proponents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Review and screening of nominations by the secretariat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Prioritization through consultation and advice from stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Inclusion of emerging policy issues on the provisional agenda of the Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: Issues of [international] concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Information Requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Mechanisms for adoption of issues of [international] concern and for monitoring their progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Identification, Nomination, Selection, Review and Prioritization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Mechanisms for implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Tracking progress including monitoring and reporting against milestones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Criteria for determining the need for further work on an issue</td>
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