

Partnerships and Networking for Chemicals Management Capacity Building

Observations and Conclusions of the First Meeting of the Informal
Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals
Geneva, Switzerland, 11-13 November 1997

*Pilot Programme to Assist Countries in Implementing National Action Programmes
for Integrated Chemicals Management*



UNITAR

IOMC

INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

A cooperative agreement among UNEP, ILO, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, UNITAR and OECD

The First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals was organised in the context of the *UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Programme to Assist Countries in Implementing National Action Programmes for Integrated Chemicals Management*.

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1. Introduction

The First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals took place in Geneva, Switzerland from 11-13 November 1997. Forty-two participants from international and regional organizations, industry associations, public interest groups, bilateral assistance agencies and national governments took part in the meeting.

The idea of establishing an Informal Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals was developed by the Project Task Force (PTF) for the *UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Programme to Assist Countries in Implementing National Action Programmes for Integrated Chemicals Management* during its second meeting in February 1997. It was agreed to initiate the Network as a forum for interested organizations and individuals to exchange their experiences, materials and knowledge related to chemicals management capacity building in the context of the pilot programme. It was also anticipated that the Informal Capacity Building Network might help facilitate linkages between the identified needs of the pilot countries and the expertise and resources of various organizations and governments.

The First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network was organized to facilitate interaction between the four countries which are participating in the UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Capacity Building Programme, namely Argentina, Ghana, Indonesia and Slovenia, and interested organizations and governments, with a view towards identifying concrete opportunities to support pilot country activities through the Network. The meeting was also viewed as an opportunity to generate ideas and share perspectives among various stakeholder groups on the general concept, potential utility and practical features of a capacity building network for the sound management of chemicals, and to explore the possible future of such a mechanism beyond the pilot programme.

This report presents some of the main ideas and conclusions which were developed during the meeting, drawing in particular upon the recent experiences of the pilot countries. The following section, **Part 2**, provides a summary of participants' introductory statements and the presentations made by pilot country representatives on recent developments in their country-based action programmes. Drawing upon the preliminary experiences of the pilot countries, **Part 3** of the report highlights some important steps which countries can take to ensure a country-driven process and to help create the necessary conditions for well-targeted external assistance. **Part 4** outlines some specific ideas on how participants in a capacity building network might actively support

the efforts of task forces established in the context of a national action programme. With sufficient interest among participants in the Informal Capacity Building Network, many of these ideas will be tested in the context of the pilot programme. **Part 5** is a forward-looking overview of possible functions and services which could be provided through a capacity building network for the sound management of chemicals, based on brainstorming and discussions held during in the meeting. From among these many potential network functions, some concrete opportunities for individuals and organizations to get actively involved in pilot programme activities are listed in **Part 6**. **Part 7** concludes the report.

2. Participants' Statements-of-Interest and Pilot Country Presentations

2.1 Introductory Statements

A network was viewed as a potentially useful platform for sharing lessons learned, promoting innovative solutions and making better use of existing materials.

In their introductory statements, participants welcomed the anticipated role of the Informal Capacity Building Network as a mechanism to help channel existing expertise, resources and practical experience to countries in order to better meet country-defined needs. A network was viewed as a potentially useful platform for sharing lessons learned, promoting innovative solutions and making better use of existing materials, thereby enhancing effectiveness of capacity building activities and avoiding duplication of effort. Participants, particularly those from organizations in a position to provide capacity building support, noted the potential value of having access to information on the existing situation and related needs in countries in order to better target their assistance activities, e.g. through access to countries' National Profiles.

Participants' statements also highlighted the broad range of expertise and experience represented in the meeting, as well as their various perspectives and areas of interest. Many participants noted ongoing activities of their organizations which could be of potential interest to countries in their efforts to strengthen national chemicals management programmes, such as training on specific technical or scientific issues, programmes aimed at reaching grassroots users of chemicals, regional coordination efforts, etc. Several participants expressed the potential willingness of their organizations to actively support country-based implementation activities as well as the proposed functions of a capacity building network.¹

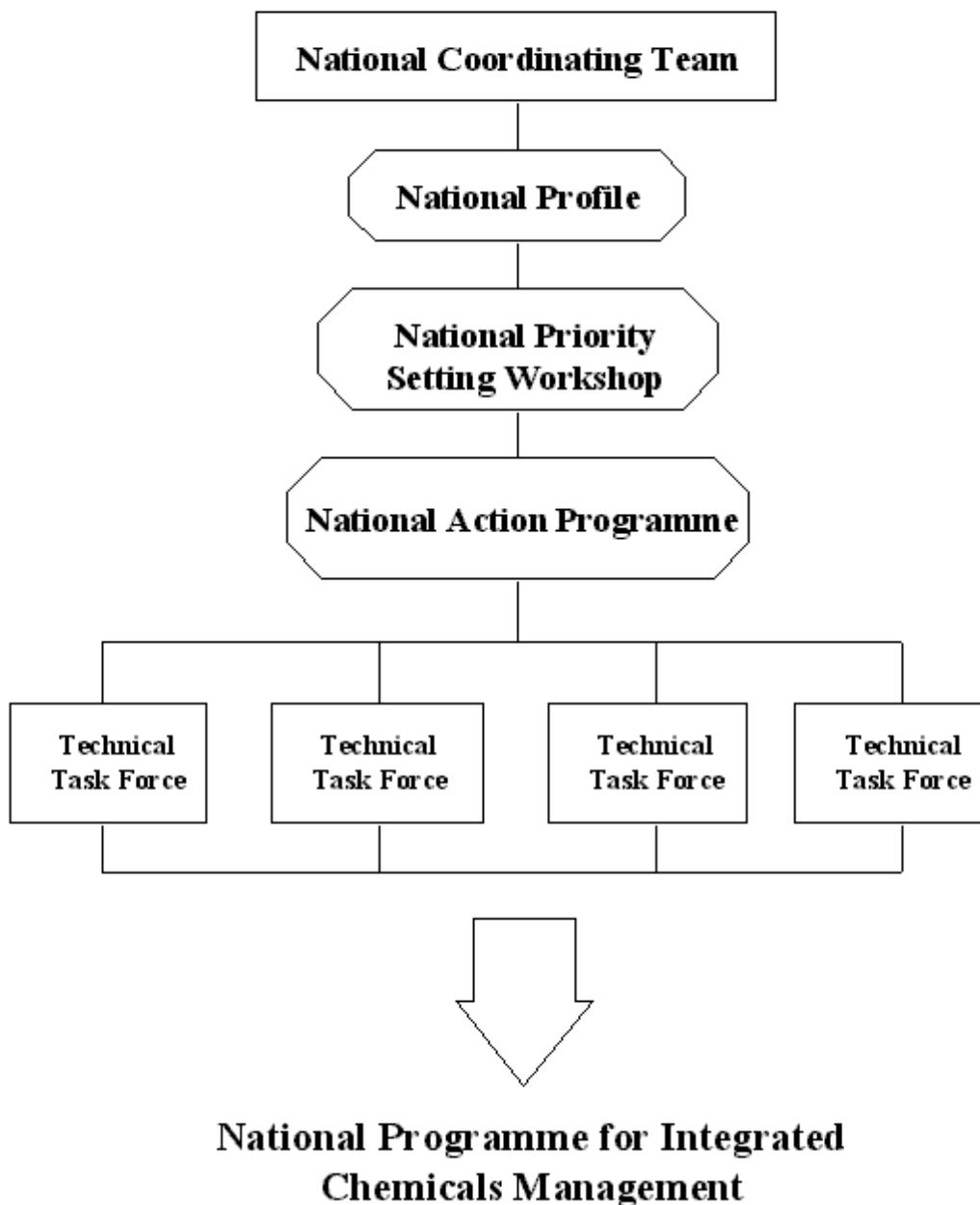
2.2 Pilot Country Presentations

Representatives of Argentina, Ghana, Indonesia and Slovenia briefed participants on progress made in implementing a National Action Programme for integrated chemicals management following the preparation of a comprehensive National Profile and based on the proposed procedural framework as illustrated in [Figure 1](#).²

¹ This suggested approach is outlined in the UNITAR/IOMC guidance document entitled Planning and Implementing a National Action Programme for Integrated Chemicals Management.

² The UNITAR/IOMC guidance document entitled Organizing a National Workshop on Chemicals Management and Safety was provided to assist the countries in organizing these national priority setting events.

Figure 1: Towards Integrated Chemicals Management at the Country Level



In all countries, this national process has been initiated with involvement of all concerned ministries as well as parties outside of government, with overall guidance provided by a National Coordinating Team or similar intersectoral body. Taking into account conclusions drawn through the National Profile process, each country organized in mid-1997 a National Priority Setting Workshop through which the priority issues to be addressed through the National Action Programme were selected.³ A Technical Task Force (TTF) was then established for each selected topic. The country representatives reported that the TTFs had begun the process of formalizing their working arrangements and preparing their plans of action, including identification of objectives, possible activities and related resource needs.⁴⁵ Annex 1 provides a summary of the presentations made by the four pilot country representatives.

2.3 Priority Topics in Pilot Countries

In terms of the national priorities identified by the four countries, several topics have emerged which appear to have particular importance to countries in their efforts to strengthen national chemicals management. At least three out of four pilot countries have identified priorities for action within each of the following areas:

- information systems;
- awareness raising and education; and
- legislation.

Other priority topics selected by the countries include intersectoral coordination, technical infrastructure, chemical accidents, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), chemical waste, occupational health, and exposure to agricultural chemicals. An overview of the TTF topics in the four countries is provided in Annex 2.

³ At the time of publication, plans of action had been prepared by nearly all task forces.

⁴ Based on information received from the pilot countries, UNITAR has prepared a document entitled *Argentina, Ghana, Indonesia and Slovenia: An Overview of Task Forces Established in the Framework of a National Action Programme for Integrated Chemicals Management* (May 1998) which provides summaries of the plans of action prepared by the pilot country task forces. This document (in English) is available from UNITAR.

⁵ In addition to verbal statements made by participants, the Netherlands and Germany also contributed papers on capacity building activities, approaches and possible linkages with the pilot programme.

**Pilot Country Perspectives and Views of Donors and Assistance Agencies:
A Constructive Dialogue**

Throughout the First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network, an active exchange of perspectives took place between representatives of the pilot countries and other developing/industrializing countries, and those participants representing the donor community on the challenges of providing meaningful external support to the Technical Task Forces. Following is a summary of some of the main points that were raised.

From the perspective of the pilot countries, it was considered potentially useful to have expert input and guidance early on in the process, as the Technical Task Forces begin to develop their action plans, in order to fully benefit from existing experiences and outside advice in identifying options and developing workable strategies. Gaining a better understanding of how certain issues have been addressed elsewhere, and knowing what types of assistance could potentially be available, are considered by countries to be important inputs into the development of action plans.

From the perspective of donors, bilateral assistance agencies and others in a position to provide capacity building assistance, it was considered important that countries first develop clearly defined plans of actions and identify related needs. Knowing the precise needs of a TTF would ensure that, for example, the appropriate expert could be sent to the country to assist. It was also felt that in order to have a truly country-driven process, many decisions regarding intended activities and overall approach ideally should be made by the country prior to bringing in outside assistance.

Following discussions which reflected these different viewpoints, there was some agreement among participants that to the extent possible, countries should strive to identify their specific needs so that those in a position to assist will be better able to provide the appropriate type of support. At the same time, there was some recognition that governments and the donor community might better meet the needs of countries, particularly in the early stages, by providing a general commitment of support and then working together with the country to further clarify the precise nature of the partnership.

3. Country Commitment and Priority Setting: A Starting Point for Targeting External Assistance

A formalized national mechanism provides the necessary setting for targeted external support.

The presentations by the four pilot countries and subsequent discussions throughout the meeting underscored the importance of country-driven initiatives and national programmes for the sound management of chemicals as necessary preconditions for effective targeting of external support and assistance programmes. In line with the recommendations issued by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) under Programme Area E of Chapter 19, Agenda 21, the meeting reiterated that a formalized national mechanism through which issues of chemicals management can be addressed in an integrated way provides the necessary setting for the provision of targeted and coordinated external support. In this respect the following items were considered of prime importance:

3.1 Establishing a National Coordinating Committee

A national coordinating committee can facilitate an integrated approach to chemicals management and ensure linkages among the activities of various concerned parties.

The establishment of a national committee or coordinating body can be considered the keystone of coordinated national action to strengthen chemicals management capacities. Participants pointed out that such a committee, which involves all concerned parties including governmental agencies as well as parties outside of government, can provide the necessary policy-level framework for establishing linkages among various chemicals management activities and for developing coordinated strategies. A well-functioning national coordinating committee provides a mechanism for timely exchange of information on ongoing activities, serves as a forum for addressing priority problems and issues of common concern, and facilitates a more deliberate and systematic approach towards strengthening the overall national chemicals management programme. By fulfilling these functions, a national coordinating committee can facilitate an integrated approach to chemicals management which addresses all stages of the life cycle and ensures sound linkages among the activities of various concerned parties

3.2 The Role of a National Profile and the Identification of National Priorities

By providing a comprehensive assessment of the existing chemicals management infrastructure, and by highlighting the main environmental and health problems related to chemicals in the country, a National Profile can serve as a practical basis for identifying priorities for action.⁶ All four pilot countries reported that they have found National Profiles to be valuable, not only for the concise information they contain, but also for the increased interaction among various parties of interest that occurs during the preparation process.

A National Priority Setting Workshop can be instrumental for deciding which of the many issues identified through the Profile should be tackled as a matter of priority.

Many conclusions can be drawn from a country's National Profile regarding opportunities for enhancing chemicals management and safety. However, in order to move forward in a pragmatic and realistic way, an important next step for a country following the preparation of a National Profile is to decide which of the many issues identified through the Profile should be tackled as a matter of priority. A country may define its priorities using various criteria. For example, one issue may be given priority due to the scope of the problem and the potential severity of its impacts, while another may be selected because it can be pragmatically and immediately addressed within existing means. Involving all concerned parties in the process of selecting priorities for action can help to ensure the breadth of support which will be needed once implementation activities get underway. As reported by the pilot countries, the organization of a National Priority Setting Workshop can be instrumental in building this type of support among various stakeholders. Such an event also provides an opportunity for all parties of concern to express their views and to share information on relevant ongoing activities.

3.3 Establishment of Task Forces to Address Priority Topics

For some of the priority topics identified by a country, a suitable mechanism may already exist through which the specific issue or topic can be addressed. In other cases, however, task forces or working groups may need to be established which involve all parties of interest.

⁶ A National Profile is a comprehensive assessment of a country's existing infrastructure for management of chemicals, and includes information on legal, institutional, administrative and technical aspects as well as identified strengths and weaknesses. The IFCS has recommended that all countries prepare National Profiles following the UNITAR/IOMC guidance document which is titled *Preparing a National Profile to Assess the National Infrastructure for Management of Chemicals: A Guidance Document*. The guidance document is available from UNITAR in English, French and Spanish; it has also been translated into Bulgarian, German, Hungarian, Lithuanian and Russian.

An important first step for a task force is to develop a plan of action which lays out key objectives and related activities in the short-, medium- and long-term.

In the context of a national action programme such as that being implemented by the four pilot countries, several task forces operate in parallel in order to address a set of identified priorities. Depending upon the subject matter and to ensure an appropriate division of responsibility, various task forces may be led by different ministries or organizations. While such task forces are likely to operate in a decentralized manner, there is also a need for coordination among them as well as with other existing programmes. The role of the national coordinating committee in ensuring appropriate linkages among the task forces and with other ongoing initiatives is therefore a critical one.

An important first step for a task force is to develop a plan of action which lays out key objectives in the short-, medium- and long-term, as well as specific tasks and activities to be initiated towards the achievement of those aims.

Certain issues can be addressed through relatively simple measures using existing means. Others may require external assistance.

Defining expected roles and responsibilities of task force members is another important aspect of planning, as is the identification of necessary resources and expertise.

Particularly during the early stages, a task force may be able to identify certain issues which can be addressed through relatively simple measures and using existing means. The identification and “harvesting” of these “low-hanging grapes” can be important for building momentum within the task force and for achieving demonstrable results in the short- and medium-term.

3.4 Identifying Needs for External Expertise and Resources

While many activities of a task force may be achievable within existing means, other activities, particularly those which are complex or resource-intensive in nature, may require external expertise and/or financial and technical assistance. Thus, as an integral part of its planning process, the task force will need to identify what resources and expertise it will need in order to achieve its objectives.

4. In What Ways Could Members of a Capacity Building Network Support Country-based Activities?

A capacity building network could play an instrumental role in forging better links between mechanisms at the country level and assistance activities of external entities.

Once the initial groundwork has been laid at the country level through the work of technical-level task forces, many opportunities exist for outside entities to assist countries in moving forward. There was general agreement among meeting participants that a capacity building network could play an instrumental role in forging better links between the mechanisms which are being established at the country level and the various programmes and assistance activities of external entities, in particular at the task force level. Based on ideas generated during the meeting, following are some possible ways in which members of a capacity building network could actively support countries' efforts to strengthen chemicals management.

4.1 Assisting Country-based Task Forces in Getting Started

Based on the experiences of the pilot countries, a key stage during which external assistance could be of particular benefit is when the task forces are beginning to develop their plans of action. Pilot country representatives and other participants noted that external assistance at this stage could help task force members work through key questions to be addressed in developing a workable strategy.

Country visits of external experts are one possible means of assisting national task forces in getting started. The potential role of an external expert in this context would be to serve as an "expert facilitator" i.e. someone with substantive expertise who is able to provide objective information and guidance to support the task force members as they work through the process of clarifying objectives, identifying possible activities and formulating a plan of action.

Another possible means to assist a country-based task force in getting started is the development of a "**Thought Starter**"⁷ paper which the task force could use as a practical guide in thinking through key issues and developing an action plan.

Such a document could be generated in the context of interactions

⁷ A Thought Starter is a short (4-5 page) document intended to stimulate thinking among members of a national task force or committee on key questions for addressing a particular aspect of national chemicals management. In the context of the UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Capacity Building Programme, sample Thought Starters are being prepared on a select number of topics (i.e. intersectoral coordination, chemical accident prevention/management, legislation, information systems and awareness raising/education). These will be tested in collaboration with the pilot countries in order to explore the potential utility of Thought Starters in assisting country-based task forces in organizing their work.

between task forces members and an external expert or, for those instances in which the organization of an expert visit is not feasible, Thought Starters could be provided as simple stand-alone tools to help stimulate thinking within task forces during the initial planning phase.

4.2 Providing Information and Expert Guidance

In addition to assistance in getting started, a task force may also require information and/or guidance on specific substantive issues in order to move forward.

Participants in the meeting noted that the provision of **information** through written material — either in hard copy or electronic form (e.g. CD-ROM, Internet) — may in some cases be sufficient. Case studies and practical, informative documents on chemicals management instruments can provide a task force with the knowledge base from which to build an approach that is tailored to national circumstances while enabling the country to benefit from the experiences of others.⁸ Guidance documents can assist task force members in working through the process of addressing a particular aspect of chemicals management. By providing factual information and/or guidance, such materials can support sound decision-making and assist a task force during project design and implementation. In addition to serving as a ready means to provide countries with needed input, documents can be a key ingredient in a decentralized and cost-effective approach to capacity building.

Participants also highlighted the importance of country visits and other types of **direct interaction** between external experts and relevant actors at the country level as practical means for outside entities to assist country-based task forces. Such visits, it was noted, should be of sufficient duration to enable the external expert to become fully familiar with the situation and needs of the country, and for the individuals in the country to fully benefit from his or her expertise.

⁸ One project has recently been initiated in this regard, i.e. the development of a series of modules which will provide practical information on specific chemicals management instruments, based on actual country-based experiences. This so-called “tool book” project involves a range of interested parties, and is coordinated by UNEP Chemicals and UNITAR.

Providing Countries with Balanced and Objective Information

Expert guidance provided first-hand can be an effective means of assisting a national task force. However, some participants pointed out that there is a potential risk for a task force to be steered in a particular direction, which may not be the most appropriate for the specific circumstances of the country, as a result of the background and/or perspective of an individual expert.

One way to avoid this situation, as emphasized by participants, is to provide capacity building assistance that is “**material dependent**” rather than “**expert dependent.**” This means ensuring that, whether in the context of a country visit or as stand-alone material, objective guidance and information is available to countries. Such materials make take the form of internationally peer-reviewed guidance documents or other informative documents which draw upon existing country experiences and reflect the perspectives of various stakeholder groups.

4.3 Forming Medium- and Long-term Partnerships

For a particularly complex and resource-intensive aspect of chemicals management, a medium- or long-term partnership with another country or organization may be essential.

For a task force that is tackling a particularly complex and resource-intensive aspect of chemicals management, a medium- or long-term partnership with another country or organization may be essential. One example of such a partnership would be a twinning arrangement between a country that has implemented a certain approach and a country which wishes to develop a similar programme. Another type of partnership of particular relevance for large-scale projects is a technical assistance project which includes appropriate financial provisions. Some participants noted that in some cases, a partnership could be initiated during the very early stages of task force work in order to ensure close collaboration between the partners from the planning phase onward. In addition to providing necessary resources and technical support, sustained interaction in the context of such partnerships can facilitate the transfer of specific skills and expertise which are necessary for the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

5. What Functions and Services Could be Provided through a Capacity Building Network?

Throughout the meeting, concrete and practical suggestions were provided on core functions and services which could be provided through a capacity building network for the sound management of chemicals, both for its members and for other interested parties. Following is a summary of the ideas which were generated.

5.1 Providing access to National Profiles and information on country priorities

As a practical means to facilitate targeting of capacity building assistance towards country-defined needs, a clearinghouse of National Profiles and information on countries' specific priorities could be provided, for example, through a library/distribution center as well as by posting National Profiles on the Internet.⁹ In the medium and long term, a decentralized mechanism could be foreseen through which countries themselves could provide such information through individual "country pages" to be accessed, *inter alia*, through a capacity building network Internet site.

5.2 Identifying individuals/organizations with expertise on specific topics of chemicals management

Much experience, practical knowledge and technical expertise exists which could be better utilized to support country-based capacity building efforts. Such expertise exists at the country level within governmental ministries, industry, academia and public interest groups, as well as within regional and international organizations. A capacity building network could facilitate a more systematic identification of individuals and organizations with expertise on specific topics of national chemicals management. Such information could be used, for example, by members of country-based task forces who wish to establish contacts with individuals in other countries with relevant expertise.

⁹ A 1998 joint IFCS/UNITAR global survey on National Profiles is expected to provide information on the status of National Profile preparation in IFCS Member countries and the potential interest of countries to make their National Profiles available on the Internet.

5.3 Facilitating short-term country visits of external experts

Another possible function of a capacity building network would be to facilitate short-term visits of external experts to countries. The purpose of such visits might be, for example, to help a task force get started in addressing a priority topic or to provide substantive and technical guidance during the design and implementation of a particular system or project. The existence of a network could facilitate an appropriate matching between the specific interests/needs of countries and the background and experience of available experts.

5.4 Facilitating medium- and long-term partnerships and twinning arrangements

The initiation of medium- and long-term partnerships and twinning arrangements could be facilitated through a network by providing a forum for exchange among potential partners regarding specific needs as well as available resources and assistance activities. Such interactions through the network could facilitate initial contacts, for example, between a country and a bilateral assistance agency. The anticipated result of such a clearinghouse function would be a more systematic approach to building partnerships, with potential benefits for all parties involved.

The First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network illustrated the potential utility of such a function. Some promising links were made in the context of the meeting between specific pilot country needs and ongoing programmes of various organizations and governments.¹⁰ In addition, some organizations/governments indicated a willingness to explore partnerships with one or several of the pilot countries in support of task forces established in the context of their national action programmes.

5.5 Documenting innovative and effective approaches

The actual experiences which countries have had in solving specific problems or implementing chemicals management instruments can be a valuable reference for other countries facing similar challenges. Participants noted that a potentially important function of a capacity building network could be to facilitate the documentation and exchange

¹⁰ During the meeting, working groups were formed to discuss priority needs for assistance in each of the four countries as well as possible opportunities for support.

The actual experiences which countries have had in solving specific problems can be a valuable reference for other countries facing similar challenges.

of experiences gained in developed countries as well as in developing countries and countries in economic transition. Such documentation could include case studies as well as primary documents such as workshop reports, task force plans of action, sample legislation, etc., which could be made available through the network for the benefit of others. For example, an innovative approach taken by a country to address a chemicals-related problem, such as the need to reduce health and environmental risks of persistent organic pollutants (POPs), could be captured in a short case study and added to a network “library.”

Another useful type of material that could result from country-based projects might be compilations of existing country experiences with certain chemicals management instruments. For example, a task force interested in establishing a notification system for new chemicals may decide to first obtain information on how such systems have been implemented elsewhere, as a basis for designing their own approach. So that others might benefit from this initial research as well as from the innovative work of the task force, a module of the UNEP/UNITAR “tool book” series could be prepared and made available through the network.

While many new ideas are expected to arise from ongoing and future work, it is also recognized that numerous innovative approaches and projects have already been undertaken by countries, either on their own or in the context of bilateral/multi-lateral assistance projects. Thus, collecting existing case studies and other materials which have been developed in the context of past country-based work, and making such materials available to others, would be another potentially valuable service to be provided through a capacity building network.

5.6 Collecting and disseminating existing guidance and training materials

Facilitating access to existing guidance and training materials is another possible function of a capacity building network.¹¹ Through collection of documents of relevance for chemicals management capacity building and by facilitating access through a capacity building library — which could be an actual physical site and/or a “virtual” library accessed through the Internet — a network could optimize the use of existing documents.

¹¹ An important first step has been taken by UNEP Chemicals through the *Inventory of Information Sources on Chemicals*, which provides references to existing documents and information sources. In the context of the pilot programme, UNITAR is preparing a *Guide to Selected Documents in Support of National Chemicals Management Training and Capacity Building Activities*. The aim of the document is to guide country-based task forces towards guidance and training materials which may be of particular relevance to their work.

5.7 Providing information on ongoing multi- and bilateral assistance projects

A capacity building network could serve to increase awareness of and facilitate access to information on ongoing multi-lateral and bilateral assistance projects in the field of chemicals management.¹² The aim would be to share information on who is doing what where, in order to help avoid potential overlaps between projects at the country level, and to foster an exchange of experiences gained through various types of partnerships and assistance activities.

5.8 Providing a forum for addressing priority topics of common interest to countries

As a clearinghouse for information on countries' priorities as well as a network of individuals/organization with existing expertise, a capacity building network could provide a forum for exchanging experiences, expertise and innovative ideas on priority topics of chemicals management capacity building, e.g. through the organization of thematic sessions. Such efforts could focus on topics selected by countries in the context of national action programmes, such as those identified as areas of common concern among the countries participating in the pilot programme, i.e. information systems, education and awareness raising, and legislation.¹³

¹² The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) periodically gathers this type of information through its Survey of OECD Member Country Development Assistance Activities for Capacity Building in the Field of Chemicals/Pesticides Management.

¹³ Thematic expert meetings on these priority topics will be organized in 1998-99 with involvement of pilot country representatives, the IOMC and other interested members of the Informal Capacity Building Network. The aim of these thematic sessions is to foster synergies among pilot country representatives and other experts towards the identification of practical and innovative approaches which are tailored to actual circumstances encountered at the country level.

6. Practical Steps to Get the Informal Network Started

6.1 Network Activities in the Context of the Pilot Programme

One issue which was raised was the need for a “network hub” or secretariat which could provide some of the proposed Network services and facilitate its various functions.

The meeting highlighted some practical steps which could be taken to initiate operation of the Informal Capacity Building Network in 1998 in the context of the ongoing pilot programme. Apart from the necessary level of commitment of Network members to actively participate, one issue which was raised was the need for a “network hub” or secretariat which could provide some of the proposed Network services and facilitate its various functions. The question was raised regarding the extent to which UNITAR would be in a position to act in this capacity.\

In its role as implementing agency for the UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Capacity Building Programme, UNITAR identified some possible activities which could be initiated immediately with resources available through the pilot programme and with sufficient involvement of Network members and other interested parties. Specifically, the following activities could be initiated and/or continued in the context of the pilot programme and with “network hub” services provided by UNITAR:

- visits of Network members to the four countries participating in the pilot programme;
- initiation of medium- and long-term twinning arrangements between Network members and pilot country task forces;
- systematic collection of existing guidance and training materials available through Network members;
- dissemination of results, including identified capacity building priorities, of the global survey on status of National Profile preparation in IFCS Member countries;
- preparation of Thought Starters to assist the pilot country task forces in getting started in addressing identified priority areas of capacity building, through a process involving task force representatives and other Network members;
- active participation of Network members in the preparation of modules under the “tool book” project, once task forces have identified specific instruments of interest; and
- exchange of experience among Network members and other

interested parties in the context of thematic sessions addressing three priority themes identified by pilot counties, i.e. information systems, education and awareness raising, and legislation.

6.2 Moving the Network Beyond the Pilot Programme

Questions of a strategic nature include the potential relationship of a capacity building network to other existing mechanisms.

In order for the Network to continue its operation beyond the pilot programme, some important questions will need to be addressed with involvement of all interested parties. Questions of a strategic nature include the potential relationship of a capacity building network to other existing mechanisms, including the IOMC and its Participating Organizations (including regional offices), as well as the IFCS and its regional groups. Participants in the meeting noted that such discussions would be needed to ensure that the proposed functions of a capacity building network would complement and contribute to rather than duplicate ongoing activities at various levels.

Obtaining the views of the IFCS, the IOMC Participating Organizations and the various development cooperation agencies will be an important step in this process, both to ensure awareness and support for the proposed role and functions of a capacity building network, as well as to ensure appropriate linkages to ongoing initiatives in the context of Programme Area E. As far as the IFCS is concerned, participants noted that the Third Intersessional Group (ISG-3) of the IFCS, scheduled for December 1998 in Japan, could provide an opportunity for exploring these issues within the Forum, particularly in light of the planned ISG-3 special session on capacity building. In the context of the IOMC, ongoing and planned discussions of the Inter-Organization Coordinating Committee (IOCC) on the coordination of IOMC capacity building activities could provide the appropriate forum to obtain input from IOMC Participating Organizations.

7. Conclusions

The First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network demonstrated the interest of various organizations and governments to interact in the context of the Informal Capacity Building Network in order to assist the pilot countries in their ongoing efforts to strengthen chemicals management capacities. The experiences of the pilot countries indicate that a country-driven process and the establishment of appropriate national mechanisms are key to creating fertile ground for sustainable and well-targeted capacity building assistance provided from the outside.

The meeting also indicated that there is a significant level of interest and support for the idea of a capacity building network for the sound management of chemicals as a mechanism for facilitating a more systematic targeting of capacity building activities towards country-defined needs. Discussions during the meeting highlighted the many different levels at which members of a capacity building network could support country-based activities, ranging from provision of information to initiation of full-scale twinning arrangements. Various core services and functions which could be provided through a network were also explored.

It is hoped that discussions held during the First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network and the contents of this report will provide a useful basis for further discussion and follow-up among interested governments and organizations regarding the opportunities and potential benefits of such a network as a mechanism for facilitating capacity building activities and better serving countries' needs.

Annex 1

Summary of Pilot Country Presentations

Following are summaries of presentations made during Session IV of the First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals, 11-13 November 1997, by representatives of the four countries participating in the UNITAR/IOMC Pilot Capacity Building Programme.

Since the time of the meeting, further progress has been made at the country level, in particular in the development and implementation of task force plans of action. Summary overviews which reflect recent developments in the pilot country task forces are available from UNITAR.

Argentina

Mr Ernesto de Titto of the *Ministerio de Salud y Acción Social* (Ministry of Health), which is the agency serving as the National Coordinator in the context of the pilot programme in Argentina, briefed meeting participants on recent developments in the National Action Programme for integrated chemicals management. Mr de Titto reported on some important milestones in the Argentine programme for integrated chemicals management, starting with the selection of Argentina as a pilot country in February 1997, the completion of its revised National Profile and organization of an initial planning meeting in May, and the establishment of the National Coordinating Team in June. The National Priority Setting Workshop, which was held in Buenos Aires in September 1997, involved 90 participants from a broad range of governmental and non-governmental sectors and resulted in the identification of ten priority issues which were then grouped into four main areas: (1) legislation, regulations, international agreements and compliance, (2) information collection, access, channels and dissemination, (3) risk assessment and interpretation in decision making and (4) pollution prevention, control and minimization. Specific topics to be addressed by Technical Task Forces are being further defined within these broad areas.¹⁴ The workshop also issued some general resolutions for integrated chemicals management, which highlighted harmonization of chemicals legislation and enforcement, the principle of right-to-know, promotion of cleaner production, improved technical capabilities, capacity to evaluate risks, and high level political commitment as key tenets.

Mr de Titto reported that the highly federalized structure of Argentina poses particular challenges for integrated chemicals management, however he reported that significant

¹⁴ Since the time of the meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network in November 1997, UNITAR has been informed by the National Coordinator in Argentina that the following TTFs have been established: Development of Toxicological and Emergency Response Information Systems; Community Right to Know; Chemical Carcinogenic Substances and Worker Safety (including a sub-group on asbestos); Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); Exposure of Rural Populations to Agro-Chemicals; Harmonization of National Legislation; and Hormonal/Endocrine Disruptors.

progress has already been achieved in this regard, in particular as a result of the National Priority Setting Workshop which involved representatives from the majority of provinces. Mr de Titto also reported on interaction at the regional level which Argentina has initiated in its capacity as vice president of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS).

Ghana

Mr G. Klufio of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), which serves as the National Coordinator in the context of the pilot programme, presented the status of National Action Programme planning and implementation in Ghana. As a result of the priority setting process which culminated in the National Priority Setting Workshop in August 1997, three task forces have been established: (1) data management, (2) public education and awareness raising, and (3) technical and legal infrastructure, with the latter comprising two sub-committees on non-pesticides legislation and laboratory infrastructure, respectively. For each TTF, a preliminary Plan of Action had been prepared which includes TTF objectives, membership, working arrangements, and proposed activities. Copies of these were made available to interested participants.

The TTF on Data Management, which is under the coordination of the Customs Excise and Preventive Service, aims to address the existing situation which is characterized by inadequate data collection on chemical production, import/export, use and waste generation, as well as insufficient institutional coordination and lack of a national information system. The Task Force on Public Education and Awareness Raising, chaired by the non-governmental organization Friends of the Earth, aims to improve knowledge and awareness among the general population on sound chemicals management through development of a national strategy, design/implementation of awareness raising campaigns and preparation of relevant materials. The Task Force on Technical and Legal Infrastructure, which comprises two sub-groups, aims to undertake a through assessment of existing capacities based upon which comprehensive strategies/recommendations will be developed for strengthening the infrastructure in these two areas.

Indonesia

Dra Fawrita Cadick of the Directorate General for Drug and Food Control, Ministry of Health, which serves as the National Coordinator in the context of the pilot programme, reported on National Action Programme activities in Indonesia. Following the National Priority Setting Workshop in Jakarta in October 1997, four TTFs were established addressing (1) integrated chemicals management legislation and enforcement, (2) coordination of national chemicals management activities, (3) awareness raising, and (4) information systems for chemicals management. The National Coordinating Team (NCT) had been formally established and its organizational structure, operating procedures and member responsibilities outlined and agreed. For each TTF, a draft Plan of Action had been prepared including organizational issues as well as a summary of planned activities. Copies of the NCT terms of reference and TTF plans of action were made available to meeting participants.

The TTF on Strengthening Integrated Chemicals Management Legislation and Law Enforcement, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Manpower, aims to inventory and analyze existing legislation and enforcement capacities in order to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement from a life cycle perspective. Lack of awareness of legal requirements and insufficient coordination were identified as important aspects of the overall problem. The Task Force on Consolidating Coordination of National Chemicals Management Activities aims to address insufficient coordination in terms of legal instruments, resources and activities by, *inter alia*, assessing the tasks, functions and responsibilities of the respective institutions, proposing an institution to serve as National Coordinator for integrated chemicals management, and recommending an effective coordinating mechanism. The Task Force on Raising Awareness on Chemical Safety, which is coordinated by the Narcotics and Hazardous Substance Control division of the Ministry of Health, aims to address an important root cause of unsound chemicals management, i.e. lack of awareness of members of the public, government officials, workers and employers on the risks posed by chemicals. Proposed TTF activities include preparation of materials for training and awareness raising, development of curricula and promotion of voluntary industry action. The TTF on Establishing a National Information System for Chemicals Management aims to address the absence of an integrated information system for management of chemicals by, *inter alia*, developing an information network, harmonizing chemicals codification and establishing a data bank for each sector.

Slovenia

Ms Darja Bostjancic of the Ministry of Health, who serves as the Coordinator of the Intersectoral Committee on the Management of Dangerous Chemicals (ICMDC), provided an overview of activities undertaken to strengthen chemicals management in Slovenia. The ICMDC, which was formally established by a governmental resolution in July 1996, is an intersectoral coordinating committee involving representatives of all concerned ministries (full membership) and NGOs (associated membership). One of the initial tasks of the ICMDC was the preparation of a National Profile. Five task forces presently exist under the ICMDC, addressing the Chemical Weapons Convention, asbestos, good laboratory practice (GLP), banned and restricted chemicals and the PIC procedure, and classification, packaging and labeling, respectively. Slovenia's participation in the pilot programme and the initiation of a National Action Programme are closely linked to the work of the ICMDC. In the context of the pilot programme, an additional six TTFs have been established under the auspices of the ICMDC addressing: (1) chemical waste, (2) legislation, (3) chemical accidents, (4) occupational health and (5) monitoring. Information management and education/training/awareness raising were identified as cross-cutting issues to be addressed by all TTFs. These task force topics were identified through the National Priority Setting Workshop which took place in November 1997, just prior to the First Meeting of the Informal Capacity Building Network Meeting. At the time of the meeting, TTF plans of action were not yet available.

The issue of strengthening chemicals management in Slovenia is seen in a global context (e.g. international conventions, IFCS recommendations, etc.) as well as in a regional context (e.g.

potential membership in the European Union). Ms Bostjancic also reported on linkages and collaboration at the sub-regional level, as well as interactions on a bilateral basis, e.g. in the context of technical assistance work with neighboring OECD countries.

Annex 2

Overview of Task Force Topics in the Four Pilot Countries

Technical Task Force (TTF) Topic	Argentina	Ghana	Indonesia	Slovenia
Information Systems	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education and Awareness Raising		✓	✓	✓
Coordination of National Chemicals Management Activities			✓	
Chemical Accidents				✓
Right to Access to Information	✓			
Occupational Health and Safety				✓
Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	✓			
PCBs (POPs sub-group)	✓			
Carcinogenic Substances	✓			
Endocrine Disruptors	✓			
Monitoring of Chemicals/ Chemical Pollutants				✓
Evaluation of Exposure to Agrochemicals in Rural Populations	✓			
Technical Infrastructure for Regulatory Enforcement		✓		
Chemical Waste				✓

Annex 3

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