

The GHS and the Global Partnership: a success story from Rio to Rio

Achievements, lessons learned and
future directions

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unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research



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DEVELOPMENT**

The GHS Partnership Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the Government of Switzerland and the European Union for their core financial support of the Partnership.



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KEY PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS 2002-2012

- 94 beneficiary countries
- 11 regional workshops
- Over 85 different awareness-raising materials developed and translated into national and local languages, with more than 65,000 units distributed
- Eight peer-reviewed guidance documents and training packages produced and translated into multiple languages
- More than 8,000 trained beneficiaries
- Over US\$8 million mobilized



Celebrating the GHS and 10 Years of the Global Partnership

A message from the Founding Partners

The WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS was launched 10 years ago at the WSSD in Johannesburg, following the call at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to develop an internationally comprehensible chemical classification and labelling system: the GHS. With the first version of the GHS adopted in December 2002 by the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS and now 10 years of successful collaboration regarding capacity building for implementation, the GHS can truly be considered one of the success stories “from Rio to Rio”.

This special publication summarises Partnership highlights from 2002-2012. It reviews the many national, regional, and supporting activities implemented in the framework of the Partnership and provides information on the concrete achievements, lessons learned, and future directions of the Partnership as it enters its second decade. In relation to governance issues, Partnerships are considered one of the most participatory and effective mechanisms to implement sustainable development and enhance international cooperation, as they are intended to facilitate, strengthen and expedite implementation by involving all relevant stakeholders. This has certainly been the experience of the GHS Partnership.

UNITAR, ILO and OECD would like to thank all the partners and supporters of the Partnership – many of them are referenced in the following pages – for their contributions over the past decade. Specific appreciation is extended to the Government of Switzerland and the European Union for having been core financial supporters of the UNITAR/ILO GHS capacity building programme, which has executed many of the activities reported in this document.

But looking to the past is not enough. GHS implementation requires on-going efforts between governments, the private sector, and civil society to continually ensure smooth transitions to GHS-based systems and provide proper information to workers and the public. We have seen continuing demand from many countries to assist with training, awareness-raising, establishing implementation frameworks, and coordinating with regional and trading partners. This demand is indicative that countries are enthusiastic about implementation of the GHS. However, it also poses some challenges: new partners will be needed and innovative ways to both deepen and broaden the impact of the Partnership will be key to the future. For our part, UNITAR, ILO and OECD remain committed to further develop this work, as well as share our experiences and best practices with other Partnerships and interested stakeholders.

There is still much work to do in the second decade of the Global GHS Partnership. But we are confident, as with the first 10 years, that the Partnership will make an important contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, as it has done for Agenda 21. It is helping, in the language of Rio+20, to continue to contribute to the future we want.



Achim Halpaap
Head of Environment Unit
UNITAR



Bob Diderich
Head of Environment, Health and Safety
Division
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Seiji Machida
Director, SafeWork
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1. Addressing a Global Need for Chemical Safety: the GHS

Over the years and decades, countries developed different ways of classifying and communicating the hazards of chemicals. This led, at the global level, to a range of sometimes conflicting provisions, which was neither optimal to protect human health and the environment, nor facilitate trade. Moreover, chemicals, through the different steps from their production to their handling, transport and use, may be a real danger for human health and the environment. People of any age, from children to the elderly, using many different languages and alphabets, belonging to various social conditions, including illiterates, are daily confronted with potentially dangerous products (chemicals, pesticides, etc.).

To face this danger, and given the reality of the extensive global trade in chemicals and the need to develop national programs to ensure their safe use, transport and disposal, it was recognized that an internationally-harmonized approach to classification and labelling could provide the foundation for such programs. Once countries have consistent and appropriate information on the chemicals they import or produce in their own countries, the infrastructure to control chemical exposures and protect people and the environment can be established in a comprehensive manner.¹



¹ For more information on the GHS, please visit the UNECE website: http://unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/ghs_welcome_e.html and see "Understanding the GHS - a companion guide to the Purple Book": http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/publications/cw/ghs/GHS_Companion_Guide_final_June2010.pdf

Development of the GHS: a win-win scenario

Following a 1989 ILO Resolution concerning the harmonization of systems of classification and labelling for the use of hazardous chemicals at work, the issue was taken up at the 1992 Rio “Earth Summit”. Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, provided the international mandate to complete this task:

“ 19.27. *A globally harmonized hazard classification and compatible labelling system, including material safety data sheets and easily understandable symbols, should be available, if feasible, by the year 2000.* ”

The subsequent work was coordinated and managed under the auspices of the Inter-organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (CG/HCCS). The OECD was identified as the Focal Point for work on human health and environmental hazards, ILO/UNCETDG as the Focal Point for work on physical hazards, and ILO as the Focal Point for work on Hazard Communication. The first draft of the GHS was then transferred to the UNECE and the first official version was adopted in December 2002 by the UN ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (SCEGHS), and endorsed by the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

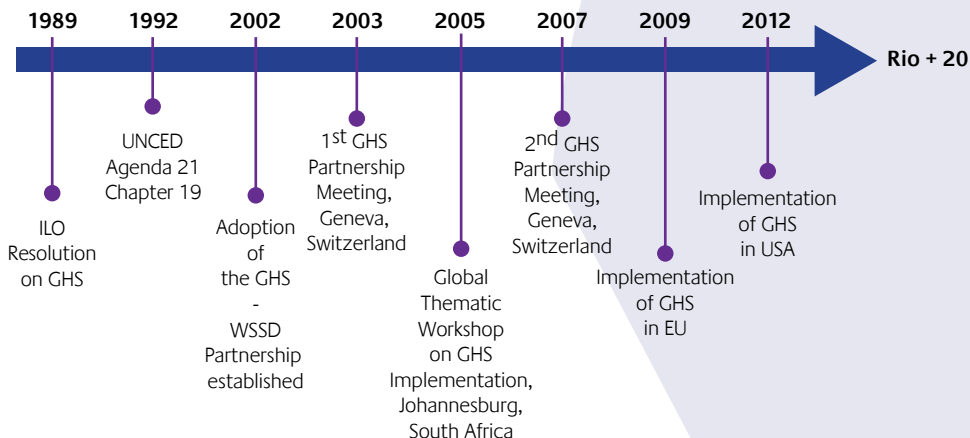
The GHS - together with the ILO Chemicals Convention concerning Safety in the use of Chemicals at Work (No. 170) - is an important tool that countries can draw upon to develop national chemical hazard communication systems by providing a basis for the establishment of comprehensive chemical safety programs. It represents a key step in harmonizing national chemical hazard communication systems worldwide and has great potential to improve chemical safety across all relevant sectors.

The GHS is a consistent and coherent approach to identifying the hazards of chemicals, and providing information on these hazards and associated protective measures to users or those who may be exposed. The system is structured so that appropriate elements for classification and communication, which consider the target population, can be selected. Those exporting chemicals are supported in acting responsibly, because they benefit from a system which is accepted, known and understood; and those who then use chemicals can take the proper steps to protect themselves and the environment.

The GHS:

- ✦ enhances the protection of people and the environment by providing an internationally comprehensive system for chemical hazard communication;
- ✦ provides a recognized framework for those countries without an existing system;
- ✦ reduces the need for duplicative testing and evaluation of chemicals; and
- ✦ facilitates international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis.

Key GHS Milestones



“ *The implementation of the GHS at the national, regional and ultimately global level makes an important contribution to ensuring the protection of human health and the environment. Switzerland is convinced that the multilateral approach taken by the GHS Partnership is the most effective and most efficient.* **”**

Franz Xaver Perrez, Ambassador, Switzerland



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2. Key Structures and Initiatives to Advance the GHS

In order to support GHS capacity building and implementation, a range of structures and initiatives were developed, including:

UN ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS

The Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS (UN SCEGHS) is a policy body which acts as custodian of the GHS, maintains existing and develops new technical elements of the GHS, as appropriate, and makes proposals for work and policy decisions to its parent committee, the UN Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods & the GHS. Proposals include the provision of technical guidance to countries and organizations and the preparation of work programmes.² The SCEGHS also issues recommendations in the area of GHS capacity building, but does not have an executing function. UNITAR/ILO have been designated as a focal point for this purpose.

UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme

In response to growing requests from countries for GHS capacity building, UNITAR and ILO initiated the UNITAR/ILO Global GHS Training and Capacity Building Programme in 2001. The Programme aims at assisting countries and regions to build capacities for the implementation of the GHS by forming pilot project partnerships, and providing guidance documents, training materials, expert training and educational, awareness-raising and resource materials regarding the new system. The Programme receives technical advice from a Programme Advisory Group (PAG) which includes representatives from several countries and organizations involved in GHS development and implementation. UNITAR/ILO provide regular updates of Programme activities to the UN SCEGHS.³

Initiation of the WSSD GHS Partnership

In April 2002, UNITAR and ILO, in collaboration with OECD, initiated the WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS as a way to mobilize resources and implement a number of specific support activities to strengthen capacities at all levels and sectors – in particular in developing and transition countries – towards implementing the GHS in sectors such as industrial workplaces, agriculture, transport, and consumer products. At the Summit in Johannesburg, the Partnership was formally launched as part of the official WSSD Programme on

² For more information: <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/dgdb/dgsubc4/c4age.html>

³ For more information: <http://www.unitar.org/cwm/ghs>

Friday, 30 August 2002. UNITAR convened a Partnership panel, and at this meeting Switzerland announced a contribution of CHF 100,000 in support of the management of the Partnership and activities for its first year. These resources complemented the initial financial support made available for country-based GHS capacity building activities provided by The Netherlands.

Today, the Partnership is comprised of over 25 governments, international organizations, business and industry groups, and public interest and labour organizations, and continues to grow. For more information, visit the Partnership website at:

http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/index.htm.

Key Partnership Supporters, 2002-2012

Special thanks are extended to Australia, Canada, EU, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, USA, Basel Convention Regional Centers, UNEP, WHO, CEFIC, IFCS, ICCA, OPCW, CIS Center, and the Orange House Partnership, for their key financial and/or in-kind contributions during its first decade.

For the full list of partners and supporters, please refer to the WSSD Global GHS Partnership Annual Reports at the following link:
http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/annualreports.htm



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GHS Pictograms and Hazard Classes



Oxidizers



Flammables
Self-reactives
Pyrophorics
Self-heating
Emits flammable gas
Organic peroxides



Explosives
Self-reactives
Organic peroxides



Acute toxicity (severe)



Corrosive to metals
Skin corrosion
Serious eye damage



Gases under pressure



Carcinogenicity
Respiratory sensitization
Reproductive toxicity
Specific target organ toxicity
(single)
Specific target organ toxicity
(repeated)
Germ cell mutagenicity
Aspiration hazard



Aquatic toxicity (acute)
Aquatic toxicity (chronic)



Acute toxicity (harmful)
Skin/eye irritation
Skin sensitization
Specific target organ toxicity
(single)
Hazardous to the ozone layer



3. Partnership Objectives and Programme Areas

Partnership activities are structured around the following four Programme Areas in order to make a significant contribution towards achieving Partnership indicators. The Partnership's programme areas are:

- GHS Capacity Development at the Regional Level
- GHS Capacity Development at the National Level
- Development of GHS Awareness Raising, Capacity Building Guidance and Training Materials
- Supporting Activities and Services for GHS Capacity Development.

“ *The GHS Partnership has been critical to the global implementation of the GHS both through its practical approach to supporting countries implementing the GHS and through its outreach activities.* ”

Kim Headrick,
Chair of UN ECOSOC Sub-Committee
of Experts on the GHS



Partnership Goal

The goals of the WSSD GHS Partnership are to:

- mobilize support and catalyze partnerships for coordinated activities at the global, regional and national levels;
- strengthen capacities in developing countries and countries in transition towards effective implementation of the GHS;
- decrease the negative effects to the use of hazardous chemicals on the environment and human health; and
- contribute to important objectives of sustainable development including protection of marginalized groups, protection of water supplies and drinking water, poverty eradication and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Partnership Objectives

Specific objectives of the Partnership include mobilization of resources for:

- awareness raising and capacity development for GHS implementation at the regional level;
- awareness raising and capacity development for GHS implementation at the national level; and
- development of GHS guidance, training and resource material.

What Constitutes a Core GHS Partnership Activity?

Although the GHS Partnership has a degree of flexibility and is resource dependent, it is an initiative which attempts to mobilize support for a number of agreed activities. Core partnership activities are technically reviewed by the Programme Advisory Group (PAG) of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme. However, not all core Partnership activities need necessarily to be executed by UNITAR/ILO. Countries and organizations may also execute core Partnership activities independently, if the activity contributes to one of the Partnership indicators and is coordinated through the PAG. It is also recognized that many other valuable GHS capacity development activities are organized independently of the WSSD GHS Partnership. These activities are presented in a special section of the annual reports of the Partnership.



4. Achievements at the Regional Level

Countries within regions often share similar needs and approaches towards chemical hazard communication. Also, regional economic cooperation or free trade initiatives increasingly take on board environmentally-related issues. The main goal of the regional activities was to bring together key representatives from governments, business and industry, and public interest and labour organizations to discuss GHS implementation and capacity needs.

Eleven regional workshops were supported between 2003 and 2012, as follows:

- ✎ SADC Sub-regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation, 1-4 September 2003, Livingstone, Zambia
- ✎ South American Sub-regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation for countries of Mercosur and the Andean Community, 29 November–2 December 2004, São Paulo, Brazil
- ✎ Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation for Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 17-20 October 2005, Manila, Philippines
- ✎ Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and the GHS for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 24-25 October 2006, Bled, Slovenia
- ✎ Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation for Arab Countries, 30 October–2 November 2006, Alexandria, Egypt
- ✎ Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation for ECOWAS Countries, 13-15 May 2008, Abuja, Nigeria
- ✎ GHS Conference for ASEAN: Implementation Towards 2008 and Beyond, 9–11 May 2007, Jakarta, Indonesia
- ✎ GHS Stocktaking Workshop for Southeast, East, and Central Asia, 15-17 September 2010, Beijing, P.R. China
- ✎ GHS Stocktaking Workshop for Central and Eastern European countries, planned for 17-19 July 2012, Chisinau, Moldova
- ✎ GHS Review Conference for Southeast Asian countries, planned for 8-10 October 2012, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (planned)
- ✎ GHS Stocktaking Workshop for the Caribbean countries, planned for 3-5 November 2012, Ocho Rios, Jamaica (planned)



Lessons learned from Regional and Sub-regional activities

The numerous regional activities resulted in a number of important lessons learned, which could also be relevant for other Partnerships, including:

- the central importance of sharing information and experience between countries and regional stakeholders
- coordination of GHS activities within and across regions leads to more efficient implementation
- regional activities are a cost-effective way to increase awareness and initiate national activities
- GHS implementation can facilitate commerce and trade on a regional level and support efforts to limit illegal trafficking of chemicals.

How the GHS contributes to sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Harm from exposure to chemicals can disproportionately affect traditionally disempowered persons, including women, children and the poor. Agenda 21, and Chapter 19 in particular, also recognize the vulnerability of these groups to toxic chemicals. Implementation of the GHS can have broader benefits related to national issues of sustainable development. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of time-bound and measurable targets for reducing poverty and addressing other issues. MDG Number 7 is to “ensure environmental sustainability.” It was recommended that this be done, inter alia, by reducing “exposure to toxic chemicals in vulnerable groups” and to “improve frameworks for chemical management.” The GHS can provide a framework for helping to improve chemical management and safety for such populations. Along with providing a tool for achieving international sustainability goals, GHS implementation can also help to protect water supplies, ensure safe transport of chemicals and facilitate trade.



****GHS: HUGIS AT ANYO NG KALIGTASAN SA KEMIKAL***



Explosive



Flammable



Oxidizing



Compressed Gas



Toxic



Corrosive



Chronic Health Hazard

Warning



**Dangerous to
Aquatic
Environment**

****Globally Harmonized System
of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals***
Alamin at ipatupad ang mga tamang uri at simbolo ng kemikal.



Para sa iba pang katanungan, makipag-ugnayan sa:
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*Maaring muling limpuha ang poster na ito ngunit
kailangang kilalanin ang OSHC bilang pinagmulan nito.

5. Achievements at the National Level

Through the Partnership more than 94 countries* in 4 regions have been supported to build capacity for GHS implementation through national projects or activities.

Africa	Asia & the Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean	Central & Eastern Europe
Zambia	Laos PDR	Barbados	Albania
Gambia	China	Jamaica	Armenia
Republic of Congo	Vietnam	Bolivia	Azerbaijan
Democratic Republic of Congo	Cambodia	Chile	Belarus
Senegal	Thailand	Colombia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Nigeria	Malaysia	Guatemala	Bulgaria
South Africa	Indonesia	Mexico	Croatia
Madagascar	Philippines	Uruguay	Czech Republic
Algeria	Singapore	Argentina	Estonia
Tunisia	Sri Lanka	Brazil	Georgia
Morocco	Bahrain	Ecuador	Hungary
Djibouti	Egypt	Paraguay	Latvia
Libya	Kuwait	Peru	Lithuania
Sudan	Jordan	Venezuela	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Qomorroos	Lebanon		Montenegro
Burkina Faso	Palestine		Moldova
Ghana	Oman		Poland
Cape Verde	Qatar		Romania
Côte d'Ivoire	Saudi Arabia		Russia
Guinea-Bissau	United Arab of Emirates		Serbia
Guinée	Syria		Slovakia
Mali	Yemen		Slovenia
Liberia	Brunei Darussalam		Ukraine
Niger	Kazakhstan		
Sierra Leone	Kyrgyzstan		
Togo	Republic of Korea		
	Mongolia		
	Myanmar		
	Tajikistan		
	Turkmenistan		
	Uzbekistan		

* includes participants from countries attending regional workshops

Of key importance to GHS implementation is the development and enforcement of national legislation to make a global system a national requirement. A number of countries and regions already have legislation applying the GHS which has entered in to force; for more information please view the UNECE GHS implementation webpage at: http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/implementation_e.html.

“ *The Government of the Republic of Zambia wishes to express its gratitude to the GHS Partnership for the decade long cooperation as the country embarks on pioneering the implementation of the GHS in Southern Africa.* ”

Mr. Joseph Sakala
Acting Director
Zambia Environmental Management Agency

Zambian experts complete a “GHS Training of Trainers Course” through a GHS Capacity Building Project in support of SAICM implementation in Zambia, December 2010.



“ *GHS Implementation initiatives in Malaysia have provided golden opportunities for various line agencies and ministries to be engaged with academia, business and industrial sector, NGOs, as well as public interest and labour organizations, to communicate and deliberate important issues pertaining to Sound Chemicals Management.* ”

Dr Mazlin Mokhtar, Professor and Director of Institute for Environment and Development
(LESTARI) - Malaysia

Lessons learned from country-level activities

From the various national GHS projects held to date, a number of important lessons can be drawn, including:

- ✦ it is important to integrate the GHS into broader national chemical safety and development objectives
- ✦ establishment of national coordination and communication mechanisms is key to ownership and sustainability
- ✦ implementing the GHS, together with ILO Chemicals Convention (No.170), can assist with national compliance with international systems and standards, as well as international chemicals and waste conventions such as the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
- ✦ national implementation of GHS avoids confusion with different existing systems
- ✦ using the GHS can lead to increased public awareness of chemical hazards and risks and ultimately to improved safety measures and working conditions.



Elements of a “standard” national GHS project

Many national GHS projects, especially those in the UNITAR/ILO programme, have common approaches and activities, including:

- Establishment of National Project Coordination Committee
- Organization of a National GHS Workshop
- Comprehensibility testing
- Situation and gap analysis
- Sectoral implementation plans
- Preparation of a draft National GHS Implementation Strategy
- Provision of training on the GHS
- Supporting activities, including awareness raising and training for civil society and Industry
- Development/Amendment of national regulations to implement GHS
- Regional and international outreach and communication



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6. Supporting and Related Activities

Over the years, a number of guidance documents, training materials and awareness raising tools were developed in the context of the Partnership in order to give partners the necessary substance to build capacity to implement the GHS. All such tools were peer reviewed and supported by numerous visits to recipient countries for face-to-face trainings in order to provide clarification and additional information on how to make the system more accessible and user friendly. These visits constituted an important feedback to improve and update the training materials and the methodology of work. The Partnership became an important platform for information exchange and knowledge sharing among the members and the beneficiary countries.

A range of training and awareness raising materials and supporting activities were also developed or conducted, and made available in different languages, including:

- “Developing a National GHS Implementation Strategy”, a guidance document to assist countries to develop a “road-map” for GHS implementation

<http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/publications/ghs.aspx>

- “Understanding the GHS – a Companion Guide to the GHS Purple Book”, a handbook to help simplify the understanding of the GHS and how to apply it

<http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/publications/ghs.aspx>

- a GHS training package, consisting of a handout document, presentations and exercises on the GHS, initially used in face-to-face trainings and now being adapted for e-learning

- the IOMC guide on “Assisting countries with the transition phase for GHS implementation”, listing the tools and resources of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to support GHS implementation

<http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/publications/ghs.aspx>

- a comprehensibility testing package – a survey-based method for obtaining information on the understanding of GHS hazard communication elements among the public

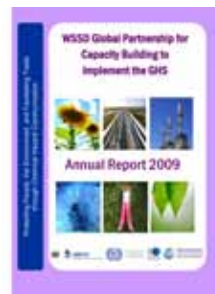
http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/CT.htm

- a Partnership website containing all the information related to the Partnership, including documents, a roster of experts, annual reports , etc

http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/index.htm



- Meetings of the Partners of the WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS (once in 2003, and once in 2007) - to discuss achievements and milestones for the Partnership
- GHS Capacity Building Programme Advisory Group (PAG) – provides technical and policy coordination to the Partnership and meets biannually
<http://www.unitar.org/cwm/ghs/pag>
- Partnership Annual Reports, detailing all activities and outcomes since 2002
http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/annualreports.htm
- The GHS Roster of Experts - a database of individuals with expertise related to the GHS
http://www2.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership/expertroster.htm
- GHS events at different international meetings and conferences to promote synergies and linkages
- Public access to existing national GHS classifications through OECD's eChemPortal
<http://www.oecd.org/ehs/echemportal/>



7. Future Directions: the GHS Partnership 2012-2022

GHS implementation is a process that requires on-going efforts between governments, the private sector, and civil society to continually ensure smooth transition to GHS-based systems and provide proper information to workers and the public.

The last 10 years of the Partnership have been largely focused on initial implementation, enabling activities and awareness-raising for the GHS. Future directions to build upon results to date should take into consideration the monitoring and evaluation of past activities, while focusing on technical and legal implementation of the GHS. Possible directions for the Partnership to consider in the next decade could include:

- ✎ Taking stock of the existing efforts and initiatives for GHS capacity building to date and ensuring that feedback from the lessons learned from national and regional implementation is integrated in to the next phase
- ✎ Strengthening and broadening the GHS Partnership and its network to scale-up the reach and effectiveness of the Partnership
- ✎ Further integrating the GHS into existing international chemicals management and development planning efforts
- ✎ Improving mobilization of resources for global GHS implementation by calling upon major international donors and new organizations (e.g. regional development banks), strengthening of national resource mobilization (including via mainstreaming), and giving consideration to establishing new ways to support GHS activities
- ✎ Further developing GHS capacity building and technical knowledge management by updating training modules, increasing knowledge on the System, and making use of the professional network of experts to broaden this knowledge and make it more user friendly.
- ✎ Facilitating public access to national classifications of chemicals.
- ✎ Fostering collaboration between countries to harmonise classification of individual chemicals.

These are some of the possible directions for the GHS Partnership as it enters its second decade. However, whatever direction is taken, it remains crucial to ensure that all partners are committed to its further development and continue to promote chemical safety through strong capacity building for implementation of the GHS.

GHS Awareness Raising Booklet in Indonesian



GHS Awareness raising in Thailand



The GHS and International Chemicals Agreements and Initiatives

GHS and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

SAICM provides further international recognition of the need to include GHS capacity building and implementation into overall chemicals management strategies and national SAICM implementation programmes. The importance of implementing the GHS is recognised in the Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) of SAICM where GHS implementation is identified under the overall objective of knowledge and information. The GHS is also included as a SAICM work area in the Global Plan of Action (GPA).

GHS and the Rotterdam Convention

The Rotterdam Convention refers to a “desir[e] to ensure that hazardous chemicals that are exported from their territory are packaged and labelled in a manner that is adequately protective of human health and the environment” (Preamble). Article 13 requires that chemicals listed in Annex III, when exported, are subject to labelling requirements that ensure adequate availability of information with regard to risks and/or hazards to human health or the environment, taking into account relevant international standards. Also Parties shall require that chemicals to be used for occupational purposes have a safety data sheet that follows an internationally recognized format, setting out the most up-to-date information available. The information on the label and on the safety data sheet should, as far as practicable, be given in one or more of the official languages of the importing Party.

GHS and the Stockholm Convention

The Stockholm POPs Convention underlines “the importance of manufacturers of persistent organic pollutants [to take] responsibility for reducing adverse effects caused by their products and for providing information to users, governments and the public on the hazardous properties of those chemicals, (preamble)”. In Article 10 on “Public information, awareness and education”, the Convention encourages parties to use safety data sheets, reports, mass media and other means of communication.

GHS and the Basel Convention

A Basel Convention-UN SCEGHS Joint Correspondence Group has been established with the aim to work towards harmonization of hazard classification systems and to improve consistency at the international level on the use of classification systems for wastes and chemicals. Use of the GHS can help to define hazardous characteristics of wastes under the Basel Convention while satisfying the needs of both international instruments.

GHS and the Montreal Protocol

The Parties of the Montreal Protocol requested the Ozone Secretariat to contact the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS to evaluate the possibilities for and feasibility of including ozone-depleting substances on its work program. The UNSCEGHS agreed to set up a correspondence group on Ozone Depleting Substances, to examine possibilities to develop classification criteria for Ozone Depleting Substances, and to request OECD (one of the focal points) to develop a proposal for these criteria in cooperation with the Conference of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol. The third revised edition of the GHS Purple Book includes a new hazard class for substances and mixtures hazardous to the ozone layer.

GHS brochure Lao PDR



GHS poster, Barbados



List of Acronyms

ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (of the United Nations)
GHS	Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAG	Programme Advisory Group
SCEGHS	Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (under UN ECOSOC)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992)
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2012)
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)



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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

United Nations Institute for Training and Research
 Institut des Nations Unies pour la Formation et la Recherche
 Instituto de las Naciones Unidas para Formación Profesional e Investigaciones
 Учебный и научно-исследовательский институт
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