

Chemical Disarmament

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FOREWORD

DISARMAMENT

ADDRESSES BY THE OPCW DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Regional Workshop on the Chemical Weapons Convention in Africa	4
Committee on Hemispheric Security in the Organisation of American States	8
Regional Workshop on the Chemical Weapons Convention for the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle Eastern Region	13

POLICY-MAKING ORGANS

Summary of the 36th Session of the Executive Council	16
Interview with the Former Chairman of the Executive Council	20

UNIVERSALITY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CWC

Regional Workshop in Africa, Ethiopia	23
Regional Workshop for the Mediterranean Basin, the Middle East and Neighbouring Regions, Malta	24

REVIEW OF RECENT OPCW GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

3rd Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Eastern Europe, Romania	25
Training courses for National Authorities in Viet Nam, Indonesia and Bosnia and Herzegovina	26

ASSISTANCE & PROTECTION AGAINST CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Protection Network Meeting, Austria	29
Meeting of Medical Experts to Support the OPCW A&P Programme	30
Fifth Chemical and Biological Medical Treatment Symposium, Switzerland	31
Saudi Arabia National Capacity Training Course for First Responders	32
Swiss Emergency Field Training, Advanced Course (SEF-TRAD 2), Switzerland	32
National Protection Training Course in Tajikistan	33
BALTEX 2004, Estonia	33

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

UNITAR Workshop, Geneva	34
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PREVIEW OF FORTHCOMING OPCW GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Second Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Asia, China	36
Second Sub-Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Central America, Nicaragua	37
Implementation-Support Exchange Programme for National Authorities	38

ASSISTANCE & PROTECTION AGAINST CHEMICAL WEAPONS

National Protection Course in Albania	39
Eighth Annual Workshop to Coordinate A&P under Article X of the CWC, Bulgaria	40
Central Asia Receives Training on Assistance and Protection	41
International Course on Protection Training for First Responders, Serbia and Montenegro	42
TRIPLEX 2004, Norway	42

LABORATORY

Workshop and Laboratory Exercise on the Analysis of Chemicals Related to the CWC (CW-LABEX), Finland	43
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NEW PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

44

UN SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTION 1540

48

DISARMAMENT CALENDAR

52

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Thematic Workshop on Synergies for Capacity Building under International Agreements Addressing Chemicals and Waste Management

Geneva, Switzerland, 30 March-2 April 2004

The implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention by Member States draws on a variety of national resources and capabilities, for example in respect to the development, enactment and enforcement of legislation and the development and application of administrative measures needed to implement the Convention. The strengthening of national capacity in the general area of chemicals management has therefore a positive spin-off effect on the implementation of the Convention. OPCW programmes, aimed at enhancing national capacity to implement the Convention, complement capacity-building programmes implemented by other international and regional agencies in the field of chemicals management. There is a need for coordination to ensure that OPCW programmes are cost-effective and avoid duplicating efforts already undertaken by other organisations. At the same time, there is potential for increasing the impact of such OPCW programmes by utilising synergies with programmes offered by other organisations. To this end, the Secretariat has been developing working contacts with the Inter-Organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and the Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety and has supported a number of thematic workshops in the area of chemicals management that addressed issues directly relevant to the implementation of the CWC.

An International Thematic Workshop on Synergies for Capacity Building under International Agreements Addressing Chemicals and Waste Management was jointly organised by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, the Geneva Environment Network (GEN), and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. The event took place within the framework of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) at the International Environment House, Geneva,

Switzerland, from 30 March to 2 April 2004. The workshop brought together more than 80 representatives from developing countries, countries with economies in transition, international organisations, Convention Secretariats, and non-governmental organizations including industry, public interest groups and labour unions. The OPCW sponsored 24 participants from 23 Member States, whose economies are either developing or in transition. The other organisations represented included Global Environment Facility (GEF), Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE),

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and World Health Organisation (WHO).

The aim of the workshop was to provide a discussion and a practical working forum for stakeholders dealing with the sound management of chemicals.

The **international agreements** discussed were: UNECE Convention on Access to Information; Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention); Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal; the Chemical Weapons Convention; FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (revised version); UN Globally Harmonised System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); ILO Chemicals Convention 1990, No. 170; ILO Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention 1993, No. 174; Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer; the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

An analysis of the agreements and the discussions held during the workshop revealed a wide number of "horizontal" or cross-cutting national capacity requirements, such as generic legislation, import/export control legislation, establishment of focal points, development of chemical lists and/or inventory, life-cycle management, emissions reporting, hazard assessment, packaging requirement, information exchange, chemical analysis/monitoring, training/skills building, resource mobilisation, among others.

The participants identified a number of potential benefits arising from synergy development, such as minimising overlaps and inconsistencies in policies and programmes, communication-related benefits, and broader benefits for chemical management beyond specific obligations outlined in the international agreements. It was agreed that the momentum gained by the recent rise in the number of agreements in force should be maintained through effective implementation at the national level, exploring synergies and taking eventually an integrative approach at the national level, when suitable to the country's needs.

The participants particularly stressed the importance of developing an integrated national framework for implementing international agreements. Such a framework could have the following elements: developing links with national development priorities, adopting a coherent legislative and policy framework, developing inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation, ensuring effective public participation and stakeholder involvement, generating awareness concerning international agreements as well as other practical measures to facilitate an integrated national approach.

Specific areas for developing synergies at the national level were identified. These included: information exchange and dissemination; risk assessment; risk management decision-making; education and training programmes; chemicals analysis and monitoring; and import and export control.

The participants also suggested that certain existing approaches/components of sound chemicals and waste management could be effective tools to assist the implementation of international agreements. The GHS and the Pollutants Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) were cited in particular as possible tools.

A variety of possible challenges and obstacles to implementing synergies at the national level were raised by participants. These included: lack of information or awareness, inter-ministerial competition, lack of skills among key personnel, financial impediments, lack of framework policies and failure to link environmental management to economic development/poverty reduction. A number of suggestions to overcome such challenges and obstacles were made by the participants, like: linking environmental management with broader objectives of sustainable development, sharing success stories and case studies, and broadening stakeholder involvements as much as possible, including other levels of government.

A number of complementary activities and approaches at the international level were also proposed in order to further stimulate the development of synergies, such as: designing international capacity building to facilitate synergy development, developing international guidance and training material, strengthening regional mechanisms and delivery, strengthening collaboration at the global level and identifying key issues relevant to the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process.