



## **Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)**

*A WSSD Type II Partnership*

*Information Update – November 2003*

### **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The *Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals* (GHS), endorsed by ECOSOC in July 2003, represents a unique opportunity to protect the environment and human health from the harmful effects of chemicals. The system provides a comprehensive approach to chemical hazard communication (communicating the dangerous properties of chemical substances through the use of labels and safety data sheets) and provides guidance for classifying chemicals according to agreed characteristics (e.g. flammability, different types of toxicity, carcinogenicity, etc.).

Both the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) set a global GHS implementation goal of 2008. Developing countries and countries with economies in transition have indicated that capacity building and training to assist with national implementation of the system is necessary to reach the 2008 goal.

### **THE WSSD GLOBAL GHS PARTNERSHIP**

In response to growing interest for capacity building,<sup>1</sup> and building upon the existing UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme, UNITAR, ILO and OECD launched a WSSD Partnership on capacity building for GHS implementation in 2002. The goal of the WSSD GHS Partnership is to mobilize support and catalyze partnerships for coordinated activities at the global, regional and national levels to strengthen capacities in developing countries and countries in transition towards effective implementation of the GHS. In the medium and long-term, the Partnership is expected to lead to a decrease in environmental and human health related effects attributable to the use of hazardous chemicals. It thus makes a direct contribution to important objectives of sustainable development, including protection of marginalized groups, protection of water supplies and drinking water, and poverty eradication.

### **PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

At the First Meeting of Partners in July 2003, representatives from 16 governments, 8 intergovernmental organizations and 12 NGOs agreed to the proposed workplan and suggested activities as the framework for the Partnership.

The Partnership framework workplan is structured around four programme areas:

- (1) GHS Capacity Development at the Regional Level
- (2) GHS Capacity Development at the National Level
- (3) Development of GHS Awareness Raising, Capacity Building Guidance and Training Materials
- (4) Supporting Activities and Services for GHS Capacity Development

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<sup>1</sup> Sixty-five countries have formally indicated to UNITAR their interest in capacity development support related to GHS implementation, including support for national-level capacity building projects.

Activities constitute a contribution to the GHS Partnership if they fall within the framework workplan. Activities are either implemented through the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme or directly by Partners. In all cases, activities should be co-ordinated through, and technically reviewed by, the Programme Advisory Group (PAG) of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Programme. It is recognized that other valuable GHS activities are implemented independently of the GHS Partnership. Those activities do not belong to the core program of the Partnership, but are referred to in a dedicated section of the Annual Partnership Report and are listed in the relevant sections of the Events page of the Partnership website.

A Meeting of the Partners will take place every two years, if possible prior to submission of bi-annual progress reports for the Partnership to the CSD Secretariat. UNITAR, working closely with ILO and OECD, provides the day-to-day coordination and secretariat function for the Partnership. The Partnership also links with the IFCS, ECOSOC Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (SCEGHS), the CSD, and the IOMC on issues relevant to GHS capacity building and identify needs for additional guidance materials.<sup>2</sup>

### **PROGRESS TO DATE**

A significant number of Partnership activities have already taken place or are underway. At the regional level, the first GHS awareness raising workshop – for countries of the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region – was held 1-4 September 2003, in Livingstone, Zambia. A SADC GHS capacity needs assessment and implementation report is also under preparation. National activities include the ongoing GHS action plan projects and implementing activities in Zambia and South Africa, via the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme, and completed comprehensibility testing in both countries. Completed awareness raising and support services include a GHS needs assessment survey and report for developing and transition countries, a dedicated evening workshop (“Implementing the GHS: Opportunities

<sup>2</sup> The full report of the First Meeting can be found at the Partnership website: <[www.unitar.org/cwm/ghs\\_partnership](http://www.unitar.org/cwm/ghs_partnership)>.

and Challenges”) held at IFCS Forum IV in November 2003, completion of the Partnership 2002 Annual Report, and the recent online availability of the interactive GHS Partnership website and virtual capacity building library (also in CD ROM format). Additionally, guidance documents on precautionary statements, safety data sheets, and labelling are under preparation by the SCEGHS (serviced by the UNECE).

### **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION**

Adequate financial resources are required to ensure that the Partnership will reach its stated goal and objectives. UNITAR would in particular like to thank the Governments of Switzerland and The Netherlands and the ICCA for their direct financial contributions, and GTZ, Health Canada, IFCS, the SCHC and the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health for their in-kind financial contributions to Partnership activities in 2003.

No pledges have been received for 2004 to fund GHS Partnership activities and the co-ordination functions provided by UNITAR. Thus, continuity in implementing the Partnership may be compromised. Interested countries and organizations that may be in a position to support Partnership activities are requested to contact:

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