



Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

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to International Chemicals Management**

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**Further development of a strategic approach
to international chemicals management**

Paper submitted by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals on its contribution towards the development of a strategy for capacity-building in the context of the strategic approach to international chemicals management

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, in the annex to the present note, a paper submitted by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) on the contribution of IOMC towards the development of a strategy for capacity building in the context of the strategic approach to international chemicals management, for consideration by the Preparatory Committee at its third session. The annex is being circulated as received, and has not been formally edited by the secretariat.

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INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

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

Contribution of the IOMC towards the Development of a SAICM Strategy for Capacity Building

1. Background and Introduction

Chemicals are essential components of modern society. They are an intrinsic part of economic processes including health care, food production and telecommunications. Under certain circumstances, chemicals and/or their transformation products are dispersed to soil, sediment, water, air and living organisms, resulting in degradation of the environment and exposure of humans and wildlife.

Capacity building for the sound management of chemicals has increasingly been recognized as a major priority in the relevant global environmental conventions, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and, in general, within the international development community. Chemical management capacity building is addressed in Programme Area E of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 1992.

Some 50 international agreements are concerned with the sound management of chemicals. The multiplicity and diversity of these agreements, and related needs for capacity building, have created significant challenges for countries, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Development of an international strategy for chemical management capacity building and its effective implementation by governments and stakeholders, in collaboration with international and bi-lateral organizations, is likely to be a key factor affecting the successful achievement of the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals, as called for by WSSD. The Organizations of the IOMC consider SAICM to be a valuable opportunity to develop, both at the national and international level, a strategic approach to chemicals management capacity building. Such an approach would provide for the best use of resources for both the development, and maintenance of, national regulatory and implementation infrastructures.

The objective of this paper is to provide a contribution to, and a basis for, discussions at SAICM PrepCom3 towards developing a more strategic approach in the areas of chemicals management capacity building.

2. The National Dimension of Chemicals Management Capacity Building

2.1 Defining Capacity Building

According to UNDP, capacity building refers to the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and countries develop their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives. Thus capacity building is not necessarily linked to external assistance activities. In relation to chemicals it refers to all efforts by governments, the private sector and civil society to achieve specific goals and perform certain functions to make progress in managing chemicals. When planning and implementing a capacity building project or activity, a key question is *what exactly is a project or specific activity meant to achieve?* ("building capacity for what?") and which functions need to be performed (and by whom) to achieve a specific goal. Goals requiring capacity building may be general, such as achieving the sound management of chemicals by the year 2020, as called for by the WSSD. Or, they can be more specific and pragmatic, such as meeting the national obligations of a specific convention/protocol (e.g. the ILO Chemicals Convention; the Stockholm Convention; the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol) or a specific standard, such as the GHS, or a pesticide registration system. Last, but not least, capacity building takes place - and progress must be measured - at the national, regional, and local levels as well as in the private sector and civil society. External support activities, such as those provided by IOMC Organizations, can only be facilitative and supportive in nature.

2.2 National framework for capacity building

Agenda 21, Chapter 19, Programme E provides suggested elements of a national chemicals management system, which include the following:

- (a) adequate legislation,
- (b) information gathering and dissemination,
- (c) capacity for risk assessment and interpretation,
- (d) establishment of risk management policy,
- (e) capacity for implementation and enforcement,
- (f) capacity for rehabilitation of contaminated sites and poisoned persons,
- (g) effective education programmes, and
- (h) capacity to respond to emergencies.

In light of the general nature of these elements, SAICM may consider developing (or initiate a process to develop) more precise benchmarks for capacity building to guide countries in their efforts to reach the 2020 goal in line with their national needs and existing situation, and taking into consideration their international commitments. Benchmarks would need to have sufficient flexibility to take into consideration various starting points in countries, such as different levels of industrial and agricultural development, different levels of existing capacities and different economic abilities to maintain capacity and infrastructure. The elements included in Programme Area E provide, in the perspective of the IOMC, a good starting point and framework to further develop benchmarks for capacity building. One of the key challenges, both for countries and international organizations involved in capacity building, is to create bridges and identify synergies between strengthening the elements of a national infrastructure for the sound chemicals management, as provided for by the Programme Area E elements, and capacity building activities aimed at implementing a particular convention and its existing protocols.

2.3 Factors facilitating sustainable capacity building at the national level

Taking into consideration lessons learned from past capacity building activities, the IOMC considers it important that countries address a number of key issues as fundamental components of developing and implementing a national SAICM implementation strategy. These are briefly outlined below.

2.3.1 Linking chemicals management to national development priorities

Organizations that provide support for chemicals-related capacity building activities at the national level are calling for such activities to be reflected in a country's overall national development priorities. Such priorities can be reflected in a number of ways – for example, through their appearance in a national sustainable development strategy, or a national poverty reduction paper. This issue has also been raised as an important factor during the ongoing SAICM deliberation by countries, IGOs, and other participants. If chemicals-related activities are not identified in development plans that represent the result of consensus-building at the national level, donor support to chemicals-related activities will not be forthcoming.

2.3.2 Developing a sound institutional and programmatic national framework

A number of countries have taken steps to link their chemicals management capacity activities and projects within a national “programmatic” framework for the sound management of chemicals. A core feature of a programmatic approach is that it represents a long term national commitment to chemicals management where relevant government sectors establish and participate in a national chemical safety co-ordinating mechanism, while maintaining their independence to execute individual components and projects within their mandate and competence. Development of a *National Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals* allows countries to conduct a strategic evaluation of progress made and challenges faced at the national level towards reaching the WSSD 2020 goals and the targets established by SAICM.

2.3.3 Effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation

It is through specific projects that concrete progress is made towards building capacities for the sound management of chemicals and achievement of the WSSD 2020 Goal. In the perspective of the IOMC, a number of characteristics contribute towards the sustainable impact of capacity building projects. These include, for example:

- multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultation/participation in project design and implementation;
- sound project planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- evaluation of the sustainability of the capacity and infrastructure;
- building on the experiences gained and lessons learned from previous projects and activities; and
- solid linkages of project and activity goals to overall programmatic priorities.

2.3.4 Securing commitment of the private sector and civil society

Civil society and the private sector have major roles in chemicals management capacity building. The private sector, in particular industry, can be a net contributor to supporting capacity building, especially given increasing calls by government for this sector to work in partnerships for sustainable development. Where industry is involved, systems should be developed that work on a cost recovery basis to ensure sustainability. Civil society will be involved in certain aspects of chemicals management capacity building activities. Multilateral organizations such as the GEF and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, for example, recognize the potential of civil society and the private sector to assist governments in the "delivery" of chemicals-related commitments.

3. Regional and International Aspects of Chemicals Management

The economy of many countries is too small to maintain a programme that fully addresses all aspects of chemicals management as identified in Agenda 21, Chapter 19, Programme E. In particular, providing for infrastructure and capacity related to regulatory aspects of chemicals management, such as risk assessment and interpretation and information gathering and dissemination, may be beyond the resources of individual countries. Regional approaches (for example, regional pesticide risk assessment or regional registration schemes) should be considered. Furthermore, the use of assessments by other

countries and global assessments should be carefully considered, also taking into account that the regulatory regime may have trade implications (for example, Codex standards).

4. A SAICM Strategy on Capacity Building and the Role of the IOMC

Since the outcomes of SAICM are not yet clear, it would be premature for the IOMC to develop a strategy on how best to assist countries in implementing SAICM. However, IOMC will stand ready in the future to review national SAICM implementation plans and explore how various IOMC Organizations may be best in a position to assist within the framework of their mandate and available resources, including facilitation of linkages to existing projects. As part of this process, the IOMC may identify gaps in capacity building services that the IOMC Organizations currently provide. IOMC Organizations would in the medium term stand ready to adapt their capacity building activities in order to ensure they correspond with key outcomes of SAICM, subject to the governing body of each Organization giving clear advice on these matters.
